



GUIDE TO
School Legislation
in British Columbia

PART XIII
FRANCOPHONE
EDUCATION

BCSTA

British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

GUIDE TO SCHOOL LEGISLATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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PART XIII

FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION

130.0 Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique

130.1 History

Francophone programs in British Columbia were first formally approved by the provincial government in 1979 and delivered as Programme cadre by local school boards. In 1982, section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* recognized minority language rights for francophones outside Quebec and anglophones inside Quebec, where numbers warrant. Francophone parents in BC sought expanded control over the francophone programs, and after court action and an extensive task force (1991) involving all education partner groups, the BC government established the Autorité scolaire in 1995 and gave it the exclusive authority to provide francophone education programs within certain parts of the province with the highest concentrations of francophones. Following further court action and amendments to the *School Act*, some limitations on its powers were removed, the Autorité scolaire was renamed the Conseil scolaire francophone, and its jurisdiction was expanded to the whole province in 1999.

130.2 Legislation

The *School Act* authorizes the establishment of francophone education authorities to provide educational programs to children whose parents have rights to a minority language education under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (see Guide 2.4). Only one francophone education authority, the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), has been established and it has jurisdiction throughout the province.

The CSF is governed by Part 8.1 (sections 166.1 to 166.47) of the *School Act*, the Francophone Education Authorities Regulation (BC Regulation 212/99), and

the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique Regulation (BC Regulation 213/99). These incorporate other sections of the *School Act*, regulations and ministerial orders. Though the *School Act* distinguishes between boards of education and francophone education authorities and has separate legislative provisions, in many ways the CSF functions like a board of education and the separate provisions of the Act applying to a francophone education authority mirror the sections governing boards of education. In this book the CSF is usually included in the term “board of education,” although under the Act, the CSF is referred to as a “board of regional trustees.”

131.0 Membership

There are two types of persons eligible for membership in a francophone education authority: “eligible persons,” that is, adult individuals who have rights under s. 23 of the Charter to have their children educated in French (see Guide 2.4), or who would have such rights if they had school-age children; and “landed immigrant parents,” who would have such rights if they were citizens of Canada.

Membership is by application. The CSF must accept any “eligible person” and may accept “immigrant parents.” No fees or dues may be charged.

Members have the right to vote in elections for regional trustees, subject to the same disqualifications as apply to voters in school trustee elections. Voters must also make a declaration that they have not voted and will not vote in a school trustee election. In accordance with the *School Act*, any person participating in the CSF elections may not vote in an anglophone board of education election.

132.0 Governance

The CSF was established as the *Autorité scolaire* by regulation in November 1995 and its first elections were held in 1996. A board of seven (7) regional trustees (or “conseillers,” formerly “directors”) governs the CSF. The original structure was five directors and 15 delegate members elected from five wards. This structure was changed by eliminating the delegate level, by creating two new regions and adding two directors (total of seven), and by establishing parent groups to assure direct parent consultation. The title of “director” was changed in 2007 to “regional trustee.” Seven regional trustees are elected in quadrennial elections, one elected by the members resident in each of the seven wards into which the province is divided. The seven wards are: Northern BC, South East BC, Vancouver Island North, Vancouver Island South, Greater Vancouver, Fraser Valley, and South Coast of BC.

For elections, see Guide 61.10.

133.0 Students, Educational Programs and Facilities

As of 2018, the CSF serves approximately 6,000 students in 41 schools in communities in British Columbia.

133.1 Eligible Students

To be eligible for the francophone program, at least one parent/guardian must meet at least one of the following conditions:

- the first language learned and still understood is French;
- primary school instruction was in Canada in French (excluding French immersion);
- has a child who has received primary or secondary school instruction in Canada in French (excluding French immersion);
- has a child who is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in Canada in French (excluding French immersion).

The CSF has discretion whether to enroll children of landed immigrant parents who have a certain affinity with francophone background and education.

133.2 Francophone Educational Program

The *School Act* defines a francophone education program as an education program including, without limitation, linguistic and cultural components. Success and scholastic achievement for each and every learner are at the very core of the vision of the *Conseil scolaire francophone*. Its educational mission is an integral part of its mandate to promote and foster linguistic and cultural vitality in its community learning environment.

The CSF provides francophone programs exclusively in many of its regional schools. Under various contractual arrangements with other boards of education, francophone students receive their education directly by the CSF in leased space and in other circumstances; services are contracted with other boards of education.

133.3 Special Features

Though in many ways the CSF functions like other boards of education, it has some special features:

- There is a strong emphasis on francophone culture. Linguistic and cultural vitality is ensured by emphasizing literacy from Kindergarten through Grade 12, updating instructional materials, increasing time for teacher-librarians and providing support to schools in the integration and teaching of culture through subject matter. Special curricular resources have been prepared in many subject areas to meet Ministry of Education standards and to include cultural elements. Each school is allocated funds for cultural activities.
- Many francophone schools have associated francophone daycare and pre-school programs onsite. These are run by registered not-for-profit organizations in consultation with the Federation of Francophone Parents of BC and the CSF, and are supported by the CSF by provision of space, if available. This is considered an important means of preparing children for the francophone educational environment.

- A language acquisition program (“francisation”) provides support services for students who are in the process of acquiring the French language.
- Because of the regional nature of the schools, the CSF provides transportation to many students.
- Home-schooling families are supported by a teacher who can assist with materials, strategies and suggestions.
- A Grade 4-12 computer-laptop program for all students supports projects such as integration of technology, videoconferencing and distance education.

Like other boards of education, the CSF provides support services for students experiencing difficulties: remedial instruction, resource programs, counselling, speech therapy, and psychological and learning assessments. The special education services are delivered through teams that travel throughout a region.

In addition to its French-language programs, the CSF provides the same English language arts program that is taught throughout BC. For students who speak very little English, a support program is offered in English-as-a-second language. Both the ESL and the English Language Arts programs begin in Grade 4.

Like many other boards, the CSF offers a program for international students.

134.0 Staffing

Initially, CSF programs were staffed mostly through service contracts with boards of education. Special arrangements were concluded for the CSF to hire staff who had been employed in the francophone programs offered by local boards of education, including retention of seniority and sick leave benefits.

The CSF now directly employs its teachers, administrative staff and program-specific support services (e.g., clerical, teacher assistants, supervision assistants, technical personnel). Where practicable, certain educational services may be contracted through local boards of education.

135.0 Funding

Operational and capital funding are provided on the same basis by the province as for other school districts (see Guide Part VIII). Federal funding supports goods and services that supplement those funded by the province. The federal government may contribute to the capital costs of facilities for community spaces used by the francophone community.

136.0 Administration

The provincial office of the CSF is in Richmond.

A directeur général and a secrétaire trésorier have the statutory responsibilities assigned in other boards of education to a superintendent and secretary-treasurer.