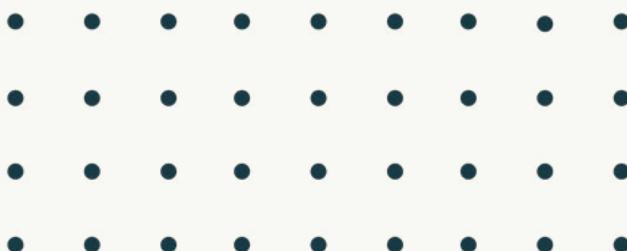




British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

POLICY BOOK

*Foundational Statements and Policy Resolutions
for the British Columbia School Trustees Association*



Updated **May 2025**

POLICY BOOK

BCSTA POLICIES

Policy statements express the beliefs and objectives of the BCSTA membership pertaining to relevant matters.

The policies of the Association provide an ongoing guide to the actions of the Association. The following comprise the policies of the Association:

- a. Foundational Statements enacted by the membership in general meeting by extraordinary motion to express the Association's core beliefs and values. *These are numbered with an FS in blue:*
- b. Policy Resolutions passed by the membership in general meeting or on an interim basis by Provincial Council. *These are numbered with a P in orange.*

Policies continue in force until repealed by the members.

Provincial Council may also enact policy in accordance with its authority under the bylaws to establish criteria for payment of expenses and levying of dues, set investment policy and limits on borrowing, and regulate its meetings.

The Legislative Committee is responsible for the maintenance of the Association's policies, and may recommend changes to the Board of Directors for presentation to the membership.

The policy statements contained in this manual are categorized under nine major headings. It is intended that they will serve as a framework of continuous action on the part of elected officials of the Association, its staff, and trustees in every part of British Columbia; also, that the policies will be added to and amended as directed by the membership.

1. BCSTA

1.1 FS MISSION

The mission of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) is to support and advocate for effective public Boards of Education in British Columbia.

The mission of BCSTA is driven by the following beliefs:

- We believe that a high-quality public education system is the foundation of a democratic society.
- We believe that improving student achievement is the key work of locally elected Boards of Education.
- We believe that the interests of BC students are best met through local decision-making with an engaged community.

We believe that an important role of BCSTA is to provide a strong, representative voice for Boards of Education throughout the province.

We believe that an important role of BCSTA is to help build effective Boards of Education by providing development, communications, and support services.

We believe that an important role of BCSTA is to partner effectively with elected officials and governments by taking a nonpartisan approach to advocacy and the establishment of educational policy.

1.2 FS VALUES

In its advocacy, BCSTA will preserve and promote the following principles:

- publicly-elected control of education in accordance with principles of co-governance; appropriate local autonomy in decision-making and practice;
- public influence and non-partisanship involvement in establishment of education policy.

BCSTA will assist member Boards of Education to promote community acceptance of the above principles, and will represent its member Boards in advocacy with respect to matters affecting public education, provincial decision-making, relevant legislation, and government policies and practices affecting public education.

BCSTA aspires to embody and work in support of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public schools of British Columbia. BCSTA strives to:

- eliminate discrimination in policies, procedures, programs, and services.
- value human differences within the organization.
- ensure that factors such as ancestry, skin colour, place of residence, socio-economic or educational background, sex, gender identity or expression, physical, intellectual or cognitive disabilities, and/or protected grounds under the British Columbia Human Rights Code, do not determine the outcomes a person achieves.
- ensure that people of all backgrounds feel they are welcomed and valued.

To those ends, BCSTA commits to:

- Educating ourselves and our members about diversity, equity, and inclusion and how they may be achieved, and about the harms that result from discrimination of any kind, including, by way of example, from racism or ableism.
- Ensuring that our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion are evident in all that we do, including by demonstrating through our actions, our rejection of unlawful discrimination of any kind.
- Ensuring that policies and practices of the organization do not contravene the British Columbia Human Rights Code.
- Supporting equity through our policies, procedures, programs, and services.
- Advocating for policies and practices that promote anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public schools of British Columbia.
- Measuring our progress in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion by our actions against discrimination.

1.3.1 P BCSTA COMMUNICATIONS

BCSTA is committed to communicating with internal and external audiences on matters of concern to BC Boards of Education.

BCSTA's internal audience includes trustees, member Boards of Education, and those Boards' senior staff. External audiences include the education partners, other levels of government, special interest groups, media and the general public.

1.3.2 P BCSTA SPONSORSHIP REQUESTS

BCSTA only financially supports events where it is directly involved in the planning or delivery.

1.3.3 P EXTERNAL ADVOCACY

BCSTA maintains full responsibility for, and control of, the Association's advocacy activities. It does not participate in the advocacy activities of other organizations except where specifically approved by the Board of Directors.

1.3.4 P COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL VOICE OF MEMBERS

BCSTA is the voice of elected public Boards of Education in BC and is recognized as such by the Ministry of Education. BCSTA also recognizes that individual Boards have the right to directly present their views to the Minister and Ministry and the public, whether or not they agree with BCSTA stated positions.

1.4 FS STEWARDSHIP

Careful stewardship of its resources increases BCSTA's ability to serve its member Boards, and increases the effectiveness of its advocacy on behalf of public education. Fair allocation of BCSTA resources for the benefit of members increases member satisfaction.

Note: According to BCSTA bylaws, Provincial Council is responsible for investment policy and member fee allocation criteria. These can be found in the section for Provincial Council policies.

1.4.1 P KILOMETRAGE RATE

The benchmark for BCSTA's kilometrage rate is the federal government's maximum allowable kilometrage rate for income tax purposes.

Note: Regulation 7306 of the Income Tax Regulations provides for a maximum amount per kilometer (regularly adjusted) that can be claimed as a deduction from business income for use of an automobile for income tax purposes.

2. PUBLIC EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

2.1 FS CO-GOVERNANCE

BCSTA believes that the British Columbia public education system is most effectively served when the relationship between Boards of Education and the province is one of co-governance.

Co-governance is the sharing of governance responsibility between two agencies, each having responsibility within their respective spheres, but sharing the same goals and objectives. It does not assume equality of authority. In the relationship between the province and Boards of Education, it is recognized that the province can, through legislation, change the sphere of responsibility of the Boards.

The School Act establishes a co-governance model for public education in BC.

2.1.1 P CO-GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

- a. co-governance model should operate in accordance with the following principles:
 - Separate and complementary spheres of decision-making
 - Co-governance partners accept and respect each other's legitimate roles;
 - Boards of Education function as a link between a community and the provincial education system, and are a means by which citizens hold the education system accountable;
 - Co-governance partner responsibilities are interdependent, not mutually exclusive;
 - Authority, responsibility and accountability must be aligned.
- b. Communication and consultation between partners
 - Co-governance partners should communicate regularly and frequently and seek to work cooperatively;

- Co-governance implies appropriate inclusion in decision-making, which requires a practice of involving Boards in planning and seeking input prior to provincial decision-making, particularly for decisions that may significantly impact the Boards;
- Co-governance attempts to reduce surprises and enhance stability;
- Through formal and informal communication, partners should be kept apprised of actions that may impact each other;
- Communications are respectful, timely, and partner-to-partner;
- Formal processes bring partners together to communicate, plan, and renew their mutual goals.

2.1.2 P ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

BCSTA believes that the roles of the provincial and local governors of the public education system can be broadly defined as follows:

- a. The provincial government is responsible for creating, reviewing, and refining a legislative framework that:
 - mediates among the competing interests and values manifested by various public constituencies and translates public priorities into strategies to achieve such objectives;
 - enshrines the rights and responsibilities of the participants in public education, and provides them with the authority to fulfill their responsibilities;
 - establishes standards for educational programs.
- b. The provincial government is also responsible to:
 - provide funding that allows students across the province to have equitable access to an appropriate quality of programs and services in keeping with the standards articulated in the legislative framework;
 - ensure that Boards of locally elected school trustees are held accountable for the delivery of required programs and services, and that Boards have the flexibility necessary to deliver a range of programs and services that respond to local situations and priorities.
- c. The provincial government is accountable to the provincial electorate for the framework it sets, and for the quality of program and service delivery achieved in the province as a whole.
- d. Boards of Education are responsible for:
 - implementing provincial requirements in locally responsive ways; mediating among the competing interests and values within a community,
 - and translating community priorities into locally responsive programs and services;
 - ensuring that learning outcomes and standards for educational programs and services are achieved;

- making effective use of funding to provide district students with equitable access to these programs and services;
- ensuring that district schools are accountable for the programs and services they deliver, and that educators have the flexibility necessary to deliver the services in responsive ways;
- ensuring that the local electorate has adequate information about the functioning of the Board to hold the Board accountable for the standard of program and service delivery achieved in the district's schools.

2.1.3 P FLEXIBILITY

Boards require maximum flexibility to carry out their responsibilities and respond to the needs of students and communities.

2.1.4 P COMMUNICATION WITH THE MINISTER

Recognizing the co-governance model for education in this province, the Minister of Education should meet regularly with Board representatives and the BCSTA Board of Directors to discuss issues in public education.

3. BOARDS OF EDUCATION

3.1 FS ACCOUNTABILITY OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Boards are accountable:

- to the provincial government for the expenditure of provincial education funding;
- to local communities for the effective and efficient use of Board resources;
- to the provincial government for implementing provincial programs and achieving provincial standards;
- to local communities for doing so in ways that reflect local priorities and values.

3.1.1 P REGIONALIZATION OF SERVICES

BCSTA opposes any initiative by the provincial government to force the regionalization of any K-12 educational, instructional or support services.

3.1.2 P DISTRICT BOUNDARIES AND AMALGAMATIONS

BCSTA believes in the preservation of local autonomy. BCSTA will only support amalgamation of existing school districts when the change will be to the total educational and economic advantage of the districts concerned, including an improvement in the local educational environment that would not be possible at similar cost within current school district boundaries.

No amalgamation or district boundary change should be implemented without prior consultation with and among all districts involved.

3.1.3 P BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMUNICATIONS

BCSTA encourages each Board of Education to develop appropriate policy to guide communications practices used by the Board of Education and by school district staff.

4. STUDENTS

4.1 FS PURPOSE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The purpose of the British Columbia public school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will contribute to a healthy, democratic, pluralistic, and sustainable society.

4.2 FS DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT POTENTIAL

BCSTA believes in the dignity and worth of each individual student.

The public school system should strive to challenge, encourage, and support all students to maximize their individual potential. This calls for development of the whole child, including intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. This responsibility is shared by the school system, family, and community.

4.2.1 P INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Public schools should develop the ability of students to analyze critically, reason, think and learn independently, communicate effectively, and appreciate and employ different forms of inquiry, thought, expression, and understanding.

4.2.2 P HEALTH-PROMOTING SCHOOLS

Schools should promote student achievement and health through teaching and learning, school environment, culture and organization, partnerships, supports, and services.

4.2.3 P PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

BCSTA recognizes the importance of preventive health care and educational programs and supports the cooperation of the Health, Social Development, and

Education Ministries in establishing, funding, and reviewing programs designed to maintain wellness, and prevent injury and other debilitating conditions.

4.2.4 P SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION

BCSTA endorses:

- Curriculum that informs students about substance misuse, encouraging attitudes and behaviours that reduce or eliminate the non-therapeutic use of chemicals;
- Provision of sufficient legal and regulatory powers to school authorities in order to protect the learning environment from disruption arising from substance misuse;
- Treatment of victims of substance abuse by health and social agencies to whom schools can refer;

- Demonstrable commitment by adults in schools, Board employees, trustees and others, to substance misuse prevention so that their examples serve to reinforce program objectives.

4.2.5 P SODIUM REDUCTION STRATEGY

BCSTA supports the goal of reducing sodium intake of Canadians.

4.2.6 P SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY POLICIES

BCSTA encourages and supports school district policies that specifically address the safety concerns of, and prohibit discrimination against students who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Persons, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, with a plus to encompass other forms of sexual orientation and gender expression, such as gender queer or gender nonconforming persons) and those who are harassed due to perceptions of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

4.2.7 P BULLYING

BCSTA supports Boards of Education and school districts in the development of policies, procedures, and strategies that address the issue of bullying of all types and the elimination of such behaviours.

4.3 FS CHILD POVERTY AND LEARNING

Given that socioeconomic status has a strong correlation with student achievement, personal well-being, and access to education services, BCSTA supports the elimination of child poverty in Canada.

4.4 FS STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Student assessment is an important aspect of accountability of the education system for student achievement. It is appropriate that the schools, the districts, and provincial authorities are involved.

4.4.1 P PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment* and evaluation** methods and tools should: Be grounded in solid knowledge of how students learn;

- Be based on clear and realistic expectations related to the aims of the curriculum;
- Be used in ways that are consistent with the purposes and limitations of the methods and tools used;
- Be flexible enough to meet the needs of a diverse student body;
- Be designed to determine whether or not standards of performance are achieved, rather than rank-order students or schools.

One form of assessment and evaluation used is provincial examinations.

Note: * *Assessment*: The systematic gathering of evidence about what a student knows and is able to do; a statistical measure. ** *Evaluation*: The making of judgments about the quality of a student's performance (e.g., the quality of a demonstration, the appropriateness of an attitude or behaviour, or the correctness, completeness or depth of an answer).

4.5 FS CHILD PROTECTION

BCSTA believes that Boards of Education play an important role in supporting the prevention, detection, and treatment of child abuse.

4.5.1 P CHILD PROTECTION

BCSTA believes that Boards of Education and school authorities should:

- Provide training for students and employees in the avoidance, detection, and reporting of child abuse;
- Ensure that suspected cases of child abuse are reported to the appropriate authorities in keeping with legal requirements and agreed protocols;
- Assist health and social service professionals in the treatment of students who are victims of child abuse by providing appropriate support to those children in the school environment;
- Work with other public and private agencies in the delivery of child abuse prevention programs, reporting and investigation procedures, and professional development activities.

4.6 FS SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

BCSTA believes in inter-ministerial cooperation and collaboration for the benefit of students.

4.6.1 P COORDINATION OF SERVICES

BCSTA is committed to the following principles with regard to services to students:

- Boards and agencies need to take a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the provision of social, health, and other support services to students;
- Services need to be provided by individuals or agencies with the appropriate expertise;
- The costs of providing social, health, and other support services for students that are outside the mandate of the Ministry of Education should be the responsibility of the appropriate agencies.

4.6.2 P SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE PROGRAMS

BCSTA believes that there needs to be a clear recognition in public policy and funding that Boards of Education:

- are front-line settlement service providers and partners in the process whereby immigrant and refugee students and their families are assisted in efforts to become integrated members of Canadian society;

- play a key role in the settlement process which goes beyond simply helping students to develop their English language skills - the only function for which school districts are currently funded - and to become productive, effective participants in the local, regional and national economies.

4.6.3 P NEIGHBOURHOOD LEARNING CENTRES

BCSTA supports the Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) concept and advocates for NLC development in existing facilities where possible as well as in new ones.

The Ministry of Education should take the lead in developing a cross-ministerial policy that would inform and encourage participation of other ministries, local governments, and community entities, and provide a framework for planning and development that is supported by appropriate funding.

4.7 FS STUDENT VOICE

BCSTA believes that student voice and input are important to inform and influence Boards of Education in effective decision-making for student learning and success.

4.7.1 P PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT VOICE

BCSTA believes that Boards of Education should:

- a. Provide opportunities for students to be informed of and comment on board policies, initiatives and directives.
- b. Develop a framework to support initiatives such as District Student Leadership Teams, Student Trustees, Student Forums and Student Advisory Councils for the purpose of advising Boards of Education on concerns and issues affecting students.

5. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

5.1 FS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OBJECTIVES

BCSTA believes that educational programs should address literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation, as well as aesthetic, cultural, numerical, scientific, and technological literacies.

5.1.1 P PROVINCIAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, FUNDING, AND IMPLEMENTATION

BCSTA believes that the introduction of new provincial curricula or programs should be based on a sound rationale, and that these require corresponding financial resources for school districts for initial and continuing in-service opportunities and instructional resources so that educators can implement programs effectively.

5.1.2 P RURAL EDUCATION

BCSTA believes in equitable access to quality public education for rural students in their local communities.

5.2 FS ADDRESSING STUDENT DIFFERENCES

BCSTA supports the use of a variety of instructional strategies for addressing student differences, including the adaptation of learning resources, timelines, assessment and evaluation strategies, and pedagogical techniques.

5.3 FS ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

BCSTA respects the heritage, histories, and cultures of Aboriginal* peoples.

BCSTA encourages and promotes active participation of Aboriginal peoples in all aspects of the public education system of British Columbia.

Note: * "Aboriginal" includes First Nations, status and non status; Métis; and Inuit. In the BC school system, students are identified as of Aboriginal ancestry based on self-identification.

5.3.1 P ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL CURRICULUM

BCSTA supports the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives within the broader curriculum.

5.3.2 P FIRST NATIONS' LANGUAGES

BCSTA supports initiatives and programs that will ensure the survival and revitalization of First Nations' languages in British Columbia.

5.4 FS MULTICULTURALISM

BCSTA believes public schools should recognize and value the multicultural reality of Canada and British Columbia.

5.4.1 P MULTICULTURALISM: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

BCSTA supports the following goals and objectives with regard to multiculturalism:

- That all students should understand and appreciate core Canadian values as reflected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- That all students should learn to appreciate and value the historical, current, and future contributions of the diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic communities to the social and economic well-being of Canada;
- In supporting these goals, it is recognized that objectives and programs should be developed and implemented that will:
 - help students develop a personal sense of identity through becoming acquainted with their cultural heritage;
 - assist students in learning to understand and appreciate the perspectives of different ethnic and cultural groups;

- integrate culturally sensitive programs and practices within the curriculum and learning environment of the school.
- assist in integrating immigrants into Canadian society and in raising awareness and understanding of immigrant issues.

It is recognized that strategies to achieve these goals and objectives include the development of school district policies that describe beliefs, goals and objectives, implementation strategies and evaluation methods in relation to the promotion of multiculturalism.

5.5 FS PROGRAM EVALUATION

Programs delivered in the public school system of British Columbia should be assessed and evaluated regularly for the purpose of improving the quality of education.

5.5.1 P PRINCIPLES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

BCSTA believes that program assessment* and program evaluation** should be based on the following principles:

- Assessment instruments must be appropriate to the purposes of the assessment and used in ways consistent with the limitations of the instruments.
- The number and nature of assessments should not place undue pressure on instructional time or financial resources.
- It is the responsibility of the locally elected Board of Education to evaluate the effectiveness of schools, programs and locally developed curriculum.
- It is the responsibility of the Education Ministry to evaluate provincial achievement levels and provincially developed curriculum.
- Assessment of student achievement, whether measured by provincial examinations or standardized tests, or other means, is not, by itself, a sufficient means of evaluating people, schools or curriculum. Student achievement is influenced by many variables, of which staff performance and curriculum are only two.
- Evaluations of staff performance and curriculum must not be based on student achievement alone.

*Note: * Program Assessment: A statistical measure of an education program. ** Program Evaluation: A judgment of quality of an educational program.*

6. TEACHERS

6.1 FS TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

BCSTA believes Boards of Education have a responsibility to support the training of teachers, and to provide a working environment that promotes ongoing professional growth.

6.1.1 P TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

BCSTA believes that:

- The ultimate purpose of teacher in-service programs is the improvement of student achievement.
- It is the professional responsibility of teachers to participate regularly in in-service programs to remain current with the most recent teaching methods, materials, and programs.
- All teacher in-service programs should have clearly defined purposes and be evaluated appropriately.

BCSTA encourages Boards of Education to:

- Provide practicum opportunities to student teachers in collaboration with teacher education programs.
- Support exemplary teachers to serve as sponsor teachers and mentors.
- Promote opportunities for teachers serving as mentors and/or sponsor teachers.
- Develop and maintain liaison with institutions providing teacher education.

BCSTA encourages faculties of education to:

- Remove from teacher training as early as possible those students who, through evaluation, are deemed unlikely to be successful.
- Facilitate the continued professional growth of teachers by expanding the accessibility of their credit and non-credit course offerings.

6.1.2 P TEACHER TRAINING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Faculties of education in BC should provide mandatory training and strategies for working with students with special needs.

7. PERSONNEL AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

7.1 FS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

BCSTA believes that Boards of Education, collectively or as individual Boards, have the responsibility for bargaining with their employees.

7.1.1 P ROLE OF LOCALLY ELECTED BOARDS OF EDUCATION IN BARGAINING

Any provincial bargaining with employee groups should be done under the collective direction of Boards of Education through BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) as their representative. Any local bargaining should be done under the direction of the district's Board of Education.

7.1.2 P COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OBJECTIVE

The objective of collective bargaining is to achieve collective agreements that promote and foster harmonious employer-employee relations and enable the provision of quality educational services to learners.

7.1.3 P TEACHER BARGAINING

BCSTA supports some form of bargaining of collective agreements with teachers on a province-wide basis to enable Boards to maintain their shared goals and objectives.

Any teacher bargaining system in BC should include a process that allows for meaningful input from every Board.

8. EDUCATION FINANCE

8.1 FS GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

BCSTA believes the government must provide predictable, stable, sustainable funding, allocated equitably and transparently, that meet the needs and priorities of Boards of Education to provide high quality educational programs for all students.

8.1.1 P PRIVATE EDUCATION

BCSTA believes that government funds for education should be used only to support public education, including First Nations schools, not private education.

8.1.2 P ONE-TIME GRANTS

The Minister of Education should, whenever possible, provide ongoing block increases rather than one-time or application-based grants, recognizing that locally elected Boards of Education are in the best positions to allocate funds appropriately to meet local needs and priorities.

8.1.3 P TARGETED FUNDING FOR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

BCSTA supports Ministry of Education targeted funding for Aboriginal education.

8.1.4 P FULLY FUNDED MANDATES FOR BOARDS OF EDUCATION

When the mandate of Boards of Education is expanded, the government should provide Boards with additional funds to cover the necessary costs of the expansion.

8.1.5 P INFLATION

Government should fully fund Boards of Education for the increases in their costs attributable to inflation.

8.1.6 P COST SHARING OF CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Ministry of Education should fully fund the cost of approved facility capital projects, including seismic mitigation capital projects.

8.2 FS TAX EXEMPTIONS

BCSTA supports the principle that all expenditures for construction and operation of public schools are in the public interest, and should accordingly be exempted from all federal and provincial sales taxes.

8.3 FS SPECIAL EDUCATION

BCSTA believes that provincial funding should be provided for the full costs associated with supporting students with special needs.

9. SCHOOL PREMISES, FACILITIES, SERVICES

9.1 FS SAFE ENVIRONMENT

All students and staff are entitled to a safe learning and working environment.

9.1.1 P EARTHQUAKE PROTECTION

BCSTA strongly endorses the general principle that structural and non-structural seismic upgrading of schools and emergency preparedness are a high priority for school districts.