



Focus on

BCTF Advice on “Communicating Student Learning”

Details

Issue

The BC revised curriculum shifts the reporting emphasis to students demonstrating their knowledge. Accompanying the revised curriculum was the introduction in August 2016 of the K–9 Interim Reporting Order. This order attempts to align reporting practices with the revised curriculum, and allows for an “alternative reporting” schedule to be followed. This option is outlined by the Ministry as a “more ongoing, flexible process” than the traditional form of reporting. However, this model raises concerns about privacy, increased workload, parent access, effective communication issues, and length of time for data storage. All these identified areas require considerable discussion, awareness, and decisions before districts embark on an alternative reporting direction.

K–9 Interim Reporting Order

According to the Ministry of Education’s guidelines to the reporting order:

Option A: (Schedule 2) Interim Student Reporting Guidelines allows districts to report to parents using more ongoing, flexible processes. Option A is intended for use by districts that have developed or are in the process of developing local policy and procedures for reporting student progress in Grades K–9, and have engaged in consultation with parents. Districts will ensure that locally developed policies and procedures for reporting student progress adhere to the requirements outlined in the order.

Option B: (Schedule 1) Student Reporting Policy (revised) provides a standard process for reporting student progress. It maintains the requirement to provide a minimum of three scheduled formal reports during the school year, and two other forms of communication to parents.

One of the Federation’s concerns with Option A (Schedule 2) is that teachers are encouraged to engage in “ongoing communication” through a variety of forms, including

- “student-led and three-way conferences/ written interim reports/ e-portfolio reviews/ parent/teacher meetings/ samples and demonstrations of student work, videos, written summaries, or portfolio entries”

And that “communications with parents” may be provided in a variety of ways: in person; through telephone, email, text, Skype, and other electronic means; and through the use of reporting applications.”

Teachers are heavily vested in the professional responsibility of communicating student information. This responsibility is to adhere to the requirements as outlined in the K–9 Interim Reporting Order. However, due to the “flexibility” of the alternate reporting order, district-developed practices may create conditions where expectations and practicality do not intersect.

The Federation’s position continues to be that communicating student learning must be performed in a timely manner. However, the

direction by administration may come in the form of “continual reporting.” Teachers need to be aware of the differences between timely reporting and ongoing, continual reporting, as well as the resulting consequences.

The Federation maintains that **timely reporting** to parents is key, rather than **ongoing reporting**. In fact, ongoing reporting may lead to undermining effective communication with parents. It is plausible to imagine how parents could become overwhelmed with the sheer volume of information coming at them from school, and end up not attending to critical information.

The tools and equipment that are provided to teachers to meet these requirements are often ineffective, as outlined in a recent BCTF survey of members on digital reporting tools. Members indicated that the tools provided to them by the district were not adequate to meet the tasks. For example, to meet the time-consuming requirements of MyEducation BC meant that teachers needed to do much of this work on a home computer. This increases workload by performing the task on different devices.

The expectation by some districts to have teachers post pictures and videos for eportfolios meant many teachers were using their personal cell phones to accomplish the task. In other districts, teachers were directed not to use personal plans, however, the devices that were supplied were inadequate to perform the task.

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. How much data is collected, stored, linked, searched, and mined electronically in education are significant questions that need to be addressed. Privacy Impact Assessments related to digital reporting systems have not been completed by many districts. It appears that training on privacy is a very low priority in the education system, as are guidelines on data retention. This puts individual teachers at risk.

Members indicated “parent access to digital reports” was an area of concern. Directing parents to access all reports online fails to meet the needs of a diverse parent population. It undermines the very point of what flexible reporting is supposed to accomplish. Without effective engagement with parent groups (including those parents who do not readily engage with school on a regular basis) the parental issues and concerns regarding digital reporting will go unaddressed. Parents have expressed frustration with some District Administrators that fail to adjust their reporting procedures to allow for equitable access.

In summary, the recent BCTF survey on digital reporting illustrated four major areas of concern:

1. ineffective tools and equipment provided to teachers for digital reporting tasks
2. teachers reporting using personal devices and data connections, or not having access to devices that are up to the task
3. limited training on privacy issues
4. parent access to digital reports.

Core Competencies

As reported in the April 18, 2017, BCTF [Education Change Bulletin: Student Self-Assessment of Core Competencies](#), there continues to be significant challenges with the student self-assessment of Core Competencies (currently in draft form). Many districts have directed teachers to evaluate and report on student proficiency in this area, a directive that goes against the very principles of the Core Competencies.

Next Steps in Reporting

The Ministry began work with a K–9 Student Reporting Policy Committee in the summer of 2017. This committee is tasked with making recommendations for a final K–9 Reporting Order to be released in spring 2018. A final K–9 Reporting Order that addresses key features of the curriculum and provides clear guidance on student self-assessment of the Core Competencies and the responsible and equitable use of digital reporting tools is required. Whatever “alternative” reporting structures are developed by districts, they must consider the

capacity of the system to function effectively. A lack of access to electronic devices and time built into the school day to engage in communicating student learning will undermine any initiative, no matter how well intended.

The final Reporting Order should be based on the principle that information on student achievement is best obtained through the

teacher and classroom-based, formative assessment practices.

Note: To date, there has been no work on the revisions to Grades 10–12 reporting.

BCTF Advice

Core Competencies

The BCTF and Ministry have discussed some of the varied interpretations around Core Competencies. The Federation has advocated for new teams to be assembled to move the Core Competencies out of the draft stage. Watch for BCTF news alerts to your email advertising upcoming opportunities for members from the BCTF. The next anticipated posting will be for members to serve on the Core Competency teams.

Joint Education Change Committees

Advocate with local education partners and through joint education change committees at both the school and district level. If a joint education change committee is not in operation

at your school, speak to your local association for information on how to proceed. These committees are vital to address site-specific and local issues related to curriculum, assessment, and reporting issues. The issues raised in this bulletin regarding reporting significantly impact teachers work. Members need to be engaged in these critical elements for successful communication of student learning.

Curriculum feedback

- Send your feedback directly to the BCTF at curriculumfeedback@bctf.ca.
- [Send the Ministry your feedback.](#)

Links

BCTF Links

- [Digital Reporting Tools: A survey of BCTF members](#)
 - [Key findings](#)
- [TeachBC](#) is an online resource of teaching materials, lessons, and research relevant to the K–12 BC curriculum.
- [Previous BCTF Education Change Bulletins](#)
- [Issues in Education: Curriculum](#)—A BCTF page with up to date information and links related to curriculum change.

Ministry Links

- [New—BC Curriculum Comparison Guides](#)

Assessment Supports

- [Educator Update: Classroom Assessment](#)
- [Supporting the Self-Assessment and Reporting of Core Competencies](#)
- [FAQ - Self Assessment & Reporting on Core Competencies](#)

Communicating Student Learning

- [Student Reporting Policy](#)
- [Student Progress Report Order](#)
- [Educator Update: K-9 Reporting.](#)