

Foundation Skills Assessment

BC Teachers' Federation Position

We understand the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) recently confirmed their opposition to the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) by way of a motion at their Representative Assembly in early November. We understand the motion that was passed by the BCTF encouraged members to continue to voice their opposition by "un-volunteering" for activities related to the FSA such as marking, and to continue to communicate their opposition in a number of different forums. As a result, there has been increased activity and communication with respect to the FSA in some districts.

Pamphlets Containing Inaccurate or Incorrect Information

We have recently received information from a district concerning their local union's notice that teachers will be distributing FSA pamphlets to parents during parent/teacher interviews. This pamphlet contains inaccurate statements pertaining to parents withdrawing their children from participating in the writing of the FSA (see attached). It is not appropriate for teachers to distribute inaccurate or incorrect information.

If your district faces a similar situation with parent/teacher interviews and/or your union has posted or intends to post similar inaccurate information on bulletin boards in schools, please contact your BCPSEA liaison. Depending on your specific circumstances and the content at issue, the following template letter to your local union and, if not resolved, subsequent letter of direction to the applicable teachers, may be appropriate.

▪ **Draft Letter to Union Local**

We are in receipt of a pamphlet that we understand may be distributed by some teachers to parents during parent-teacher interviews. Upon review, we note there are inaccurate statements contained in this pamphlet pertaining to parents withdrawing their children from participating in the writing of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). More specifically, the following statement contained in the pamphlet as well as the accompanying form, are inaccurate in this regard:

"Withdraw your child from the FSA tests by writing a letter to the school principal. Simply tear off and sign the sample letter on the back of this brochure."

This statement and accompanying form are contrary to the Ministry of Education guidelines on exclusions from the FSA testing. The following are the Ministry's 2007 participation guidelines:

"All Grade 4 and Grade 7 students are expected to participate in the Foundation Skills Assessment. The only exceptions are: a) students who

have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) documenting a learning disability directly related to reading, writing or numeracy; b) students with IEPs who would need adaptations with which they are not familiar (e.g., readers, scribes) or who would need such extended periods of time as to create a hardship for the individual student; or c) those students who are reported and funded as receiving English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) support who have not yet reached a level of proficiency sufficient for them to provide meaningful responses to the reading or writing or numeracy sections of the FSA.

Principals determine which students, if any, are excused from one, two or all three components of the FSA.

Parents may request the principal to excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, a lengthy illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Principals of public schools are to send a list of those students the principal has excused to their Superintendent.

As principal, you must notify a parent or guardian if you intend to excuse a student from participating in one or more components of the FSA.

Such notification should be made prior to the administration date. Provide a copy of the brochure, "Information for Students, Parents and Guardians." This brochure explains the purpose of the FSA; you would not then need to repeat all of the background information in your notification letter or telephone call."

This is to advise that teachers communicating on the FSA in any venue are to remove any reference to exclusions from participating in FSA (this will include the draft form letter for parents to sign), except for the exclusions of students which are permitted under the FSA participation guidelines described above. Should these inaccurate references not be removed, teachers will be directed not to distribute these pamphlets to parents.

Please advise whether teachers in your local intend to distribute FSA pamphlets to parents and, if so, whether the above-noted reference and draft form letter will be removed from such pamphlets.

- **Draft Letter of Direction to Applicable Teachers**

We are in receipt of a pamphlet we understand may be distributed by some teachers to parents during parent-teacher interviews. Upon review we note there are inaccurate statements contained in this pamphlet pertaining to parents withdrawing their children from participating in the writing of the FSA. More specifically, the following statement contained in the pamphlet as well as the attached form, are inaccurate in this regard:

"Withdraw your child from the FSA tests by writing a letter to the school principal. Simply tear off and sign the sample letter on the back of this brochure."

This statement and accompanying form are contrary to the Ministry of Education guidelines regarding exclusions from the FSA testing. The following are the Ministry's 2007 participation guidelines:

“All Grade 4 and Grade 7 students are expected to participate in the Foundation Skills Assessment. The only exceptions are: a) students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) documenting a learning disability directly related to reading, writing or numeracy; b) students with IEPs who would need adaptations with which they are not familiar (e.g., readers, scribes) or who would need such extended periods of time as to create a hardship for the individual student; or c) those students who are reported and funded as receiving English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) support who have not yet reached a level of proficiency sufficient for them to provide meaningful responses to the reading or writing or numeracy sections of the FSA.

Principals determine which students, if any, are excused from one, two or all three components of the FSA.

Parents may request the principal to excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, a lengthy illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Principals of public schools are to send a list of those students the principal has excused to their superintendents.

As principal, you must notify a parent or guardian if you intend to excuse a student from participating in one or more components of the FSA.

Such notification should be made prior to the administration date. Provide a copy of the brochure, “Information for Students, Parents and Guardians.” This brochure explains the purpose of the FSA; you would not then need to repeat all of the background information in your notification letter or telephone call.”

This is to advise that teachers communicating on the FSA in any venue are to remove any reference to exclusions from participating in FSA (this will include the draft form letter for parents to sign), except for the exclusions of students which are permitted under the FSA participation guidelines described above. The district has informed your local association of our position. You are directed to either remove these inaccurate references from the pamphlet or not distribute these pamphlets to parents.

Failure to follow this direction may result in discipline.

Questions

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

Attachment: Pamphlet