

BCTF Brief to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

January 15, 2021



BC Teachers' Federation

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Preamble

This Education Brief outlines five areas where a recommitted effort is needed to meaningfully and adequately address longstanding challenges and concerns in the BC public education system: assessment and reporting, curriculum and resources, inclusive education, the application of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in the K–12 sector, and teacher recruitment and retention. BC has experienced a significant teacher shortage for years. While every region of the province is impacted, rural and remote communities have experienced a worsening shortage especially during the pandemic. Additionally, there is a critical shortage of specialist teachers across the province. The BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) appreciates the opportunity to provide context and recommendations for action on these key issues of concern, many of which have been neglected for quite some time.

There is an urgent need to develop and provide BC’s teachers the resources and curriculum implementation supports needed for the revised curriculum. Accompanying the new curriculum is the requirement for a long-overdue shift in K–12 reporting practices, so that student assessment is formative and aligns with the pedagogy imbedded in the revised curriculum. Renewed commitment to inclusive education is urgently needed. Policies and funding to adequately support inclusion must be top Ministry priorities. A coherent plan of action is needed to move forward on meaningfully implementing the principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to all facets of the BC public education system. Finally, a concrete plan of action must be developed and implemented to address the longstanding teacher shortage in BC. Not addressing the shortage makes implementing many of the recommendations presented in this brief more challenging.

We look forward to ongoing discussion with the Minister and other Ministry education officials to work toward addressing and resolving these longstanding issues facing BC public education with the urgency they require.

SECTION 1

Assessment and Reporting

To align with the changes in BC’s revised curriculum, there needs to be a long overdue shift in K–12 reporting practices to enable greater emphasis on students demonstrating their knowledge. Districts and teachers need a clear reporting order that addresses key features of the curriculum. There continues to be a need for clear guidance on student self-assessment of the core competencies and the responsible and equitable use of digital reporting tools, including privacy obligations and responsibilities.

Recommendation 1

The Ministry K–12 Reporting Order and related reporting procedures need to be updated, based on educational stakeholder consultation, to reflect current pedagogy and assessment practices and to align with the last round of curriculum revision. In addition, there needs to be consideration to ensure that reporting workload is equitable at all grade levels and in all school districts.

Since the beginning of the revision of BC’s K–12 curriculum in 2013, there has been a clear need to update student assessment and reporting procedures to match the formative assessment pedagogy that is an integral part of the revised curriculum.

An Interim Reporting Order was released in August 2016, leaving many teachers and districts scrambling to meet the requirements as outlined in the order. Although two options were provided, a traditional model or a locally established model, both options required districts and teachers to engage with new features of the curriculum, including a student-self assessment of the core competencies.

Between September 2017 and June 2020, the Ministry ran a reporting pilot, formally involving several districts, that was intended to inform the process that would lead to the creation of a new final K–12 reporting order. Many other school districts were informally invited to try out elements of this reporting pilot. The result was large variations in how student reporting is carried out between districts and a lack of equitable workload for teachers.

After more than three years of meetings by both the Classroom Assessment and Reporting Committee and the Pilot Implementation Team, the Ministry appears to be no closer to issuing a revised reporting order than it was in 2017. Meanwhile, Grade 10–12 teachers have implemented the revised curriculum but are mandated to report on their students using out-of-date reporting policies that do not match the curriculum.

Recommendation 2

The removal of BC Literacy 10, Literacy 12, and Numeracy 10 Graduation Assessments scores from final official student transcripts.

The inclusion of the Graduation Assessment scores on the student transcript makes them a high-stakes assessment and increases student anxiety over what was intended as a snapshot of the system and not an individual measure of achievement. In addition, the Graduation Assessments are of a summative nature and do not fit with the formative assessment education philosophy contained within the curriculum.

Recommendation 3

A Ministry-led education stakeholder committee be tasked with investigating the impacts of and providing recommendations regarding the use of online learning platforms and digital reporting tools. This work should include consideration of the significant and complex privacy concerns regarding the storage of student data related to the use of digital reporting tools and the use of online cloud-based platforms and tools by students.

Within the current Reporting Order, and especially in the alternative Student Progress Order, school boards are encouraged to pursue non-traditional methods of “communicating student learning,” including a variety of digital tools and platforms. According to a survey conducted by the BCTF, teachers have concerns about many aspects of these tools, including: the flexibility of the tool, assessment, workload and time, effective communication with parents, appropriateness for the revised curriculum, provision of technology, in-service training, parental access, privacy, and data retention. There have been cases where teachers have been forced to use their own devices to record examples of student achievement when there has been a lack of availability of appropriate district devices.

There are significant privacy concerns that must be addressed regarding the Ministry’s storage of data and continued use of a variety of tools and platforms. Digital reporting tools must comply with BC privacy legislation and undergo a Privacy Impact Assessment clearly stating who owns the data. Teacher autonomy and professional rights regarding reporting must also be respected in this process. The amount of data we should collect, store, link, search, and mine electronically in education are significant concerns that need to be addressed.

The BCTF has been concerned about privacy issues related to the use of digital tools and platforms for some time. We have presented these concerns to both the Ministries of Education, and Citizen Services. Of particular concern is the lack of training, consideration, and awareness of privacy issues at the school district level that has resulted in a lack of training for teachers.

Recommendation 4

That elementary and secondary Advisory Groups on Provincial Assessment (AGPA) be convened to advise on creating a replacement to the Foundational Skills Assessment (FSAs) that includes a mechanism for the ethical reporting and aggregation of the data.

Representatives from all the K–12 stakeholders have invested years in discussing provincial assessments through the elementary and secondary Advisory Groups on Provincial Assessment (AGPA). Ethical concerns around data collection and use in education was one of the major foundations of the recommendations from AGPA and has continued to be a focus in all subsequent discussions with the Ministry of Education. Most recently these concerns were raised as part of the work related to establishing the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning.

The current FSAs also take up valuable student learning time and at the same time do not serve as a useful formative assessment tool. The Ministry and other stakeholders' need for system-wide data could be addressed through randomized testing where individual student and school data would not need to be reported publicly. This approach would avoid the current issues that occur when third parties use the FSA data out of context to incorrectly rank schools and districts.

In the initial report on elementary assessment in 2014 and the subsequent report on secondary assessment in 2015, the education stakeholders in the advisory group proposed significant changes to provincial assessments that were needed to address the many issues identified.

Recommendation 5

The Ministry engage with the K–12 sector in meaningful consultation regarding the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning in order to redesign the policy to support the fundamental mandate of public education.

The Ministry has stated the overall purpose of the Framework is about system accountability and continuous improvement. It connects education sector accountability to economic outcomes and the labour market and uses the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as framework to guide BC policy. Unfortunately, the Framework policy and the associated Ministerial Order fails to align with current best practice in multiple ways:

- The policy and order are contrary to the spirit and words of the revised curriculum, including the focus on a specific timeframe for meeting expectations. The approaches guiding the revised BC K–12 curriculum are premised on and require a shift from high-stakes summative assessment to a more balanced approach of classroom-based formative assessment.
- There is a continued focus on standardized assessments in Grades 4, 7, and 10. From 2013 to 2015, the BCTF actively participated with partners on the AGPA. All parties agreed that the purpose of a provincial tool was a system-wide check, not an individual measure of achievement. However, to date, the government has failed to agree to the recommendations of AGPA to protect individual and school data from misuse by third parties.
- Graduation rate is based on singular data or one point in time. Not all students learn at the same rate, and some leave school before completion and then return to finish their studies. Additionally, because of life circumstances beyond their control, many students may find themselves in situations that necessitate leaving school prior to graduating.

- Student career and life goals are narrowly defined. It is the responsibility of the public education system to provide students with knowledge and wisdom, which does not always align with academic achievement as it has been traditionally defined. The system must protect and nurture all students' natural joy of learning; encourage them to become persons of character, strength, and integrity; infuse them with hope and spirit; and guide them to resolute and thoughtful action.
- There will be a negative impact on teacher professional judgment, autonomy, and voice on efficacy and choice of educational programs, assessment, and evaluation. A focus on narrow assessment measures takes valuable time and much-needed resources away from classroom learning and undermines the ability to provide meaningful learning experiences for all students. This policy will not help students learn or teachers teach.
- There is the potential to increase inequality and ableism and decrease opportunities for meaningful inclusion. The education system must be part of the continued struggle for equity and inclusion based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and economic/social disparity. Narrowly defined measures of success and achievement limit students' ability to develop the skills, understanding, and responsibility to build a world that has enhanced equity, security, and sustainability.
- There has been a lack of meaningful consultation, resulting in teacher input missing from the documents. As the BCTF discussed the draft policy with Ministry staff over the 2018 to 2020 period, we consistently raised concerns about the underlying assumptions of the policy and the extremely problematic understanding of accountability that it puts forward. These concerns have to date not been addressed. Teachers' voices on what effective assessment for learning looks like, supported by robust research literature, should guide this policy.
- The policy is based on inappropriate and inaccessible timelines. Data on student achievement must be appropriate, timely, and responsive. Part of this responsiveness is taking into account the current pandemic context and how public education can mobilize outside of a narrow accountability framework.

Recommendation 6

The proposed revision of the BC Performance Standards be done in such a manner as to build on the successes of the current Performance Standards.

The current BC Performance Standards documents were created as part of an extensive, multi-year Ministry project involving significant consultation with both teachers and other educational stakeholders. The resulting standards were of high quality and highly valued by teachers. While they are no longer aligned to the curriculum, they are rooted in values that foster and support meaningful student learning. Updating the BC Performance Standards to align with the current curriculum and pedagogy, without losing their existing values at the same time, is not a simple process and will require an extensive commitment of both time and funding by the Ministry to ensure that it is done with full consultation with the field and that the updated BC Performance Standards continue to be a highly respected and valued resource.

SECTION 2

Curriculum and Resources

An effective education system relies on a strong curriculum combined with necessary resources and curriculum implementation supports. It is now seven years since the start of the last curriculum review process, and it is time for some incremental updates to be added. There are many areas of the curriculum that still need specific resource supports, especially Indigenous education. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the continuing need to provide more electronic resources and stronger platforms to provide for online learning.

Recommendation 7

The Ministry form a stakeholder committee to review the last curriculum revision process and to make recommendations on how to move forward incremental updates to the current curriculum documents.

The last extensive round of curriculum revision provided a new and transparent model for curriculum review. At that time, it was the Ministry's stated intention that future curriculum review would occur more often (two- to three-year cycle) and be of an incremental nature. However, several years have now passed and despite continuing discussions with Ministry staff about what an incremental process could look like, nothing has transpired. Meanwhile, there are areas of the curriculum that need updates to reflect changes to the world that we live in, including those related to climate change, racism, and outdoor learning. It is critical that any curriculum review process include classroom teachers, including subject specific specialists.

Recommendation 8

There be ongoing support for the curriculum by providing new technology, lab equipment, learning materials, and professional development support for teachers.

Creating revised curriculum documents is only the first phase of the implementation of a successful curriculum. For a new or revised curriculum to be fully implemented and for it to flourish, there needs to be a government-level financial commitment to provide the necessary resources, planning time, and teacher professional development to ensure the maximum impact on student learning.

Recommendation 9

The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the BC Primary Teachers' Association and other stakeholder groups, update The Primary Program—A Framework for Teaching document.

The Primary Program—A Framework for Teaching document, which was last updated in 2000, is still used by many teachers and teacher training programs as a reference document providing supports for the primary education program. However, it has become very outdated and does not align well with the "Know, Do, Understand" model upon which the current curriculum is based. In addition, the links to curriculum contained within the document are no longer accurate.

The Ministry recently updated the Early Learning Framework, and it would make sense for the Primary Program document to be updated to help provide the desired seamless connection between Early Learning and the K–12 education system. An update would also help support primary-level teachers by providing a current resource to assist with the continued implementation of the revised curriculum.

Recommendation 10

The Ministry of Education form a committee, including participation by BCTF members, to generate general guidelines that would assist school districts with the creation and revision of their policies related to outdoor learning.

Taking students outside for learning—whether it’s to use an outdoor classroom, go for a walk, or engage in a wide range of outdoor activities—is very beneficial for mental health, physical health, and cognitive development.

It is important to ensure that outdoor learning is both accessible and safe for all students. The policies that are currently in place vary widely between districts and individual schools. Some existing policies can lead to unsafe practices. School district staff, including BCTF members, need consistent policies that help protect them and their students but are not so onerous as to make leaving the school building prohibitive.

Recommendation 11

The Ministry start a fresh process with clear terms of reference, end-goals, and appropriate leadership to develop Indigenous learning resources and in-service opportunities to support the curriculum.

Indigenous content and knowledge have been woven into all subject areas and grade levels of the redesigned curriculum. The BCTF made a recommendation, to then Education Minister Bernier, in January 2017 calling for the development of resources that assist teachers with the delivery of Indigenous content in a respectful and meaningful way. In several communications and discussions with Ministry staff, the Federation recommended that Indigenous resource development be an inclusive, thoughtful, multi-year process. Instead, after a significant delay, the Ministry embarked on a rushed and superficial process to develop a small number of Indigenous resources. To date, this process has only produced a highly flawed resource inventory document.

The Ministry committee tasked with the resource development has faced many documented challenges in their work, including insufficient time allocated for the scale of the project, several changes in the Ministry staff responsible for the project leading to a lack of direction, and at times a lack of transparency to the process. Given the current situation, it would appear that a fresh start is the only approach that will lead to the successful development of these vital resources.

Recommendation 12

A full environmental scan be undertaken by the Ministry of Education to gain a clearer understanding of the need for additional provincially licensed digital student learning resources and provision of a collection of relevant and up-to-date eBooks in the K–12 education system.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the existing need for the provision of quality digital learning resources that can be used by teachers to support student learning. The current BC Digital Classroom provided through Focussed Education Resources is a good starting point, but there needs to be a commitment to more funding to broaden the selection and improve on the quality of the resources provided.

In addition, BC Public Libraries have been providing eBooks to their patrons for some time. An environmental scan would provide the data to demonstrate the need for a consistent, provincial approach to the implementation and provision of current and relevant eBooks for student use. At the current time, many districts only provide access to the free, public-domain eBooks that in some cases are of little use and of questionable appropriateness in schools.

Recommendation 13

During the next round of curriculum review, the Ministry of Education amend the curriculum to include climate change in each year from K–12 across subjects and as a Big Idea in the Grade 10 Science curriculum.

Our planet is facing an energy and climate emergency that amounts to a global crisis. The report Canada’s Changing Climate 2019, released by the Government of Canada, gave a strong Canadian context to this issue and indicates that some areas of Canada have warmed and will continue to warm at more than double the global rate.

It is vitally important that future human generations understand the issues resulting from climate change and be able to work collaboratively in a constructive way to resolve them. To assist with this goal, it is essential that students in BC schools are prepared with the knowledge needed to understand the issues around climate change and the skills to be able to make the correct decisions when trying to find solutions.

Recommendation 14

In-depth consultation with the field occur during the current Ministry acquisition process for a new Learning Management System (LMS) for Distributed Learning and Open School use. Additionally, that appropriate time and in-service be provided to the teachers expected to transition to the new system once it is in place.

The existing Moodle Learning Management System in use by many districts and Open School is dated and teachers using the system report that it is cumbersome to use. The current request for proposals for a new and updated LMS gives the Ministry a great opportunity to provide a modern and intuitive system for use by Distributed Learning teachers that would better support student learning.

It is important that the end-users are consulted throughout the replacement process and that appropriate time and in-service support is provided to enable a successful transition to a new LMS.

SECTION 3

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education in BC is in a state of crisis, a crisis that has been “decades in the making” (RCY, 2020, p. 1).¹ As the complexity of student needs has increased, chronic underfunding of public education has resulted in a dire lack of supports, resources, and staffing to meet these needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified this crisis and further undermined the rights of all children and youth to a supportive, inclusive, and equitable education in BC.

Renewed commitment to inclusive education is urgently needed. Policies and funding to adequately support inclusion should be among the top priorities to be addressed by the new Minister of Education. The BCTF provides the following recommendations for upholding every student’s right to a fully inclusive and equitable education.

Recommendation 15

Re-engage in meaningful consultation with education stakeholders to work toward a revised and finalized Special Education Policy Manual.

The Ministry of Education formed two stakeholder committees in late Fall 2017: The Inclusive Education Policy Manual Review Team and the Inclusive Education Resource Development Team. The work of both of these teams ended abruptly in April 2018 when they were informed at a Ministry meeting that their services would no longer be required. At the start of this meeting, a 75-page draft Special Education Manual document had been placed on the seat of each attendee and there had been no time given to review the document and give any form of meaningful feedback. It is the Federation’s understanding that Ministry staff have continued to work on the draft document without input from the Federation or other stakeholders. The Federation requests that the committees be reconvened, and transparent and meaningful consultation occur prior to the draft being released to the field.

Recommendation 16

Anchor funding for inclusive education in identified needs, including dedicated funding for students in “high incidence” categories.

In 2018, teachers welcomed the BC government’s opportunity for a review of the funding formula for public education,² seeing it as an opportunity to ensure that our schools and our classrooms reflect both the needs of our students and, more broadly, our values as a society. Inclusive education is at the heart of these values.

Unfortunately, the consultation process on the funding formula that followed was deeply flawed. Particularly in relation to Inclusive Education, the Ministry of Education convened a working group to explore the implications of a “prevalence-based” model. However, the working group was never

¹ Representative for Children and Youth (2020 Dec 3). Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic. Retrieved from https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CYSN_Report.pdf

² See <https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/BCEdFundingModelReviewBrief.pdf>

provided with an actual model, which meant that stakeholders were unable to meaningfully assess the implications of prevalence funding and other proposed changes on BC classrooms, including the impact on some of our most vulnerable students. Furthermore, at no point in the consultation process did the Ministry provide estimates of the impact of the proposed changes on school district budgets. Seeing how funding model changes would affect the resources available to all 60 BC school districts should be a minimum bar for serious stakeholder input. This is especially the case as adequacy of the quantum of funding was excluded from the funding review process and proposed changes would redistribute existing funds between districts.

At its core, funding must abide by the principles of equity and inclusion. This includes both vertical equity—students with different needs receiving the same quality of education and having the same opportunities for flourishing and growth—as well as horizontal equity—students with the same needs from different regions and socio-economics backgrounds receiving the same quality of education and having the same opportunities for flourishing and growth. Resources must be distributed so that every school district, every school, and every classroom have at their disposal the resources to ensure that every child can have their particular educational needs met.

This “needs-based” approach to inclusive education should be based on actual incidence of needs, not statistical approximations, to uphold every student’s right to education. This approach must also move away from competition about whose needs “count,” driven by chronic underfunding, where certain needs that are more recognized or fall into the Ministry’s defined special education categories get addressed and receive support, while others don’t. Inclusion is not complete when students with “high incidence” special needs are identified but excluded from dedicated funds, or when students with multiple needs are only funded to support some of their needs, but not all. As such, a needs-based approach should expand the number of students who qualify for additional funding based on their identified needs.

Recommendation 17

Provide targeted funding to support the early identification and designation of students with diverse needs, particularly in Kindergarten and Grade 1, regardless of where in the province the student is going to school.

Identifying students with diverse needs is a cornerstone of inclusive education. Currently, wait lists for educational assessments grow longer and longer each year, with some students, their families, and teachers waiting for the support they need for up to three years. BC schools need the resources to identify and designate students with special needs so that they receive the supports they require as early as possible, ideally in the K–1 years. Early, well-resourced identification and assessment is key to ensuring that BC’s students get the supports and resources they need for educational success.

Recommendation 18

Increase availability of and access to in-service opportunities for both classroom and specialist teachers on inclusive education theory and practice.

Inclusive education involves all teachers in a school, many working in school-based teams to support the specific needs of a student. All teachers should have access to in-service opportunities in inclusive education, regardless of where they work in the province.

Recommendation 19

Develop with the BCTF and other education stakeholders a targeted recruitment and retention plan for specialist teachers (speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, counsellors, learning assistance teachers, special education teachers, teachers of English language learners, and other teachers) to help alleviate the problems of understaffing and high caseloads for current teacher specialists.

Meeting the needs of all students also requires addressing the shortage of specialist teachers. Research with BC's specialist teachers has illustrated how insufficient staffing, large amounts of paperwork, lack of collaboration and meeting time within school hours, and increased time spent covering a classroom when there are no teachers teaching on call available are stretching their ability to meet students' needs.³ The situation is leading to stress and burn out within the field. BC needs a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan to ensure there are sufficient specialists to support students with special needs as well as address the high workloads of specialists.

Recommendation 20

Investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on inclusive education in BC, specifically the impact on learning for students who are diverse learners and the impact on their families.

An investigation is needed to better understand not only how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted students with diverse needs' education, but their families as well. Preliminary research has indicated that families have been forced to "fill the gap" in services for their children with diverse needs.⁴ Children and youth with diverse needs parent and community advocacy groups have also documented the ways that many students with diverse needs have been excluded from a full education.⁵ While the issue of exclusion—and the tracking of it—precedes the COVID-19 pandemic, there is concern that the current situation is exacerbating the problem.

BCEdAccess is an organization that supports families and tracks school exclusions and some of the other issues related to supporting diverse learners and students with medical needs. This group surveyed families this summer that highlighted the issues faced by families. Inclusion BC is another

³ Gacoin, A. (2020). The landscape of inclusion: How teachers in British Columbia navigate inclusive education policy and practice. Retrieved from

<https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/TheLandscapeOfInclusion.pdf>

⁴ Representative for Children and Youth (2020 Dec 3). Left Out: Children and youth with special needs in the pandemic.

Retrieved from https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CYSN_Report.pdf

⁵ <https://bcdaccess.com/exclusion-tracker/>

such group that directly supports families with diverse learners. It is important that these groups, along with educators, be included in these discussions to ascertain all of the issues surrounding inclusive education.

Recommendation 21

Create ongoing opportunities for meaningful consultation and collaboration on inclusive education with educational stakeholders and other Ministries.

The current crisis in inclusive education in BC requires deep collaboration from all education stakeholders, as well as between the Ministry of Education and other Ministries. Multi-stakeholder engagement should resume to collaboratively review and finalize the updated Special Needs Education Manual. Furthermore, any major policy shift, such as a change to the funding model, must meaningfully engage BC's students, parents, teachers, support workers, trustees, and administrators in the necessary informed discussion of and awareness of its impacts. Recommitting to inclusive education is crucial for building a vibrant, democratic, and equitable world for this and future generations.

SECTION 4

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

In 2019, the BCTF applauded the provincial government's leadership in passing legislation to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* into BC's provincial laws. This international instrument provides a framework for the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world to survival, dignity, and well-being. Little action has been taken thus far, and action is required to move forward on implementation. Implementing the declaration requires concrete plans, timelines, and content to equip teachers and all workers in the K–12 system with knowledge specific to the diverse Indigenous peoples of their respective regions and provinces. The BCTF provides the following recommendations to work towards the meaningful implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in all aspects of our public education system.

Recommendation 22

Adopt a funded plan of action that ensures every school district is providing all employees with comprehensive in-service that fully addresses all aspects of Call to Action #57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, including antiracism training for all employees.

Recommendation 23

Ensure school districts provide all teachers with the necessary teaching resources in keeping with the Indigenous content embedded in the revised curriculum, and relevant to the worldviews and knowledges of local First Nations communities.

Recommendation 24

Include antiracism and anti-oppression in the core competencies and curricular competencies at all grade levels.

Recommendation 25

Adopt the long-held recommendation of the BCTF, FNEC, BCSTA, and other organizations for graduation requirements to include at least one First Peoples course at the secondary school level for all students.

A fully resourced and funded plan of action is needed to ensure all those who work and learn in BC's school system are engaging in anti-oppression education and training. BC public school staff must be provided ongoing opportunities and resources to both deepen their own settler knowledge and understanding of local First Nations, as well as cultivate a meaningful relationship with local First Nations. An integral part of this meaningful and respectful relationship is the openness to taking the lead from the local First Nations on what they want taught in their child's classroom. The interconnected relationship between classroom teachers and the local First Nations knowledge keepers is foundational to incorporating the Local First Nation teachings into BC public education. Above recommendations 22 through 25 provide specific ways this can be done.

Recommendation 26

Commit to ongoing stable and adequate funding for BC First Nations language authorities to work with BC public school teachers to develop local curriculum with knowledge holders and, once approved by the local First Nations, the languages are taught in all school districts and easily accessed by students.

Most students in BC schools have the opportunity to study a new language as part of their educational experience. Local First Nation languages are currently not offered widely throughout the province and are difficult for students to access. An effort needs to be made to expand languages offered in BC's education system, to work toward ensuring the survival and revitalization of endangered Indigenous languages.

Recommendation 27

Work with BC school district hiring directors, the BCTF, the BC Teachers' Certification director, and other organizations and bodies to significantly increase the number of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachers working in BC schools.

Although there currently is no data on the percentage of teachers in BC who identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, it is generally agreed that it is less than the percentage of BC students who identify as such. Attention and planning in recruitment and retention efforts are needed to be directed toward increasing the number of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachers working in BC schools.

This is an issue that the BCTF has been advocating for decades. This commitment is also reflected in the Collective Agreement. Letter of Understanding #4 is an Employment Equity agreement that was negotiated many years ago and which was reaffirmed in the last round of negotiations. It encourages school districts and locals to work together to make an application to the Human Rights Tribunal under Section 42 of the Human Rights Code to obtain approval for a "special program" that would serve to attract and retain Aboriginal employees. This agreement also contemplates the inclusion of layoff protections for Aboriginal employees.

Unfortunately, Employment Equity agreements have been negotiated in only a few districts to date.

Recommendation 28

Work with the BCTF and other organizations to implement a plan of action to address racism experienced by staff, students, and families in BC schools.

Recommendation 29

Abandon colonial narratives in education promoted by the OECD, and discontinue the utilization of colonial tools such as the FSA and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

BC has embraced the rhetoric and goals of organizations such as the OECD that see education primarily as an instrument for national economic prosperity, and thus an important arena of

competition. This competition is reinforced globally through PISA tests (and internally, among BC students themselves through the FSAs).

Comparing nations and education systems globally flattens any cultural diversity and nuance within and across countries. Using a singular tool—such as the PISA test—to measure the quality of education systems across the world is fundamentally rooted in a colonial worldview and must be abandoned.

Recommendation 30

Remove in their entirety Sections 11 and 12 from the School Regulations, which pertain to promoting “loyalty to the Crown” and “observation of occasions of historic or current importance to Canada and the Commonwealth.”

Recommendation 31

Include National Indigenous Peoples Day in Section 10 (b) of the School Regulations.

SECTION 5

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

A common thread running through the most urgent challenges discussed in this brief is the longstanding teacher shortage in BC, which is felt across all 60 school districts, in both urban and rural locations. The stability and vitality of BC public education is undermined by the ongoing teacher shortage. Not addressing the shortage makes implementing many of the recommendations presented in this brief more challenging.

Recommendation 32

Develop and implement a recruitment and retention action plan to address the current teacher shortage across the province.

Many districts struggle to fill daily Teacher Teaching on Call (TTOC) assignments and other teachers must fill in for their colleagues who are out. This negatively impacts student education and adds to the already significant workload teachers experience. The shortage of specialist and hard-to-fill teachers—the most pressing include teachers of special education, counsellors, First Nations Language and Culture, French Immersion, and technology education—has a ripple effect throughout the BC public education system. With regards to inclusive education and the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Sections 3 and 4 of this brief), progress cannot be made in these two areas without a concerted recruitment and retention action plan.

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