



September 2023

# REPORT to CSBA

*Report to the Canadian School Boards Association*

## Government Relations and Member Priorities

BCSTA recently held several meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. The objective of these meetings was to discuss and strategize regarding resolutions passed by the association's membership at the most recent annual general meeting. This updated approach, focused on collaboration and understanding, has allowed us to expeditiously seek solutions and resources for related working groups and committees. BCSTA continues to update members regularly on the progress of resolutions through our motions database and will continue to focus on member-driven initiatives at future meetings with the ministry.

The association's co-governance relationship with the province remains strong, with discussions to update and extend the current memorandum of understanding (MoU) for a further three years and sign an updated MoU at our upcoming annual general meeting in April 2024.

## Gender Diversity

BCSTA continues to support the Ministry of Education and Child Care's work to ensure our schools are safe, welcoming and inclusive. BCSTA Director Jen Mezei sits on the provincial Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) K-12 collaborative as part of this work, and the association has provided feedback and support on government-led initiatives relating to supporting all students. BCSTA has previously provided members with [guidelines](#) for public engagement at board meetings as part of these efforts as member boards of education engage in discussions with the public. BCSTA has closely monitored protests relating to SOGI and has connected with members throughout the province to offer support and to stay connected.

## Artificial Intelligence in Schools

The association has been closely monitoring the subject of the use of artificial intelligence in public education settings, which has generated significant media interest at the start of the school year. While the provincial government has not yet defined a formal position on using and integrating AI, the topic remains a high priority for the Ministry of Education and Child Care and boards of education. The ethical use of AI to enhance student learning and improve student outcomes is a regular topic of discussion, and we look forward to collaborating with government on this evolving priority.

## Wildfires

B.C.'s wildfires were once again a cause for significant concern, especially in rural and remote regions of the province. Several districts experienced disruptions leading up to the beginning of the school year, and BCSTA has contacted board chairs to offer support wherever possible. With the increase in wildfire, flooding and other climate-related incidents, BCSTA will look to update and develop resource materials to support boards when such climate-related events happen in the future.

## Rural Districts

Rural districts also continue to face disproportionate recruitment and retention issues and have relied on filling positions through letters of permission. The shortage of specialist teachers, counselors and school psychologists continues to hamper the ability for districts to staff schools and properly serve students, leading to continued inequity. This remains a top priority for the association and work continues on incorporating these concerns into upcoming projects and events. Terms of reference for a BCSTA developed Rural and Remote Network are currently in development, and the association will work with the ministry, the BC Public School Employers' Association,



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educational leaders and other ministries to gather information to inform a cross-jurisdictional approach. These needs are directly tied to increased enrolment being experienced across the province, and the release of data from the government detailing enrolment figures in late September will inform and guide the work of BCSTA in supporting its membership.

## Advocacy Day

BCSTA's upcoming Advocacy Day takes place on October 19, 2023. All 60 board chairs in B.C. are invited to join BCSTA's board of directors in Victoria to meet with Members of the Legislative Assembly. The association is preparing to engage board chairs and vice-chairs on effectively raising educational issues with various levels of government before this event. An advocacy kit and other resources will be distributed to members as well.

## Other Events

Our annual Trustee Academy will occur November 23-25 in Vancouver. An agenda is in development, and details will be posted on BCSTA's [website](#) soon. The intent is to build on existing knowledge and grow the capacity of trustees. BCSTA has also resumed its travelling Leadership Series, which will once again provide boards of education with professional development opportunities throughout the province. The series will feature content focused on continuous improvement, the First Nations Education Steering Committee's How Are We Doing? report and more. Updates will be posted on our website and sent out via the association's newsletters. Speakers from the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Ministry of Education and Child Care and more will be contributing to the event, including Representative for Children and Youth Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, Associate Superintendent of Indigenous Education Brad Baker and Superintendent of Indigenous Education Denise Augustine.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the association is hosting additional webinars this fall as part of our [Virtual Trustee Orientation](#) series. Sessions are free for members, and district senior staff are also welcome to attend.

Event dates and subjects include:

- October 3, 5 - 7 pm  
Values-Based, Evidence-Informed Decision Making
- November 16, 5 - 7 pm  
Planning for Student Success
- January 11, 5 - 7 pm  
Financial & Resource Management

## Members' Site

Significant updates are being made to BCSTA's intranet better to serve member boards of education throughout the province. The new BCSTA Portal is being soft-launched to members, and existing content will continue to be ported from the HUB over the fall. The new intranet features a streamlined interface and improved mobile functionality.

## Publication Updates

BCSTA's latest module of the Learning Guide, [Vision, Planning, Improvement and Reporting](#), covers the responsibility boards of education have in establishing and overseeing a vision and strategic plan for their school district. Two additional guides on finance will be released in the coming months.

A top priority for boards of education is to improve student outcomes in their district. Understanding and using data through a governance lens can highlight areas of need and inform decisions, and BCSTA's new guide on [Improving Student Outcomes](#) supports boards in this important work.

CSBA members may contact CEO [Suzanne Hoffman](#) for access to these guides.



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