

Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)

As 2008 begins, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) campaign in opposition to the FSA enters a new phase with increasing activity. The following @issue bulletins cover the matters at issue to date and can be accessed at <http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca/access/publications/aissue/aissue.html>

- No. 2007-09, dated November 27, 2007 — Pamphlets containing inaccurate or incorrect information
- No. 2007-07, dated October 16, 2007 — BCTF approaches, strategies, and tactics
- No. 2007-06, dated September 25, 2007 — Student and teacher participation not optional; distribution of union material to parents; local union pressure
- No. 2007-04, dated May 4, 2007 — Using students as couriers; mailing lists/parent directories; BCTF brochures' freedom of information

BCTF Recent Actions

- **Teacher petition**

The BCTF has requested each local to have their teachers sign a petition by January 31, 2008 stating their opposition to any mandated district-wide and provincial testing, including the FSA and provincial exams. The BCTF has stated that it intends to publicize these results in February 2008. Please find attached a copy of the memo to local presidents as well as a copy of the petition.

- **BCTF district meetings/PAC meetings**

The BCTF has held, or will be holding over the next few weeks, meetings with teachers in many districts to deliver the BCTF message regarding their opposition to the FSA. Further, in some locations, the union has requested to speak on this topic at PAC meetings and/or school board meetings.

- **FSA pamphlets**

A major part of the BCTF campaign is to seek to persuade parents to withdraw their children from participating in the writing of FSAs in February. The BCTF and many locals have developed a variety of versions of pamphlets to distribute to parents in this regard. Many of these pamphlets contain inaccurate information and go beyond the free speech rights which may have been previously established in the appeal case (2005 BCCA 393) of Don Munroe's arbitration award concerning class size. A fuller discussion of this award can be found in @issue No. 2007-07 referenced above. It is important to note that many of these pamphlets are geared towards attempting to frustrate the delivery of FSAs through student withdrawal instead of a public debate of the issue.

District Response

Whether teachers are speaking directly to parents at school or distributing pamphlets to parents, it must be done in a professional manner that does not undermine public confidence in the education system or in a manner that may frustrate the district's ability to effectively carry out its legally mandated obligations in respect of the FSA. Discussion of the FSA or distribution of material relating to it must be based on accurate information. Parents who do not wish to receive the information or engage in the discussion about the FSA with a teacher should be respected.

Under no circumstances should students be used by teachers as couriers to distribute union materials on FSA or use school/classroom mailing lists or parent directories to obtain mailing addresses for these purposes. There are currently two arbitrations proceeding on the issue of using students as couriers for BCTF materials.

By attempting to directly affect the actual administration of the FSA by promoting to parents inaccurate information concerning their children's withdrawal from the writing of the FSA, it is clear from the material found on the BCTF website as well as the pamphlets that are being produced in some of the locals that the union is going well beyond participating in a public debate or any free speech rights that may have been established in the appeal case of Arbitrator Munroe on class size as referenced earlier. BCPSEA will be meeting with the BCTF this week and will be raising our objections in this regard.

Should your district face a situation where teachers intend to post on bulletin boards in the school or distribute to parents inaccurate information, please contact your BCPSEA liaison and refer to the above noted *@issue* documents.

In addition, your district may consider sending parents a letter and/or speaking at PAC meetings to provide the district's perspective on this subject.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding this bulletin or any other issue pertaining to the FSA, please contact your BCPSEA liaison.

Attachment