

Parents' Education Rights and Responsibilities

Parents have important rights and responsibilities for their children's education.

Promoting a shared understanding of parents' rights and responsibilities can help everyone work together for the benefit of students.

If Your Child Attends a Public School

The *BC School Act* sets out the rules for how those schools must operate. The *BC School Act* states that parents are entitled to:

- be informed of their children's attendance, behaviour, and progress in school
 - receive annual reports about the general effectiveness of education programs
 - examine all records kept for their child
 - be consulted regarding the placement of children with special needs
 - be involved in the planning, development and implementation of their child's education program
 - belong to a parents' advisory council (PAC)
- **In the public education system, a School Board oversees the operation of schools within each school district.**
- School Boards allocate the budget for all schools in the district, establish the policies and procedures for schools, and are responsible for ensuring that all decisions made by schools are fair.
 - School Boards are led by a Superintendent of Schools.

Parents have a right to:

- be informed of School Board activities and decisions.
- attend School Board meetings.
- participate in parent advisory meetings of the district.
- ask for the school district's policies and procedures, including information about any First Nations programs and special education support services provided.
- contact School Board members, who are called Trustees, to share concerns or ideas.
- run for a position on the School Board.

Parents should also be aware that public School Boards must establish Codes of Conduct for schools within their district. School Boards must make their Codes of Conduct available to the public and provide them to students and parents. Boards must ensure Codes of Conduct outline:

- types of discrimination that are not allowed
- what is acceptable behaviour
- what is unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, threatening and violent behaviours

Codes of Conduct must outline consequences for unacceptable behaviours. These consequences should be restorative and appropriate for students of various ages and unique support needs.

Remember that you have a right to see the school's Code of Conduct if you have a concern about how your child is being treated at school.

Parental Rights and All Schools

For students attending any type of school, you should expect to:

- be informed about and involved in making decisions that directly affect your child, including changes in the courses or programs they are enrolled in.
- be informed of all school policies, programs, rules, and routines.
- be consulted about and provide consent before any formal assessment of your child takes place, and be informed about the results.
- have your concerns listened and responded to promptly and respectfully.

- be able to speak to school staff, such as teachers, education assistants, or principals, when you have questions, concerns or need information, and bring along a support person if you want to.
- receive regular and understandable reports about your child's progress.
- be involved in planning and reviewing your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), if they have one.

Parental Rights to Confidentiality

You have the right to expect that all information about you and your family will be treated confidentially by the school.

School staff have a professional obligation to share your information only with people directly involved in delivering education services to your child. This includes respecting the privacy of, among other things:

- ▶ Your personal contact information
- ▶ Data about your child's progress in school, reports cards, etc.
- ▶ Information about whether your child has been assessed, for what purposes, and the results
- ▶ Information about your child's health status
- ▶ Any legal matters related to your child

You should be asked to provide consent before your child's information is shared, including before it is transferred to another school.

BC's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) also sets out rules for how information about you and your children can be collected, used, or shared. According to PIPA, you have a right to:

- ▶ Expect an organization to collect, use or disclose your personal information reasonably and appropriately.
- ▶ Know who in the organization is responsible for protecting your personal information.
- ▶ Expect that your personal information will be protected through appropriate security measures.
- ▶ Complain about how an organization handles your personal information if a problem arises.

If you have concerns about your privacy or how your confidential information is being handled, ask questions. Schools must let you know what policies and procedures are in place to protect the confidentiality of you and your children.

You can also take your concerns to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia if you have a serious complaint. The Office states that:

- ▶ You should try to settle the matter directly by contacting the person responsible for managing privacy issues within the organization.
- ▶ If you are not satisfied with the organization's response, you may ask the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of B.C. to review the matter.

For more information or advice on how to proceed, you can contact:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia

E-mail: info@oipc.bc.ca

Web Site: www.oipc.bc.ca

Telephone: (250) 387-5629

Parental Responsibilities

In addition to their rights, parents' responsibilities include the following.

- Ensure your children attend school regularly.
- Help make sure your children follow school policies, programs, rules, and routines.
- Share your concerns openly, clearly and immediately with appropriate school representatives.
- Respond to requests from the school for help in supporting your children's learning.
- Share your understandings about things that are going well for your children, and things that are not.