

ABBOTSFORD DISTRICT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



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BULLETIN

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Foundation Skills Assessment 2010

BCTF-BCPSEA Protocol Agreement

In December 2009 the BCTF and BCPSEA reached an agreement (a consent award to resolve grievances) regarding the distribution of FSA materials by teachers to parents via students. The main points of this agreement are as follows:

1. Districts may not oppose the distribution by teachers of some or all of the following BCTF pamphlets (available on ADTA website) to parents via students:

“What Parents Need to Know”

“Testing? You bet”

“What Parents Need to Know: Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)”

2. Materials/pamphlets that are distributed to parents by teachers via students shall be in sealed envelopes, clearly identifying that they are union produced and distributed.
3. This consent award is binding on BCPSEA, the BCTF, all 60 public school districts and teacher locals in British Columbia.
4. The ADTA will provide copies of the materials to the district and notify the district of the intent to distribute.
5. This consent award is without precedent and without prejudice to the positions of the parties regarding any other FSA materials/pamphlets or other type of communication other than FSA.

Courts and Arbitrators (and more specifically in our sector, Arbitrators Munroe and Kinzie and the BC Court of Appeal) have recognized that teachers have the right to engage in political discussion with parents on educational issues under Section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the Charter), and that any restrictions on expression by the employer have to be justified under Section 1 of the Charter. We strongly encourage teachers, and not just grade 4 and 7 teachers, to engage parents in conversations about the effective and legitimate uses of student assessments and the dangers of misuse. This

agreement does not address or affect the ability of teachers to directly provide parents with information about educational issues.

As soon as possible, envelopes and pamphlets, including previously distributed ADTA created pamphlets, regarding the upcoming Foundation Skills Assessments will be provided to grade 4 and 7 teachers to send home with students. And while the FSA only applies to grade 4 and 7 students it might be useful for information to be provided to the parents of grade 3 and 6 students in preparation for their future involvement. In order to facilitate this we will also provide appropriate pamphlets to grade 3 and 6 teachers.

Student participation rates vary widely across the province, in spite of directions from the Ministry of Education that all students must complete the FSA. In some districts parent requests for exemptions are honoured, with consequentially lower participation rates. Some of those districts have experienced pressure from representatives of the Ministry of Education to improve participation.

In addition, there appears to be a growing recognition by various partner groups of the deleterious effects of the manner in which the FSA results are used. Teachers' opposition to the misuse of the FSA can be effective. We ask for your support.

Rick Guenther