

BC Society for Public Education

Protecting the Integrity of BC's Public Schools

www.bcspe.ca

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The British Columbia Society for Public Education has a new website:

www.bcspe.ca

Please visit the website and download our provincial election kit. The kit is designed to help you raise issues about public education with all parties and all candidates in a manner that will inform and educate voters.

When Candidates Come Calling ...

During the provincial election, we encourage everyone concerned about public education to talk to all candidates about education issues. Below are questions on six key areas of concern:

1. Downloading costs – Since it was elected, the current government has imposed many new costs on schools. These include legislated salary increases, higher MSP premiums and new graduation requirements. While some new funds have been provided, they are far short of what is needed. If elected, will you commit to providing the funds needed to pay for new expenses your government requires schools to make?
2. Seismic Safety- The current government has promised to spend \$1.5 billion to seismically upgrade public schools. If elected, what will you do to ensure that work is completed within —or even sooner than — 15 years?
3. Grade 10 exams - Parents, teachers, students and school trustees are concerned about the new, mandatory Grade 10 provincial exams. Research has indicated that exams of this nature have little or no benefit to student learning, and can in fact be detrimental, resulting in fewer students graduating and teachers feeling pressure to "teach to the test." What is your position on Grade 10 provincial exams?
4. Privatization/commercialization - Funding shortfalls have led to what has been described as "creeping privatization" in the form of increased student fees, corporate sponsorships, parent fundraising for curriculum materials, increased use of private tutors, reliance on revenues from "for-profit" international students and school districts establishing business corporations. If elected, what will you do to protect the integrity of BC's public schools and reverse this trend?

5. Youth Workplace Safety - In 2003, the BC government changed the laws governing children and work. Now children from 12 to 15 can work at almost any type of work and at almost any time of day (outside school hours) with only one parent giving permission. WCB statistics tell us that young workers (18 to 24 year olds) are injured on the job at twice the rate of older workers. If elected, will you support measures to increase the safety of our youngest workers by restricting the kind of work they can do and by limiting their hours?

6. Child Poverty - Recent studies indicate that 1 out of every 6 children in Canada lives in poverty, a figure that may be even higher in BC. If elected, what will you do to reduce poverty in BC and ensure that children are not lacking the basics they need to learn and grow?

Secondary School Survey

Data collection for the BC Society for Public Education (BCSPE) survey of Vancouver's secondary schools will soon be complete. The data will provide baseline information about many of the resources currently available to students in Vancouver's secondary schools. A similar survey of elementary schools is presently being undertaken by BCCPAC on a province-wide basis.

Unlike the recently released school ranking report by the Fraser Institute, the BCSPE survey report will not identify individual schools by name nor make comparisons between schools. The purpose is rather to track changes taking place in such areas as the number and variety of elective courses offered, ESL class sizes, waiting times for special needs assessments, and reliance on fundraising and other revenue sources.

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