

# Talking about teaching and learning



## A place of learning

Together, parents and teachers work hard to provide children with opportunities to grow and learn, helping them to be successful and to realize their hopes and dreams. We know that students need a wide range of

learning activities to support their intellectual, social, and emotional growth. To be successful, school must be a place where teachers can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning. We want our schools to be the best they can be and students to be busily and happily engaged in learning.

## What is happening to teaching and learning?

Teachers are very concerned that an overemphasis on testing, measurement, and the relentless collection of data has made it much more difficult for them to focus on teaching and for students to engage in learning. Teachers have to devote more and more time to compiling statistics, completing paperwork, attending meetings, and developing growth plans that have little to do with student learning. This has meant less and less time for supporting students and meeting their needs. When test scores become more important than learning, teachers are driven to spend valuable learning time on practising tests and memorizing answers. All this adds up to fewer real opportunities to learn. Teachers are not opposed to using tests as one of the means of checking up on student progress and identifying areas that need more attention. But tests should not be the only method nor should they be used solely to measure and sort students.

## Why are teachers withdrawing from school planning councils?

In 2003, the government created school planning councils to set goals and develop growth plans for each school. Teachers were concerned that SPCs only involved five people (three parents, a teacher, and the administrator). But, teachers participated in the hope that they would be able to improve learning conditions in schools.

This spring, after giving SPCs their best efforts, teachers decided to withdraw from SPCs and focus on teaching, learning, and the valuable links teachers can make with parents and parent advisory councils instead. Teachers found that SPCs closed the door to broad participation, limiting the decision-making to just five people, at the most. School growth plans, developed after hours spent meeting, collecting data, and writing reports, did not really reflect the school's needs. School goals had to be in line with district goals that had to be in line with ministry goals. Too often teachers saw the school plans as more about public relations than real learning. Once again, teachers found time and attention taken from teaching and learning and spent on activities that did not make a significant difference for students. Clearly, it was time for a different approach. Teachers are committed to working with parents, advocating for students, and striving for improvement in meaningful ways.

## What we can do together?

Teachers are eager to talk to parents about these issues. When teachers and parents advocate for quality public education, students benefit. Please talk to teachers at your child's school about the ways to work together for change. Raise your concerns with your MLA and the trustees on your local school board. Join with other parents to advocate for quality public education.

For more information go to [www.bctf.ca](http://www.bctf.ca)

