

Representative Submissions*

The thoughtfulness of the more than 620 presentations made to the **Charter for Public Education** was inspiring. The great majority of these submissions are referenced at some point in this report. Nevertheless, there were some submissions which stood out, not so much because they were more meaningful than others, but because they were representative of the whole. Together, they provide a kind of summary of the findings of the panel, and point directly to the principles and vision articulated in the **Charter**. It is instructive to note the tremendous diversity and breadth of the groups and individuals cited among these representative submissions.

** Some editing of these submissions has been done to facilitate the flow of ideas, and to reduce their length. Great care was taken in the editing process to ensure that the substance of the ideas is as the original authors intended.*

Kim Howland, District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) Chairperson, Nanaimo

DPAC in Nanaimo has been hoping to see the government work with all partners of the community and the education system towards a basic quality of education.

Some of the issues we have been trying to address within our district that we would like to see addressed province-wide are:

- Working for the student's benefit first and foremost in all decisions.
- Equity in course selections.
- Reaching all styles of learners – visual, intellectual, tactile, experiential, with emphasis on academic, fine arts and science.
- Early intervention programs.
- A safe environment for students and staff.
- A provincial Abuse Protocol to protect students' rights.
- A system that allows parents and students to address concerns on a fair, safe and respectful level.
- Mandating programs from the BC Safe Schools Facility.
- Respect for all education partners.

- Clean, healthy environments for learning.
- Teaching to the student and not the curriculum.
- Inclusion that is supported by full funding.
- Standards for class size with a realistic look at class composition.
- Creating a critical thinking adult.
- A basic standard of education and a standard for funding. The concern is that public education is being lost and the future of the best quality education will be solely for those who can afford it, or whose parents care and advocate for it or whose school has the most active PAC and parent group.
- Supporting poverty initiatives within districts. Recognize that children do not learn if they are not fed. It is impossible to teach children if socio-economic factors are not considered.
- Working to create healthy and socially responsible communities in schools that will transfer out into the overall community.

Angela Laird, Brittany Froese, Candace Coupland,
Students at Kamloops Secondary School

(These three students wrote and performed a short play for the **Charter** panel. The script is found below, together with the students' explanatory notes.)

What is an Educated Person?

Angela: (sitting in waiting room reading book)

Brit: (walks into Candace's office with flute) Hi! My name's Brittany. I'm here for the job interview.

Candace: Hello, what is that you have?

Brit: My flute, I just came from a lesson.

Candace: Ah, I see. Do you have a resume?

Brit: Yes, here it is.

Candace: (reads resume) Tell me a bit about yourself Brittany.

Brit: Well, I am responsible, honest and reliable. I am a hardworking student at Kam-High. I do several volunteer activities – at the SPCA, the hospital and the Salvation Army throughout –

Candace: (interrupts) Ooh, well I don't really need to hear about those things. Since we're looking for a well educated person, all that really matters is your grades. So, what sorts of grades do you get?

Brit: Oh, mostly B's and C's. I have a record of my grades if you'd like to see it. Candace: (looks it over) Hmm. (frowns disapprovingly) I see ...

Do you have any letters of reference?

Brit: Yes, I do. (hands papers to Candace)
Candace: (looks them over) So, why do you want this job Brittany?
Brit: Well, it wouldn't pay as well as my previous job, but since I have so many activities in the area and can't afford a car it's more convenient. I also think I will enjoy this type of work a lot.
Candace: Thank you, I'll give you a call if anything comes up.
(Brit leaves office. Angela gets up and hides book)
Brit: Hi Angela! You're applying for this job too?
Angela: Yes, I am.
Brit: Cool! By the way do you still have that book I lent you a few weeks ago?
Angela: Book ... Umm ... What book?
Brit: You know, Watership Down.
Angela: What are you talking about? I never borrowed your book. I don't even read.
Brit: Oh, okay then. See you later.
(Angela goes into office)

THE NEXT DAY

Candace: Congratulations! You've got the job.
Angela: Great!
Candace: As soon as I saw your grades I knew I had a well educated person on my hands. Your grades were higher than anyone else who applied and since that was the most important factor you got the job of course!
Angela: Thank you very much. When do I start?
Candace: Tomorrow morning.
Angela: See you then!

Comments on the Play from the Students

You may think that this scenario of an untrustworthy person who lacks knowledge of current events, lies at the drop of a hat, and still gets hired merely on the assumption that if they get good grades they must be well educated seems ridiculous and unrealistic, but the fact is that it does happen. It is a common occurrence for people to be judged as educated or not, based solely on how good their grades are. Like many others in our society today, the interviewer focused too much on intellectual strength and didn't consider equally important qualities such as honesty, good morals, work ethic, creativity and musical and interpersonal abilities. The intellectual aspect is important, of course, because one must have the ability to become educated and learn new things, but we believe that for someone to be well educated he/she must be well

rounded, have insight into other cultures, have a wide range of experiences, and have knowledge in many areas.

Langley School District Graduate Profile, Presented to the Charter panel by Alison McVeigh, School Trustee

The Graduate Profile is a vision statement for the district. Its purpose is to describe the attributes of students graduating from Langley schools. All curriculum, administrative and teacher practice, assessment, evaluation and reporting processes, will be directed toward the achievement of this vision. While there is a recognition of the diversity and developmental stages of students, high standards of performance will be expected. With the modeling and support of the family and community, Langley students will be:

Ethical and Respectful Citizens

Who act in caring, principled and responsible ways, respecting the diversity, gender, race, ability and cultural heritage of all people and the rights of others to hold different ideas and beliefs.

Democratic Participants

Who, as Canadian and global citizens, make knowledgeable decisions, and take actions which consider the needs of others, show historical awareness and are in accordance with the principles, laws, rights and responsibilities of a democracy.

Self-directed Individuals

Who in pursuit of personal and career goals display a strong work ethic, initiative, responsibility and a commitment to life long learning while maintaining a balance in their lives.

Skilled and Knowledgeable Learners

Who demonstrate high standards of performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking; mathematics; the natural, applied and social sciences; the fine arts; the applied skills and information technologies.

Collaborative Workers

Who demonstrate communication skills and commitment in pursuing group goals and purposes.

Quality Contributors

Who contribute to the development of quality ideas, products and performance through learning, talent, creativity, flexibility, critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Adrienne Montani, Chairperson, Vancouver School Board

Schools as learning communities must first and foremost be places of profound respect for children and youth, staffed by people who are knowledgeable and supportive of children's rights, of their developmental needs and optimistic about each child's ability to learn and reach their full potential.

... we must also support teachers and all others who work in schools to be able to teach and nurture children in an environment imbued with respect and caring. They must also be supported in expressing their passion for teaching and for partnering with their students in a learning journey.

At the same time as the carpet is getting pulled out from under the feet of schools, many students are coming to school far needier. Social assistance cuts (rate decreases, eligibility restrictions) are increasing the depth of poverty for families on welfare, and creating greater instability for families – including food insecurity and housing insecurity. Other supports and community services are disappearing or becoming unable to keep up with the demand for their help.

There is a consistent attempt to shake the public's confidence in public education (with a lot of help from the corporate media) by groups like the Fraser Institute, who would like to see the "monopoly" of public education dismantled, and a "marketplace of consumer choice" replace the comprehensive neighbourhood public school.

But this new rhetoric of choice comes with an agenda that values competition, not community building, and we all know which families and students are most likely to win a consumers' race, and which are most likely to lose.

Schools with well-stocked and staffed libraries, with smaller class sizes and teachers able to give attention to individual student learning styles and needs, with social supports built in to the staff team in sufficient numbers to be effective, with school buildings that are safe places to learn, with a rich curriculum, fully resourced, that includes academic subjects, fine arts, athletics and opportunities for personal exploration and risk-taking, with an inclusive, caring school community, these are just

some of the things in my vision of what public schools should be. In this vision, many things that are currently distracting so many of us from focusing on education, would be gone, e.g. incessant fund-raising demands on parents and school boards, agonizing decisions on what to cut next, and the contradiction between knowing the importance of having curricula that reflect the experiences and realities of the students we are teaching and the inability of our schools to purchase learning materials that don't contain the historical biases and omissions that exclude and embarrass some of our students.

I would argue that BC must stop looking to the worst examples, where privatization and commodification of education have been imposed, and look instead to the countries, for example in parts of Europe, that have strongly supported public education systems from pre-school through post-secondary.

The stakes are very high in this struggle between competing visions of education. It would be a tremendous loss to our hopes for sustaining a cohesive, caring society if the competitive, privatized and class stratified vision of education won.

The principles of equity, inclusion, democracy, high quality learning environments and student engagement have not always been fully realized in our public schools, but we have, I think, worked from a shared belief in their value.

First Nations Education Steering Committee

Given the numerous challenges that exist, FNESC respectfully asserts the following recommendations to ensure greater success for First Nations Students.

1. British Columbians must fully recognize the unique place of First Nations people and their inherent rights.
2. The racism that exists in the public education system must also be honestly admitted and addressed.
3. Public schools, school curricula, textbooks, and learning materials must be more reflective of First Nations people.
4. There is a pressing need for more First Nations people in schools and in the public education system administrative structure.
5. It must be recognized that targeted Aboriginal Education funding has contributed significantly to efforts to address all of the issues noted above.
6. The public education system must more fully recognize First Nations jurisdiction for education.

7. The public education system must continue to emphasize mechanisms such as Local Education Agreements.
8. The public education system must make concerted efforts to inform and consult with First Nations parents.
9. The BC public education system must continue to track data and measure results.
10. Greater attention must also be paid to provincial special education statistics and the serious over-representation of First Nations students.

Bill Shephard, Chair, Regional District of Mount Waddington

As the major communities, hamlets as well as municipalities, evolved around and away from the logging and fishing camps that served the area and the industry, the establishment of the public school was the landmark event that set the tone of the settlement.

A school lost leaves a community without a heart, a community where it will be difficult to attract growing families. A community without a school is a community without a real future. We also insist that the school have a teacher, as well. The idea of “distance education” with computer connection to the outside, is not the answer that we can accept for our children in small settlements.

The first thing we expect of the public educational system is the knowledge that our children will need to advance to higher education or to a successful level of trade skills.

... we hope that a public education charter will call for a broad smorgasbord of knowledge, with an emphasis on the outdoors and nature. We hope that there can be enough flexibility to allow for creativity in teaching the 3 “Rs”. I think that a lot of people would like to feel that the system drew the kids into the practical knowledge of the local forest and ocean environment.

Your challenge in developing this aspect of the charter is to balance desirable social components of the system with the time and effort demands of the 3 “R” curriculum both for students and staff. From my point of view there needs to be enough flexibility to achieve community social goals at the level of our small schools. There also needs to be sufficient contact at a community and school level, between the parents, the community as a whole, and the formal and NGO agencies that social issues bring into the question.

It is extremely important to foster appreciation for the fine arts and to discover and nurture latent artistic talent. We need to outline the opportunities that exist for a fuller, richer, cultural lifestyle, even at the level of a community with a one-room school. A formal statement in your charter, on suggested community obligations for developing joint use arts and sports amenities and programs, would be useful.

Finally, I suggest that the school system has a direct role to play in maintaining the historical record of the community and integrating that history into the broader historical context. How do we codify this wonderful tapestry and put it into the local “socials” curriculum? Please include something in your charter that will allow that to happen in all of rural BC and you will make our small communities richer places to live in.

So long as the Public System has a broad and inclusive program, it will always set the standards and serve most of the students in the province. So long as the Public School System maintains its broad focus and is sensitive to the needs of the community, no matter the size of the community, it will be the foundation of learning.

Carol Clarke, Vice-president Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 847, Nicola Similkameen

In School District #58 there are 110 plus proud members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, (Canada’s largest education union).

They are committed to quality education and work hard to achieve it despite the pressures created by frozen education funding and the threat of privatization.

They work together to support the education of our youth to produce well-rounded individuals who hopefully will reach their full potential, who will continue to learn throughout their lives, and who will make meaningful contributions to society as “educated persons.”

They work towards providing quality education and a safe and caring environment, with respect for students and staff, without discrimination and with fairness for all, principles that Public Education could and should work towards.

Richmond Association of School Administrators,
presented to the Charter panel by Mark Porter,
President

An educated person is one who continues to develop, within the scope of their individual potential, the understandings, skills, and attitudes that provide that individual not only the means to develop a meaningful and contributing life in society, but the means to participate in changing and shaping the future of that society.

An educated person is one who understands how the world works and how they fit into that world. An educated person is one who can give critical thought to issues and events and make sound decisions about them. An educated person is one who values and respects different ideas and beliefs and can support or reform their own ideas when the ones they hold close are challenged. An educated person is a learner for life.

- someone who can think critically
- someone who has gained the skills to become a life long learner
- someone who can think beyond self to the greater good

The Principles of public education:

- 1) the value of the **individual**
- 2) the **inclusion** of all individuals
- 3) respect of individual **rates and styles** of learning
- 4) learning is both an **individual and group process**
- 5) learning requires the **active participation** of the learner
- 6) the education of an individual is a **shared responsibility** of both the home and the school environments.

Like the principles of learning, public education should recognize that learning requires the active participation of the student, people learn in a variety of different ways and at different rates, learning is both an individual and a group process and that everyone is entitled to an education regardless of race, ethnicity, challenges, age, gender, or socio-economic background. Public education should prepare/facilitate the development of an educated person.

- inclusivity
- valuing and honouring diversity (of individuals and groups)
- the betterment of society through critical reflection, discourse, and action

British Columbia Teachers' Federation, presented to the Charter panel by Neil Worboys, President

Among the many challenges facing our public education system will be that of:

- securing fair and adequate funding for public education, on a stable basis.
- maintaining a balance between preparing students for work and preparing students for living full lives as responsible citizens in a democracy.
- resisting privatization and commercialization in the public school system.
- avoiding the trend to commodify the educational experience, to use the language and standards of the market to drive educational decision making.
- recognizing the value of lifelong learning and supporting this learning with opportunities and resources.
- ensuring an equal emphasis on intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth in students.