

16 September 2020

Board of Education, School District 68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith
395 Wakesiah Avenue
Nanaimo, BC
V9R 3K6

Dear Trustees,

I am writing you today to request that Trustees direct staff to honour parent requests to withdraw their children from writing the upcoming Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). The Board had such a policy, and the previous Board voted to rescind it. The NDTA hopes that you will re-instate this policy.

It is well known that teachers oppose the FSA. We all agree that using test results to rank schools (as is done by the Fraser Institute) is odious, and the BCSTA joined teachers and other partner groups in taking a principled stand demanding that the Ministry of Education prevent the unethical and unfair use of FSA data. Despite our efforts, the Ministry still allows the ranking of schools. This is not, however, the sole reason for our objection to this standardized exam.

The test itself is contrary to best practice in assessment and evaluation as it is unrelated to the current classroom learning and does not align with BC's new curriculum.

Administering the FSA takes up an enormous amount of teaching time—time that would be better spent teaching and learning, especially in a year where instructional time may be affected during a pandemic.

The data generated does not inform teaching and learning because of the delay in providing results to schools. When a school scores poorly, no additional support or resources are provided for students.

Schools do not have adequate technology to support the test. Crashes and freezes are common, and students' lack of familiarity with computer test taking and typing significantly skew student results.

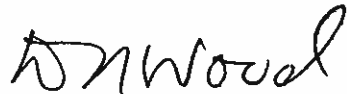
The tests are not truly standardized because every school and every classroom delivers the test in a different way. Students are provided varying levels of support during the

exam, and there are no guidelines for invigilators to ensure consistent support for students who need assistance.

Every year teachers report high levels of anxiety related to taking the FSA. The exam setting is unfamiliar and often stressful during a "regular" school year. This year is far from regular. The Ministry of Education has emphasized how important school is to our students' mental health right now. Our experience is that the FSA works contrary to that goal.

The NDTA supports parents in their understanding of the inherent problems with the FSA. We hope Trustees will ensure that parent choice is honoured, and that parents will be protected from questioning or coercion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Denise" written in a more stylized, connected manner to the last name "Wood".

Denise Wood
President

Cc Karen Matthews, Manager Administrative Services
Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer