



VIA EMAIL
Our Ref: 129802

January 30, 2009

Irene Lanzinger, President
British Columbia Teachers' Federation
100-550 6th Ave W
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2

Dear Ms. Lanzinger:

Thank you for meeting with my Deputy Minister, staff and me on January 20, 2009, to discuss the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). I appreciated our candid discussion and your passionate views on the topic.

While our perspectives differ on some aspects of this issue, there are others upon which we agree. Those areas of agreement provide us with an opportunity to work together to improve the administration of the assessment and to explore ways to provide more fulsome information about schools in addition to the FSA data.

As you know, the government is committed to the Foundation Skills Assessment as it provides valuable information to support student achievement. School level information is critically important to principals, superintendents, and boards of education to better inform ways in which to improve student success.

As discussed last week, we agree that more comprehensive, fulsome data in addition to data generated through the FSA would be valuable. It is my view that more information, not less, is required to better inform this discussion. I am committed to continuing our dialogue on this front and exploring ways to jointly develop a method of school-based assessment that provides additional context to the FSA data. Therefore, I have asked my Deputy Minister to meet with you to explore the possibility of developing our own framework – one that better meets the needs of parents, teachers, trustees and administrators. At our meeting, we briefly discussed the work of the Ontario government and teachers in developing “Statistical Neighbours.” Perhaps by learning more about this model together, we can find an appropriate starting point to tackle this important task.

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At our meeting, we also discussed a number of additional issues regarding the FSA including: the quality of the assessment tool; the time it takes to administer the assessments; its impact on other parts of the school program, notably computer labs; and the time that is required to prepare students for the assessment.

These are all important considerations, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further with a view to incorporating potential improvements into the administration of the FSA 2010. Our last two meetings have been candid and provided a foundation for further dialogue and work on these matters.

As Minister of Education, it is my responsibility to balance the views of teachers, parents, trustees and administrators. I look forward to continuing to work with the BC Teachers Federation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley Bond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shirley Bond
Minister
Deputy Premier

cc: James Gorman, Deputy Minister