

# Good Governance of Child Care: What Does it Mean? What does it look like?

BC SCHOOL BOARD MODEL

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Working Documents - For Information Purposes

# BC SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE MODEL

## British Columbia

- Population 3.9 million, 2001 and 947,800 sq km
- 85% of the population lives in urban centres (2001).<sup>1</sup>
- British Columbia has the largest gap between the average wealth of the richest 10 percent and the poorest 10 percent – suggesting the highest level of inequality in Canada.<sup>2</sup>

## Brief Model Description:

- Both government and school boards, call this model a ‘co-governance model’.
- Please note that **Independent Schools** fall under a separate piece of legislation, the *Independent Schools Act*. Independent schools must be run by non-profit organizations and do receive government funding. However this analysis will, for the most part, not include independent schools because they are not under the jurisdiction of school boards.
- Statistics from the Ministry of Education (2005)<sup>3</sup>:
  - \$5.06 billion education budget
  - 567,523 estimated public school students for 2005-06
  - 48,951 estimated Aboriginal students for 2005-06
  - 19,736 students with special needs estimated for 2005-06
  - 2,014 schools (1,666 public, 348 independent) in 2004-05
  - 33,300 teachers and 3,000 administrators in public schools in 2004-05
  - 3,068 children home-schooled in 2004-05<sup>4</sup>

## The Public Policy Context

The broader public policy context in which the governance model operates.

<b>1. Universal</b>	<i>Universal entitlement as opposed to a targeted or market approach.</i>
☑	Education is available universally to “school-age children” in BC, defined under Section 3 of the <i>School Act</i> as a person who has reached the age of 5 at the beginning of the school year or on or before December 31 <sup>st</sup> . Independent schools have the right to refuse enrolment for some students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Section 82 of the <i>School Act</i> requires school boards to provide an educational program free of charge to every student of school age residing in BC and enrolled in a school operated by a board.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Quality</b>	<i>Government is responsible for, and sets high standards, for relevant services that are enforced and resourced (i.e. strong public policy framework, ensures workforce and administrators have appropriate education, wages and working conditions).</i>
☑	The Ministry of Education sets standards for education that are resourced using a per/student formula, and are reviewed through standardized testing of students. School plans (which seem to be known almost universally as School Growth Plans) and accountability contracts with school boards are also required. There is a very

	strong public policy framework, educators and administrators are qualified, and wages and working conditions of educators are protected by a strong, well-established union.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The provincial government “provides leadership, develops policy and legislation, oversees system governance, sets results-based standards and builds accountability frameworks in partnership with school boards.”<sup>5</sup></li> <li>▪ Also, class size and composition are now legislated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recently, the government amended the <i>School Act</i> to include strict consequences should the board not meet its class size or composition provisions. “The minister must appoint a special administrator (SA) if the minister is of the opinion that the board has not met the class size or composition provisions...Failure to follow directions of the SA (in any respect) can result in replacement of the board by an official trustee. (In the absence of this amendment, the test would be whether the board was guilty of ‘substantial non-compliance’.)”<sup>6</sup></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>3. Affordable</b>	<i>Parental fees are no more than 20% of the service revenue.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parental fees are no more than 20% of revenue. Section 82 of the School Act requires that educational program be provided free of charge and therefore there currently is controversy over fees some school boards have been charging for educational and extra-curricular programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “The <i>BC School Act</i> regulates the ability of BC school boards to charge fees to students and parents. There have been court actions regarding school fees that have redefined what school boards are able to charge. Most notably, a Supreme Court of British Columbia decision in April 1997 (McDonald and Chamak v. The Board of School Trustees, Greater Victoria School District No. 61) prohibited school boards from charging fees to enroll into an educational program and the accompanying educational resource materials necessary to participate in the program. The provincial government responded Aug. 1, 1997, amending the School Board Fees Order to clarify school boards’ ability to charge for goods and services. As of spring 2006, three school boards, Greater Victoria, Nisga’a and Powell River, do not charge any fees.”<sup>7</sup></li> <li>▪ According to the School Board Fees Orders, fees may only be charged where the board has established “hardship” policies and procedures for families that cannot afford the fees.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Publicly funded</b>	<i>Government provides the majority of funding for relevant services.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Government is mandated to provide funding for education to school boards. Public debate continues about the ‘adequacy’ of public funding. As noted above, communities, school boards, and schools sometimes supplement this with fundraising when educational programs are not adequately resourced.

	<p><b>Under the <i>School Act</i>, provincial funding for boards</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec 106.2): On or before February 1 of each year, the minister must establish and announce the amount of Provincial funding to be paid to boards in the next fiscal year for the delivery and support of educational programs.</p> <p><b>Operating grants to boards</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec 106.3.1): The minister must determine the amount of the operating grant to each board from the Provincial funding based on a funding formula that includes the per student funding amount determined by the minister, and the number of students enrolled in programs provided by the board. Amongst other powers, the Minister may establish different per student funding amounts for different classes of students.</p> <p><b>Targeted grant</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec 106.4.1): The minister may, in respect of an operating grant, provide a direction to a board specifying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) an amount or a percentage of the operating grant to the board that is a targeted grant for the fiscal year,</li> <li>(b) the manner in which that board must budget, spend and account for the targeted grant for the fiscal year,</li> <li>(c) programs or services the board must provide in respect of the targeted grant and to whom the board must provide those programs or services, and</li> <li>(d) a minimum amount of percentage of the targeted grant that the board must budget, spend and account for in respect of a program or service referred to in paragraph (c).</li> </ul> <p><b>Establishment of School Board Budgets</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec 110.1): On or before March 15 of each year, a board must submit to the minister the board’s estimate of the debt service surplus or deficit it will experience in that fiscal year. On or before March 30 of each year, the minister must prepare, approve and provide to each board the estimate of the board’s debt service expenses for the next fiscal year.</p>
<p><b>5. Accessible</b></p>	<p><i>There is a space for everyone in a resource that supports their full development.</i></p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Again, education is available universally to “school-age children” in BC. See Section 6.2 (d.) for further discussion of inclusion of children with special needs and ensuring planning and coordination of services is equitable.</p>

**School Board Governance**

<p><b>6.1 Clear Mandate</b></p>	<p><i>The degree to which the governance model has a <b>Clear Mandate</b>.</i></p>
	<p><i>There is a clear and formal mandate for the assessment of need, planning, development and delivery of child care or other service (mandate enshrined in legislation with a budget to back it and full accountability).</i></p>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  ←  ?	<p>School Boards are local elected governance structures that have a clear and formal mandate for the assessment of need, planning, development and delivery of education to children, including home-schooled children.</p> <p>Some critics argue that the mandate of school boards has been eroded over the last few years and central government authority has become stronger.</p> <p>With the last election, the provincial government expanded the mandate of the Ministry of Education to include, amongst other things, early learning and literacy, libraries, etc.; however, the details of which remain unclear.</p>
	<p><u>On the Upside</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are numerous acts, regulations and ministerial orders that relate to the education system in BC, including the <i>School Act</i>, <i>Teaching Profession Act</i>, and the <i>Independent School Act</i>.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>▪ According to the current Ministry of Education Service Plan, “The Ministry works in partnership with school boards in a co-governance structure in which school boards are responsible (in legislation) for providing education programs to students.”<sup>9</sup></li> <li>▪ The School Board is a corporation under the <i>School Act</i><sup>10</sup> (Sec. 65) and may: (a) establish committees and specify the functions and duties of those committees, (b) establish a district advisory council comprised of persons representing parents’ advisory councils and other organizations in the community, and (c) delegate specific and general administrative and management duties to one or more of its employees.</li> <li>▪ See Section 4 above, plus: School Boards receive both annual operating grants (based on a funding formula) and targeted grants from the provincial government, and are empowered to raise certain types of revenue through property and land improvement taxation (after approval via referendum). This revenue may be used by a board to provide new programs, to enhance existing programs for additional activities for students or for local capital project initiatives but must not be used to fund operating deficits. Although the BC Teacher’s Federation (BCTF) asserts that “[School boards] no longer have taxation authority. Their total budgets are set entirely by the provincial government. Their responsibility for collective bargaining was handed over to BCPSEA [British Columbia Public School Employers’ Association], and boards seem to have little influence over its decisions, taking orders, rather than giving direction.”<sup>11</sup> The BCPSEA was created as a result of the passage of Bill 78, the Public Sector Employers Act, on July 27, 1993. BCPSEA is the employers’ association for all 59 public school boards and the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique(CSF), and is the accredited bargaining agent for school boards, for teaching and support staff in the British Columbia K-12 public education system. Their statutory mandate also includes coordination of exempt staff compensation, benefit administration, human resource practices, and collective bargaining objectives. Local school boards do have some level of representation at the BCPSEA.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul> <p><u>On the Downside</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns have been raised by both the BCTF and the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) about the erosion of local power and initiative.<sup>13</sup> This includes lost of taxation authority, a role in collective bargaining, and talk of ‘re-purposing’ school boards.</li> </ul> <p><u>Child Care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is interesting to note that in the Ministry of Education Service Plan Summary for 2006/07 – 2008/09: “The Ministry of Education oversees the K-12 education system</li> </ul>

	<p>in British Columbia – this includes both public schools and independent schools. As well, in line with the Government’s new priorities following the provincial election in May 2005, the ministry’s mandate was expanded to include the responsible for Public Libraries, improving literacy rates across all segments of the population, and for Early Learning.” Later in the document, the Ministry of Education describes Early Learning as addressing the five domains crucial to early childhood development: physical development, social and emotional development, and language and cognitive development. “The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development has responsible for improving Early Learning.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Ministry of Education has established a committee to develop an early learning framework and standards.</li> <li>▪ Yet, schools boards do not have a mandate that covers children under the age of 5 years and neither the Ministry of Education, nor School Boards have a mandate covering child care. Policy regarding child care located within schools varies across districts.</li> <li>▪ The Ministry of Education has said: “In fact, we do need to look at the mandate of this ministry. It does have new components. The question that was asked...was about: do we need to look at the mandate of school boards because we now have a new mandate as the Ministry of Education? ...Does it need to incorporate new thinking about <b>early learning</b> and early literacy?”<sup>14</sup> A review of Ministry of Education news releases indicates that their immediate response to their new mandate to incorporate early learning primarily involve distributing booklets for parents and children.<sup>15</sup> District ‘pre school’ and/or ‘school readiness programs’ are on the increase.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. 2 Reflects CCCABC’s Values</b></p>	<p><b>a. <i>Accountable</i></b> <i>The model promotes accountability to the community through government for ensuring standards/regulations are met and financial reporting is transparent and that the service is responsive to individual needs.</i></p>
<p>→</p>	<p>Accountability to the province is strong, although there is controversy around some of the accountability mechanisms used.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “The Ministry’s Accountability Framework focuses school and school board attention and resources on improving student achievement. The key components of the Accountability Framework are: School Plans...Accountability Contracts... Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements...[and] District Reviews.”<sup>16</sup></li> <li>▪ Specifically, Accountability Contracts are drafted and submitted by each school board – they are held accountable to those contracts.</li> <li>▪ The BCSTA argues that school trustees are the locally elected representatives of education – and because of their close proximity to the community, they can be held accountable in a way that provincial representation cannot.<sup>17</sup></li> <li>▪ BCTF and others argue that standardized testing is not a valid method of ensuring accountability.<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>6. 2 Reflects CCCABC’s Values</b></p>	<p><b>b. <i>Coordinated</i></b> <i>The model promotes coordination and integration of service (avoids overlap, duplication and ensures efficiency of available resources).</i></p>
<p>→</p>	<p>While school boards are mandated to provide spaces for eligible children in their area, planning and development of the budget is managed centrally, so</p>

	<p>school boards are not necessarily free to plan accordingly and respond to community needs. To the extent that services are coordinated, coordination occurs at the district level.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no formal structure that exists between city or village councils, community planning bodies, and school boards.</li> </ul>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC's Values	<p><b>c. <i>Equitable</i></b> <i>The model promotes equitable access across regions.</i></p>
→	<p>Funding of school boards and education for each district is based on a funding formula that is predominantly demand-driven – as such, basic access across regions is fairly equitable; although, some challenges remain in less-populated regions, inner-city communities, and remote regions.</p>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC's Values	<p><b>d. <i>Inclusive and responsive to diversity</i></b> <i>The model provides those who require additional supports and those who come from different backgrounds with the services they need to support their full development.</i></p>
→	<p>The <i>School Act</i> requires that school boards make available educational programs to all school age persons who reside in the school district. A Ministerial Order requires the integration of students with special needs with those who do not have special needs in most instances.</p>
→	<p>Recent developments suggest that aboriginal groups will be “given autonomy over their children’s education [on reserve]”. A final agreement outlining specifics has not been reached.</p>
←	<p>The BCTF argues that supports to children with special needs have not kept pace with the need and there is concern that active parents are not reflective of the diversity of the general parental population.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recently, a general agreement between some aboriginal leaders and both levels of government may open the way to some aboriginal groups being “given autonomy over their children’s education [on-reserve].”<sup>19</sup> In the materials reviewed, it is not clear what this ‘autonomy’ will look like, although “once the deal is given the force of law, FNEESC [First Nations Education Steering Committee – the organization that negotiated and signed the agreement and “will become – in essence – <b>the first aboriginal school board</b>”] will be empowered to fill that vacuum, setting standards for schools, teachers and student achievement. Participation is voluntary, but Prentice predicted more than half the on-reserve schools will join within the first six months. More than 40 of the 200 first nations in B.C. are already part of FNEESC, which has been gradually assuming responsibility for first nations education.<sup>20</sup> A high level scan of the agreement reveals an interesting clause: 3.6 Provincial Enabling Legislation prevails over other provincial laws to the extent of any conflict.<sup>21</sup></li> <li>There is concern about demographic of people who are represented (and NOT represented) in Parent Advisory Councils and on School Planning Councils: an overwhelming majority are white, middle-class, educated, partnered females, which does not reflect the general population.<sup>22</sup></li> </ul>

6. 2 Reflects CCCABC's Values	<p><b>e. Community-control</b> <i>The model promotes democratic community control, meaning it will:</i></p> <p>i. Be <b>participatory</b>, with children, parents, caregivers, and community members at large involved,</p>
<p>☑</p> <p>?</p>	<p>School Boards themselves are democratically elected and, therefore, have potential to represent the adult population at large.</p> <p>Parental advisory and parent involvement in school planning is also mandated, with rather uncertain success (please see the <i>Vignette</i> at the end of this section). Students have some limited involvement in school planning.</p>
	<p>The <i>School Act</i> says:</p> <p><b>Parents' advisory council (PACs)</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec. 8): Parents of students attending a school may apply to the board to establish a parents' advisory council for that school; and, on receipt of an application, the board must establish a parents' advisory council for the school. The parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may advise the board and the principal and staff of the school respecting any matter relating to the school, other than matters assigned to the school planning council (but, at the request of the school planning council, may assist the council in carrying out its functions).</p> <p><b>Analysis of PACs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Martin-Newcombe and Prince argue that the <i>School Act</i> gives no guidance with respect to the composition of the PACs (unlike many other jurisdictions): it does not emphasize the importance of reflecting ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student body of the school, as well as gender balance. Their research of one urban and one semi-rural district in BC revealed that 28% of the PAC executive were also on other public boards, 90% of PAC members were married, 92% women, they were neither aboriginals (98%) nor members of a visible minority (96%) (apparently white), and were between the ages of 35 and 54 (84%). Only 14% were younger than 34...On the executive, parents had the highest level of education (47% with degrees and 63% with either college or degrees). Generally, these balances do not reflect the reality in BC. One exception is that parents from under the income bracket of \$20,000/year were slightly over-represented on the executive (10% in sample versus 7.3% in the populations.)<sup>23</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>District parents' advisory council (DPACs)</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec. 8.4-8.5): A parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may apply to the board for the establishment of a district parents' advisory council. On receipt of an application the board must establish the DPAC for the school district consisting of representatives elected to the council from each parents' advisory council. The PACs may elect annually one of its members to be its representative on the district parents' advisory council for a term of not more than one year. The district parents' advisory council may advise the board on any matter relating to education in the school district.</p> <p><b>School planning council (SPCs)</b> (<i>School Act</i> sec. 8.1 – 8.3): A board must establish a school planning council for each school in its school district. A school planning council (SPC) for a school consists of the following persons: (a) the principal of the school; (b) one of the teachers at the school, elected annually by secret ballot by the teachers who teach at the school; (c) 3 representatives of the parents' advisory council who are (i) parents of students enrolled in the school, and (ii) elected annually by the parents' advisory council; (d) if the school enrolls students in grade 10, 11 or 12, one student of school age enrolled in one of those grades at the school, <b>appointed annually by the principal</b> of the school after consulting with the students enrolled in those grades at the school. A board must consult with a school planning council in respect of the allocation of</p>



	<p>staff and resources in the school, matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to the school, and schools' educational services and educational programs.</p> <p><b>Analysis of SPCs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In a study done in 2004 by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE), 43% of respondent SPC members in BC felt that their SPC could benefit from further members; 67% indicated their SPC attempted to open up its process to the school community by inviting nonvoting participants to SPC.<sup>24</sup></li> <li>▪ Respondents showed a high level of satisfaction in three key relationships: among SPC members (90%); between the SPC and the PAC (87%); and between the SPC and school staff (84%). Only 63% of SPC respondents were satisfied with the relationship between the SPC and the school board.</li> <li>▪ Results were mixed on whether SPCs were beginning to have an impact on student achievement. Just over half of respondents (54%) agreed this was the case. Fewer thought the SPC was beginning to have an impact on the allocation of resources (43%) and the allocation of staff (23%).</li> <li>▪ Notable successes of SPCs were improved communication, dialogue, and collaboration among stakeholders. Respondents also cited creating a common vision, identifying goals, focusing the school's attention on a plan, and greater parent involvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>School plan:</b> In each school year, a board must approve a school plan for every school in the school district. By a date set by the board, a school planning council must prepare and submit to the board a school plan for the school in respect of improving student achievement and other matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to that school. A school planning council must consult with the parents' advisory council during the preparation of the school plan (although, in the study referenced below, only 87% of respondents said their SPC consulted with their parent advisory council during the preparation of the school plan, despite the requirement of the School Act that all do so; yet almost all said their SPC sought advice from school staff and 42% from provincial organizations.)</p> <p>The board may approve, approve with modifications, or reject a school plan submitted. The board may direct the principal of a school to prepare and submit to the board a school plan for the school if the school planning council does not submit a school plan, the school planning council does not comply with a direction of the board, or the board rejects the school plan submitted. A board must make the approved school plan available to the parents of students attending that school.</p> <p><b>Student involvement</b> Student involvement is limited to a single student representative (from one of three grades, 10, 11, or 12) on the Student Planning councils.</p>
6.2 Reflects CCCABC's Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>ii. Reflect a high level of community <b>ownership</b>,</p>
☑	<p>To the degree that democratically elected bodies reflect a level of community ownership, school boards fulfill this requirement.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In recent community dialogues about changes to the current model, BCTF has issued strong statements in opposition to changing the model to a non-elected model. This suggests a certain level of community ownership of the current model.</li> </ul>

6. 2 Reflects CCCABC's Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>iii. Be delivered through <b>non-profit or public</b> organizations,</p>
☑	<p>K-12 Education is delivered through public, not-for-profit organizations. Even the 17% of schools in BC are independent are required by legislation to be non-profit authorities.</p>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC's Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>iv. Allow for political <b>autonomy</b>,</p>
☑  ←	<p>Both government and school boards call this model a 'co-governance model' – and certainly the directly-elected nature of school boards lends a strong level of political autonomy.</p> <p>However, the BC School Trustees Association has issued a discussion paper in an attempt to address 'unclear roles and responsibilities' – this paper, along with information from the BCTF, suggests there are threats to autonomy of local boards through increased provincial control.</p>
	<p><u>On the Upside</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School boards have a strong mandate that allows for a certain autonomy (See 'Mandate' section). As an elected board, they are politically independent of the provincial government.</li> <li>▪ According to the current Ministry of Education Service Plan, "The Ministry works in partnership with school boards in a co-governance structure in which school boards are responsible (in legislation) for providing education programs to students."<sup>25</sup></li> </ul> <p><u>On the Downside – a huge amount of power remains with the provincial government</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Payment of grants</b> – (<i>School Act</i> sec 114 and 117) In each fiscal year the minister must pay to the board of each school district the operating grant plus the debt service grant for that board. The minister may withhold or reduce a grant payable to a board, other than a debt service grant, under certain conditions (when boards have not fulfilled their mandated obligations, etc.).</li> <li>▪ <b>Jurisdiction of minister</b> (<i>School Act</i> Sec 168) - The minister has charge of the maintenance and management of all schools established under the School Act. He or she may make orders for the purpose of carrying out any of the minister's powers, duties or functions under the Act and, without restriction, may make orders governing the provision of educational programs, determining the general requirements for graduation from an educational program, determining the general nature of educational programs for use in schools and specifying educational program guides, preparing a process for the assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs and requiring a board to cause its schools to participate in the process for the purpose of comparison to provincial, national and international standards, governing educational resource materials in support of educational programs, establishing and causing to be operated Provincial resource programs and schools in British Columbia, and providing in them specialized types of education, respecting distributed learning educational programs, etc.</li> <li>▪ <b>Appointment of official trustee</b> (<i>School Act</i> Sec 172) – The government may appoint an official trustee to any school district to conduct the affairs of the school district if, in the opinion of the government, there has been a default in a payment on the due date of either interest or principal of a debenture guaranteed under the Act or a failure to comply to the satisfaction of the minister with a condition</li> </ul>

	<p>governing the guarantee, the board is in serious financial jeopardy, there is substantial non-compliance with the Act or regulations made under the Act, there is substantial non-performance of the duties of the board, or there is a risk to student achievement in the district and it is in the public interest to do so, etc.</p> <p>On the appointment of an official trustee to conduct the affairs of a school district, the trustees of the school district cease to hold office. This trustee has the powers and duties conferred by the Act on a board, and in the exercise of a power or performance of a duty conferred under the Act on a board, an official trustee, with the approval of the minister, may deviate in matters of procedure and in the form of any notice or statement under this Act as the official trustee considers necessary for the more effective exercise of that power or duty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns have been raised by both the BCTF and the BC School Trustees Association about the erosion of local power and initiative.<sup>26</sup> This includes loss of taxation authority, a role in collective bargaining, and talk of ‘re-purposing’ school boards.</li> </ul>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC’s Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>v. Be of a size/scale that allows a <b>direct relationship</b> between users and caregivers,</p>
?	<p>The scale of the school board system often does not support a meaningful, direct relationship between users and teachers. Class size remains a challenge and some parents experience the school system as difficult to access.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recent developments have resulted in slight changes to class size and composition limits:<sup>27</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Grades 4-7: Average district class size must be no greater than 28 (previously 30); new cap of 30 students in a class (with possibility to override but need teacher’s consent).</li> <li>○ Grades 8-12: Average class size remains the same at a maximum of 30. New cap of 30 students in a class (with possibility to override).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC’s Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>vi. Have the <b>infrastructure</b> (administrative support, etc.) to support community involvement,</p>
☑ ?	<p>School Boards have very clear infrastructure and support, and formal professional organizations. School Planning Councils also have a considerable amount of administrative support. It is not clear how much support Parent Advisory Councils and District Parent Advisory Councils have.</p>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC’s Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>vii. Allow service delivery to be <b>decentralized</b>, and it will,</p>
☑	<p>Although the mandate is decentralized to School Boards, service delivery varies widely – schools in urban centres can be very large.</p>
6. 2 Reflects CCCABC’s Values	<p><i>e. Community-control</i></p> <p>viii. Build on the <b>strengths</b> that currently exist in the community and province (probably using a community development model).</p>
?	<p>This model has been in place for quite some time.</p>

## In Addition:

On paper, this model is strong and meets many of the criteria laid out in the template for reviewing governance models. However, there was some concern that the model in reality may play out in a different way. To highlight this point, we have included the following vignette. It is not intended to be representative of the experience or opinion of all school administrators in BC; it is merely a way to highlight the questions we need to raise before considering this model for the governance of child care.

### **VIGNETTE: ONE RURAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR'S (RSA) PERSPECTIVE**

*This informal interview was conducted July 2006 with a school principal who has been a teacher and/or an administrator in this rural district for the last 25 years.*

#### **Q: What is the real role of the Parent Advisory Councils: are they powerful? Are they listened to? How are they funded?**

**RSA:** "In our area, the PAC is primarily a fund-raiser for the school and an avenue for parents to go through to get individual advocacy support when they have concerns about the school – they are not really involved in school planning (other than one PAC representative to the SPC and the supposed consultation on the draft annual School Growth Plan).

"A very similar small group of parents are usually involved in the PAC executive – educated, white, middle-class women (with spouses) who are either staying at home or are working part-time and are also sitting on other boards or committees. In my entire career, I only remember one or two aboriginal people getting involved in PAC. The executive can also be dominated by parents who are getting involved because they have a specific issue they would like to address affecting their child/children. This constrains them from focusing on broader educational issues. They also don't feel beholden to the rest of the parents to put forward a unified voice because they are the ones volunteering their time.

"The rest of the parents are often too busy or unable to attend PAC meetings and even sometimes feel uncomfortable with the PAC executive and so avoid meetings. In fact, even in large schools, the PAC meetings are usually quite small. This is unfortunate because PACs can be quite powerful when they work with the larger parent body to advocate for change.

"We need to reach out to a broader audience to elicit parent opinions. In the current model, the role of the school principal is so important in bringing in the broader parent voice. It is really important to work around parents' busy schedules, provide transportation for those who need it, provide child care, provide food and then ensure the meeting gives plain-language information to parents so they understand the 'frame of references' for education in their school."

#### **How are the School Planning Councils working?**

**RSA:** "It is hard to say. We have all year to gather data that will inform our decision making when it comes time to put a School Growth Plan together. We meet, on an average, once every two months and then 5-6 times when putting together the SGP (over the course of about three weeks at the beginning of the school year). What is critical is that the SPC meet after our October, February and May reading assessments. These provide the framework for discussion around whether or not we are indeed making progress.

"Given the short three-week period we have for drafting the SGP, it is difficult to allow for adequate consultation, for example, with the PAC."

#### **How well are parents participating in SPCs?**

**RSA:** "The PAC elects one member of the executive to participate in the SPC – two other parents can volunteer to join the SPC (making three parent representatives) although they only have two voting parent positions. The 3rd parent position is optional – that parent can stand in for a vote if one of the other parents is not present. We have all three parent positions filled.

"There seems to be variation in the way SPCs are functioning. Some SPCs seem to be controlled by the principal, either because the principal wants it that way, or because the parents do not feel they have the information and understanding to comment on some aspects of the plan i.e., in my school, we identified two main goals for the School Growth Plan: Literacy and Social Responsibility. Parents are in a better position to comment on Social Responsibility, but the parents on the SPC don't feel they can comment on the plan to achieve the goal of Literacy. I have taken the time to carefully explain why we are taking this particular approach to implementation, and they feel they can only say: "you are the professional – we will defer to you on this", etc. Although, I do know of one district where the parents insisted on a third goal – numeracy – and so it was written into the plan.

"We need to continue to find ways to inform parents about district goals, teaching methods/frames of reference, etc., and allow them to ask questions before we ask them to participate in decision-making. It is a lengthy process – there is no legislated requirement to take this approach therefore depends on the personality and style of the school administrators."

#### **How well are teachers participating in SPCs?**

**RSA:** "In my school, our SPC does not currently have a teacher representative. My teachers feel too swamped and some disagree with the SPC idea. There are three parent voices (two votes) on an SPC compared with one teacher voice: teachers are professionals and yet have to live with the decisions made at the SPC – so they feel rather frustrated."

**Suggestion:** "Check out BC's Community Schools – it would be a model I would recommend you look at. Each school has its own board of a wide range of stakeholders – it involves envisioning the school as a hub of services to children and youth. It is more participatory."

## Concerns, Issues, Questions

1. Are there some major concerns with the locally-elected model? i.e. What is the government reasoning behind considering moving away from a locally elected board model to a regional board model, as projected by the BCTF? Why have school boards lost the power of taxation (according to BCTF)? What is 'repurposing' and why is the government considering doing it to school boards?<sup>28</sup>
2. It is still unclear as to how the DPACs advise at the district level.
3. Given provincial control over funding, what limitations are there on School Board's political autonomy and advocacy role?

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Population urban and rural, by province and territory (British Columbia), at: [www40.statcan.ca/01/cst01/demo62k.htm](http://www40.statcan.ca/01/cst01/demo62k.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Behind the Numbers: BC home to greatest wealth gap in Canada. November 28, 2001. At: [www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC\\_Office\\_Pubs/btn\\_bcwealthgap.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC_Office_Pubs/btn_bcwealthgap.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education, Information Bulletin: BC's Education System by the Numbers. August 22, 2005. At: [www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2005-2009/2005EDU0065-000751.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2005EDU0065-000751.htm).

<sup>4</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education. Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools. *Number of Homeschooled Children Registered and Registration Grant Amounts*. January 2005. At: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/home\\_school/hs\\_stats.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/home_school/hs_stats.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education Service Plan Summary 2006/07 – 2008/09. At: [www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP\\_brochures/EDUC\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP_brochures/EDUC_brochure.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> BCSTA, From the Legislature: Legislative Analysis for School Boards, May 19, 2006, at: [www.bcsta.org/pub/FromTheLeg/May18-06\\_Bill\\_33.pdf](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/FromTheLeg/May18-06_Bill_33.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> BCSTA, Backgrounder on School Fees, n/d. At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/Backgrounders/School\\_fees.pdf](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/Backgrounders/School_fees.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw) for a full list of relevant legislation, regulations and ministerial orders pertaining to education K-12.

<sup>9</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education Service Plan Summary 2006/07 – 2008/09. At: [www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP\\_brochures/EDUC\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP_brochures/EDUC_brochure.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> British Columbia. *School Act RSBC 1996* at: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/revisedstatutescontents.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/revisedstatutescontents.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See BCTF, A note from your teachers: A report from the BCTF to the members of the legislative assembly – Preserve local, elected school boards, November 1, 2005 Number 8. At: [www.bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers/archive/2005-06/2005-11-01.html](http://www.bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers/archive/2005-06/2005-11-01.html).

<sup>12</sup> See their website at: [www.bcpsea.bc.ca/public/aboutus/aboutintro.html](http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca/public/aboutus/aboutintro.html).

<sup>13</sup> BCTF, A note from your teachers: A report from the BCTF to the members of the legislative assembly – Preserve local, elected school boards, November 1, 2005 Number 8. At: [www.bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers/archive/2005-06/2005-11-01.html](http://www.bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers/archive/2005-06/2005-11-01.html); also, BCSTA, Our Children – Our Responsibility: A Framework for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, and school boards, February 25, 1997. At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/Reports-Briefs/Roles-Response.htm](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/Reports-Briefs/Roles-Response.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Quoting Hon. Shirley Bond, Education Minister, in the Legislature, Wednesday, March 29, 2006 Vol 8, No. 7. In, BCSTA, e-Digest, April 13, 2006. At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/e-Digest/Documents/Leg\\_quotes\\_April\\_13.pdf](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/e-Digest/Documents/Leg_quotes_April_13.pdf). Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education. News Release: Program Expands to Help Kids Get Ready for Kindergarten, June 8, 2006; News Release: Ready, Set, Learn Program Funded for Second Year, November 18, 2005; News Release: New Booklets to Help Families Improve Student Literacy, Sept. 6, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education Service Plan Summary 2006/07 – 2008/09. At: [www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP\\_brochures/EDUC\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP_brochures/EDUC_brochure.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> BCSTA, Our Children – Our Responsibility: A Framework for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, and school boards, February 25, 1997. At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/Reports-Briefs/Roles-Response.htm](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/Reports-Briefs/Roles-Response.htm).

<sup>18</sup> BCTF: <http://www.bctf.bc.ca/education/assessment/WhatsTheProblem.html>.

<sup>19</sup> BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), BCSTA e-Digest, Vol 1, July 6, 2006 At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/e-Digest/e-newsletter\\_July\\_6\\_06.pdf](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/e-Digest/e-newsletter_July_6_06.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Janet Steffenhagen, *Leaders plan to exceed public school standards: First nations celebrate pact giving them control over own education*, Vancouver Sun, Thursday, July 06, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Governments of Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee, *EDUCATION JURISDICTION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT, Signed 5th day of July, 2006*. At: [www.fnesc.bc.ca/Attachments/Jurisdiction/ed\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.fnesc.bc.ca/Attachments/Jurisdiction/ed_agreement.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Yvonne Martin-Newcombe and Michael Prince, "Active Parent Advisory Council Members: Who are They?" In, *BC Educational Leadership Research*, Vancouver: Faculty of Education (UBC), March 2006. At: <http://slc.educ.ubc.ca/eJournal/Issue3/Prince.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE), A Survey of School Planning Councils in British Columbia, 2004. At: [www.sae.ca/publications/A\\_025\\_BBG\\_EXECSUM.php](http://www.sae.ca/publications/A_025_BBG_EXECSUM.php).

<sup>25</sup> British Columbia. Ministry of Education Service Plan Summary 2006/07 – 2008/09. At: [www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP\\_brochures/EDUC\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.corporate.gov.bc.ca/SP_brochures/EDUC_brochure.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> BCTF, A note from your teachers: A report from the BCTF to the members of the legislative assembly – Preserve local, elected school boards, November 1, 2005 Number 8. At: [www.bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers/archive/2005-06/2005-11-01.html](http://www.bctf.ca/NoteFromTeachers/archive/2005-06/2005-11-01.html); also, BCSTA, Our Children – Our Responsibility: A Framework for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, and school boards, February 25, 1997. At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/Reports-Briefs/Roles-Response.htm](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/Reports-Briefs/Roles-Response.htm).

<sup>27</sup> BCSTA, From the Legislature: Legislative Analysis for School Boards, May 19, 2006, at: [www.bcsta.org/pub/FromTheLeg/May18-06\\_Bill\\_33.pdf](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/FromTheLeg/May18-06_Bill_33.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Questions raised by BCTF, AGM 2006 – March 11 to 14. At: [www.bcsta.org/pub/e-Digest/Documents/BCTF\\_recom\\_March\\_30\\_06.pdf](http://www.bcsta.org/pub/e-Digest/Documents/BCTF_recom_March_30_06.pdf)