



## NORTH VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 44

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June 15, 2009

The Honourable Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid, MLA  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

Subject: Foundation Skills Assessment

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Education. We represent all of the education partner groups in School District No. 44 (North Vancouver): the Board of Education, parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff.

We are writing to encourage you and your government to establish a dialogue among the provincial education partners in an effort to find a mutually agreeable resolution to the issues surrounding the Foundation Skills Assessment.

For many years, the FSA testing and the reporting of its results have created friction and uncertainty in our schools. A great deal of organizational time and energy has been spent trying to manage this issue, with no long-term solution.

The use of FSA test results to rank schools by organizations such as the Fraser Institute can have far-reaching, unintended, and negative impacts for some schools and communities. Many schools that are criticized for low rankings are, in fact, vibrant places where students and teachers are working hard every day to maximize learning, to overcome socio-economic disadvantages, and to help each child achieve success.

We believe that it is in the best interests of students, and of public education, to undertake a review of the Foundation Skills Assessment programme through a process that involves all of the education partner groups.

Among the issues that need to be examined are:

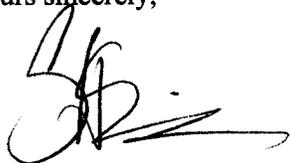
- Whether the original intent of the FSA is still valid
- Whether the tests are meeting the needs of students (including those currently excluded from the tests), parents, educators, and government
- The testing methods: methodology, sample size, census vs. sample administration
- The usefulness of the data for educational purposes
- Cost-effectiveness
- The place of standardized testing at the school, district, and provincial levels
- The release of test data in a way that will protect schools from biased and unfair comparisons by outside organizations.

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We are asking you, as Minister, to convene a representative stakeholder group to examine these issues and to seek a new, common framework for system assessment in British Columbia schools. Our students will be well-served when all parties are willing to sit down together and engage in an open process that has the potential to find a common sense, common ground solution.

Thank you very much for considering our views.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Skinner, Acting Chairperson  
Board of Education



Lisa Cartwright, President  
North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council



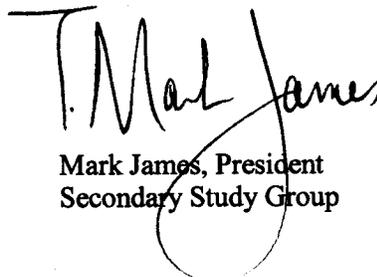
Linda Watson, President  
North Vancouver Teachers' Association



Cindy McQueen, President  
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 389



Karen Harrop, President  
Association of Elementary Administrators



Mark James, President  
Secondary Study Group

PC/ps

cc Board of Education  
John Lewis, Superintendent of Schools  
Gordon Campbell, Premier  
Ralph Sultan, MLA  
Jane Thornthwaite, MLA  
Naomi Yamamoto, MLA  
Robin Austin, MLA, NDP Critic for Education, Early Learning and Literacy