



Board of Education
School District No. 38 (Richmond)

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January 22, 2008

Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education
BC Ministry of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Bond:

I am writing today to ask you to take action to limit the Fraser Institute's ability to employ Foundation Skills Assessment data for the production of its Elementary School Report Card.

The Ministry website already contains the disclaimer that "attempting to rank schools or districts based on FSA results invites misleading comparisons that ignore particular circumstances that affect achievement in each school." Nonetheless, every year the Fraser Institute uses this data to produce a dubious statistic upon which basis it ranks schools and publishes the results. It is our view that this represents an egregious misuse of Foundation Skills Assessment data that not only fails to accurately inform the public, but also creates misleading impressions that are harmful to individual schools and to public education in general.

Despite the fact that the Ministry, trustees, administrators, and teachers have all disassociated themselves from the Fraser Institute Report Card, it continues to produce one of the highest selling editions of The Province newspaper each year and parents continue to consume this "information" as if it were true. Therefore, we ask you to take whatever steps you can in order to limit this misuse of public data.

We understand that Freedom of Information legislation gives access to the data, but we wonder if you might attach an ethical standard to the use of that data. For example, we note that the Fraser Institute produces no confidence interval for its statistics, which would certainly be unacceptable in any academic journal.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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The Foundation Skills Assessment itself is technically sound and can provide useful information to schools, but this potential is entirely overwhelmed by the distress that teachers and schools experience as a result of the misuse of the data by the Fraser Institute after the fact. Surely something can be done to prevent this insult so that the educational community can focus its discussion on ways to maximize the potential benefits of the FSA.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda McPhail". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "M".

Mrs. Linda McPhail, Chairperson
On Behalf of the Board of Education (Richmond)

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