

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils



For more information about PACs, DPACs and SPCs, talk to someone in your school or district. BCCPAC has published *The BCCPAC Leadership Manual*, a resource to help establish and maintain school and district parent advisory councils. Contact BCCPAC at 604-687-4433 or 1-866-529-4397.

Many PACs and DPACs join BCCPAC to ensure a collective parent voice at the provincial level. BCCPAC talks about members' views to the leaders of other provincial education partner groups including teachers, support staff, principals, superintendents, secretary-treasurers, trustees and the Ministry of Education. BCCPAC also helps PACs, SPCs and DPACs in their roles as advisors in their schools and districts.

The Ministry of Education recognizes BCCPAC as the collective voice of parents of children in BC public schools. BCCPAC represents its member PACs and DPACs on provincial committees dealing with a range of issues, including student assessment, Aboriginal education, curriculum and safety. Just as a principal consults with the PAC on school issues and the school board with the DPAC on district issues, the ministry consults with BCCPAC on issues of provincial importance. BCCPAC is a partner at the Learning Roundtable, a forum for education partners to discuss critical issues with the Premier and Minister of Education related to learning conditions in the public school system, such as class size and class composition.

“Advocacy is essential if fairness principles are to be effectively implemented in our school system. Experience has taught us that without effective advocates the concerns of children are easily overlooked. School and District Parent Advisory Councils are vital mechanisms for the provision of child advocacy within the school system. When operating effectively, these councils can provide important support to individual children and their parents in efforts to resolve conflicts that inevitably arise in such a complex system.”

Dulcie McCallum,
former BC Ombudsman, 1995

Advocacy in Public Schools

Educators and parents are committed to meeting the needs of children. Sometimes parents are unsure about where they “fit” when it comes to speaking up for their children. School district policies and processes can help. Educators can let parents know about policies and processes and help parents understand and use them.

Advocacy means speaking up in support of oneself or others.

It is important to recognize that parents:

- are their child's natural advocate
- can make sure their child's rights, needs and opinions are respected
- can make sure that decisions affecting their child are made fairly.

Together, parents and educators can help children through difficult times and teach them to speak up for themselves.

In the Fair Schools report, the Ombudsman talks about how schools can meet the challenge of being fair to students. Advocacy in public schools upholds the principles from the Fair Schools report:

1. All children and youth have the right to be valued and to be treated with respect and dignity.
2. All children and youth have the right to a fair and equitable education.
3. All children and youth have the right to receive appropriate advocacy supports.
4. All children and youth have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, to express their views and to have them carefully considered.
5. All children and youth have the right to the benefit of the fundamental human rights provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
6. All children and youth have the right to a safe physical and emotional environment.
7. All children and youth have the right to receive appropriate programs from appropriately trained and properly motivated staff.
8. All children and youth should have the opportunity to access publicly funded services in their home communities or as close to their home as possible.

Office of the Ombudsman, Fair Schools Report, Report 35, May 1995.
