

BC NDP Response - BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

1. What does your party see as the role of parents in education, and what measures will you take to enhance parent connectedness in schools?

The BC NDP knows that parents are important education partners who understand the vital role of public education in our society.

All those with a role to play in building our education system, including parents, must continue to work together to ensure that we are doing the best for our children.

2. What does your party see as the role of a School Planning Council (SPC)? What changes, if any would you make to this structure?

Improving public education will be a key priority of an NDP government and improving student achievement is very much a part of that. Former Premier Campbell's own Progress Board reports that BC's graduation rate is seventh in Canada. Aboriginal students have only a 57 per cent graduation rate.

We will be looking to all those who have a role to play in making real improvements to student achievement in our province, including School Planning Councils, to help make a real difference.

3. How would your party change the bargaining structure between the BCTF and BCPSEA to ensure minimal impact on students and families during bargaining?

An NDP government will repeal Bills 27 and 28 and restore free collective bargaining in the education sector. The BC NDP supports free and fair collective bargaining rights for teachers.

4. How does your party envision the future of education in BC? What elements of the BC Ed Plan would you implement?

In today's world, the BC NDP knows that education is the most important investment we can make in our future. Our commitment to change for the better means investing in our future and improving public education.

A BC NDP government will invest an additional \$100 million annually to improve learning conditions for our children. We will provide students with the classroom support they need, and hire new teachers, education assistants, librarians and counsellors. This will allow the education system to put additional focus on students with special needs, Aboriginal students and ESL students.

An NDP government will take real and meaningful action on bullying by creating province-wide standards for school codes of conduct and ensuring that students are respected, and that policy exists to deal effectively with homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia and other forms of systemic discrimination.

We will also support the preservation of threatened First Nations languages by renewing support for First Nations' heritage, language and culture.

5. What other changes would your party make to the education system in BC?

A BC NDP government would also restore provincial support for the BC Program for the Awareness and Learning of Science (Science World).

Also, far too many BC children enter kindergarten without the developmental skills they need to learn and succeed. We will take a broad approach, ranging from income support for low-income families to improved early learning and childcare options for all BC families.

6. What is your party's position on class size? What changes would you make and why?

The BC NDP understands public education is vital to creating a more prosperous and inclusive society for every British Columbian.

A New Democratic government is committed to improving classroom learning conditions for all children and particularly special needs, ESL and Aboriginal students. This is an important step towards improving outcomes for students.

7. What is your party's position on class composition? What changes would you make and why?

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8. Does your party support conducting the FSA in its current form? If not, what changes would you make?

An NDP government will replace the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) test with improved assessment tools resulting from consultation with parents, teachers and school boards.

9. What steps will your party take to address the impact of poverty in BC schools?

A strong public education system is the most powerful tool we have to ensure that our province provides equal opportunity and the best possible start in life for every child.

Far too many BC children enter kindergarten without the developmental skills they need to learn and succeed. In fact, research tells us that three in 10 children in BC are not meeting core developmental benchmarks when they first arrive at school.

We know that child poverty plays a role in school-readiness and we need a multifaceted approach, ranging from income support for low-income families to improved early learning

and childcare options for all BC families. New Democrats will invest \$210 million a year in a BC Family Bonus program to raise household incomes for low- and moderate-income families with children under 18. As most other Canadian provinces have already done, we will also implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy with legislated targets and timelines.

In addition, because all the research tells us that education begins in early childhood, long before the first day of school, we will take steps to create new spaces and reduce fees for existing licensed infant and toddler care by 20 per cent, saving families an average of \$2,000 per year. We will also invest in early learning and childcare through an Early Years Innovation Fund.

10. What plans has your party in place to ensure that technology expansion does not impede other learning supports, or continue to be available only for those with the means to meet the costs?

The issue of technology expansion is not part of our platform.

We have released our priorities for education, including more resources to support classroom learning for students. Technology in the classroom is not part of our education platform.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss issues and work together on public education issues.

11. How will you ensure safe use of technology such as Wi Fi in schools?

The use of Wi Fi in schools is not part of our platform.

We have released our priorities for education, including more resources to support classroom learning for students. The use of Wi Fi in schools is not part of our education platform.

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12. How would your party support and fund the activities of BCCPAC?

Funding of BCCPAC is not part of our platform.

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13. What steps will your party take to support Special Education and Mental Health in Schools initiatives?

The BC NDP knows that cuts to special needs programs are making it harder for many students to succeed. Mental health challenges are a part of what keeps some students from achieving all that they could.

A BC NDP government will improve learning conditions for our children by providing students with classroom support, including better access to school counsellors. We will also invest in mental health treatment and outreach services for children and youth.

14. How will your party support aboriginal education in BC?

The BC NDP knows that action is needed to improve the 57 per cent graduation rate among Aboriginal students. The \$100 million investment in classroom conditions will allow an additional focus on Aboriginal students.

Within 100 days of forming government, the BC NDP will invite the First Nations Leadership Council and all Chiefs to develop a four year action plan to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, among other key priorities such as reducing poverty. We will also renew support for First Nations' heritage, language and culture.

15. What is your party's position on Section 177 of the School Act? Are you aware of parent concerns pertaining to this legislation?

Taking a position on Section 177 of the School Act is not part of our platform.

We have released our priorities for education, including more resources to support classroom learning for students. A position on Section 177 of the School Act is not part of our education platform.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss issues and work together on public education issues.

16. What will your party's funding formula for education be?

Change for the better means investing in our future and improving public education. We will start by directing new resources to the classroom as an important step towards improving outcomes for students.

17. Does your party contemplate the amalgamation of school boards in BC? If so, please supply details

Amalgamation of school boards is not part of our platform

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