

To the Parents and Guardians of Students in Grades 4 and 7

As the Board of Education Trustees for School District No. 39 (Vancouver), we wish to communicate our perspective on parent choice regarding student participation in the provincial Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) testing program. The FSA is given to all BC students in Grade 4 and Grade 7 each February to assess basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing and numeracy. As a provincially prescribed program, all Grade 4 and Grade 7 students are expected to participate in the FSA.

We believe strongly in the importance of effective assessment, which includes testing, to inform and guide student learning and instruction. We are therefore committed to developing and using various assessment instruments and practices that provide a combined picture of each student's performance.

As a board, we respect the right and responsibility of parents and students to determine whether or not the student's participation in the FSA is in the best interest of the student. We therefore support the Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) executive's position that:

“...it is up to each family, considering what they know about their student(s) and think is in their best interest to decide whether or not their children should participate.”

Facts about the FSA

- FSA is a set of three tests. It covers specific reading, writing and numeracy skills in the provincial curriculum.
- FSA measures skills students gain over several school years, not only in a single year.
- The reading and numeracy tests consist of multiple-choice questions and written answers. The writing section has two writing tasks—one shorter and one longer.
- FSA scores are not letter grades or percentages; they do not count towards students' report card marks.
- Other FSA information is available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa

Participation guidelines

- Principals determine if students are excused from one, two or all three FSA components based on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and English-as-Second Language (ESL) proficiency. Parents must be advised of these.

- Parents may request the principal excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, a lengthy illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Request to Excuse a Student from Participating

As a parent or guardian, should you wish to request that a student be excused from participating in the 2009 FSA, please provide the following information and submit this document to the Principal of the student's school by Friday, January 30, 2009.

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Division: _____

School: _____

I am requesting that the above-mentioned student be excused from participating in the 2009 FSA due to (please check):

_____ Family emergency

_____ Illness

_____ Extenuating circumstance

Signed: _____

Parent / guardian

_____ Date

_____ Print name

Please note: A student who is excused from participating will be marked "absent" during the testing period. His or her standing on the test will be recorded as "performance level unknown".

Should you have questions or points you wish to raise concerning the above information, please direct these to the Principal of the school involved.

Sincerely,

Patti Bacchus

Chairperson

On behalf of the Board of Education Trustees