

September 14, 2023

Ey Swayel, and Hello,

Dear Parents, Guardians, Elders, and Community Members,

The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) was started in the year 2000 at grades 4, 7, and 10 as a series of standardized tests that would report to parents how their child was doing in the areas of reading, writing, and numeracy. It has faced criticism over the years for flaws inherent in any standardized test and rating schools based on FSA results. Grade 10 was eventually removed from the FSA, but in Grade 4 and 7 the assessment continues to be used.

Concerns about the FSA have meant that some students do not participate, which makes overall results less valid for schools and school districts to understand and support struggling students. This also has a direct result in rating schools from highest to lowest. In the past few years, the First Nations Education Steering Council (FNESC) has expressed their concern over a decline in participation with the FSA. Some sort of standardized testing is vital for School Districts to be accountable to the communities they serve, and for true equity to emerge in British Columbia as a whole.

Mission Public School Board of Education discussed the significance of the Foundation Skills Assessment in November 2021 in relation to FNESC expressing their need for data and support for the FSA. The Board agreed to write a letter to parents explaining how vital the results from these assessments are, as both the Ministry and FNESC rely on the data to support student equity. The British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) has long opposed the FSA, and it is certainly true that organizations like the Fraser Institute misrepresent the FSA's significance. The BCTF has been effective at messaging parents to have their child/children not participate in the FSA, and this undermines the students who could really benefit from the Assessment. The data is still utilized at both the School District and Provincial level for evidence-based decision making, and it continues to be reported home to parents. FNESC also needs the data for Grades 4 and 7 students and is very supportive of the FSA. While the FSA is not the only data and needs to be used in conjunction with other data/information, most teachers use a wide variety of formal and informal methods to effectively assess student progress and to meet individual student needs. It still creates some province wide measures that FNESC and others can use to help understand where support may be needed locally and provincially.

In November of 2021, the First Nations Leadership Council, the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations' Summit, and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs submitted a letter to the Minister of Education and Childcare to express their concerns regarding the ongoing targeted campaign to cancel the FSA in BC public schools. The letter indicates that the cancellation of the FSA is contrary to the views of First Nations leadership and the legal commitments of the province, which specifically addresses the FSA.

Therefore, the Mission Public School Board of Education would like to express its support for the position of FNESC and encourage all students to participate in the Foundation Skills Assessment as part of the ongoing efforts to improve the education of all students in our community. Please do not hesitate to reach out to trustees@mpsd.ca to discuss further.



Sincerely,
Shelley Carter – Board Chair
On behalf of the Mission School Board of Education