



# Learning Matters

A Guide for Parents



A Publication of School District No. 38 (Richmond)

*Revised 2005*

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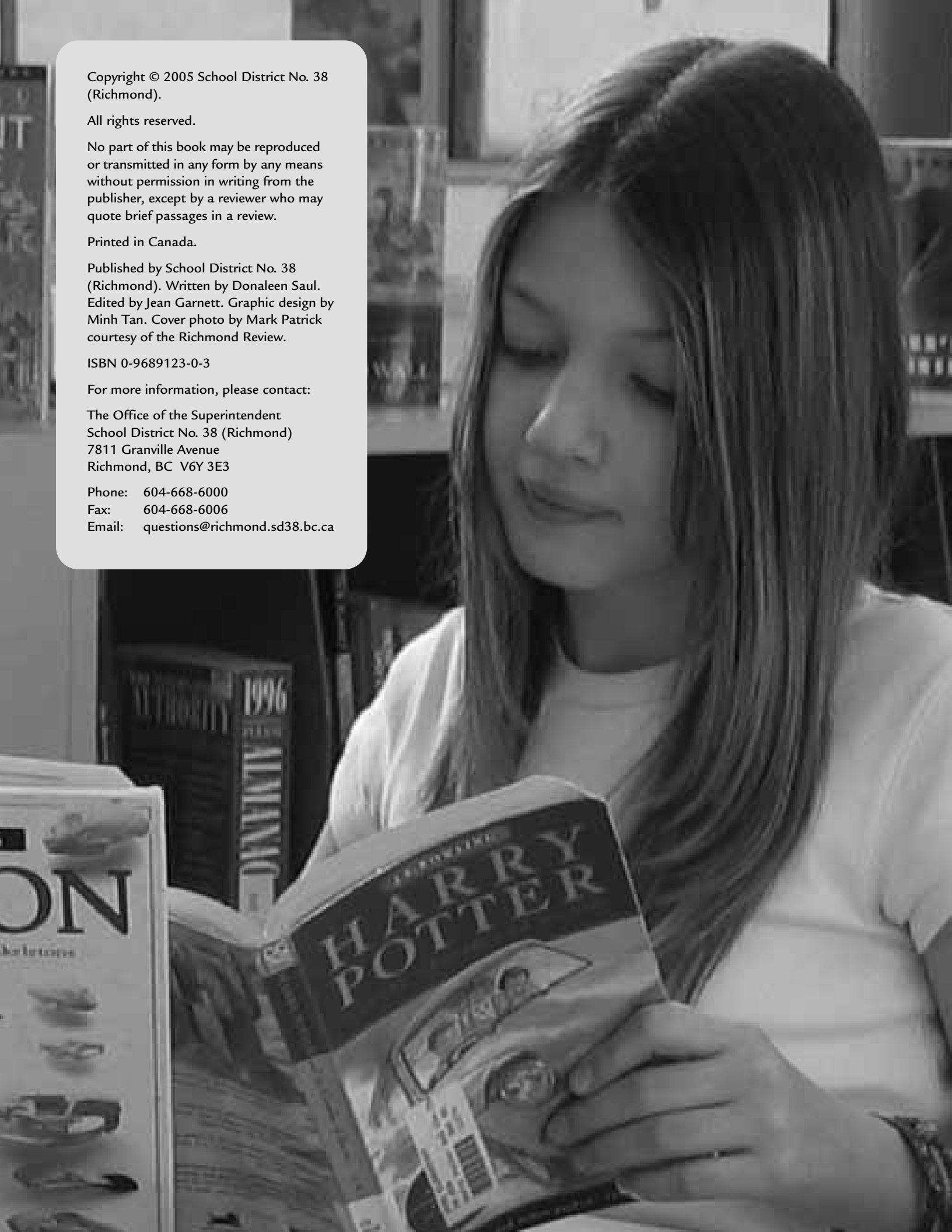
For more information, please contact:

The Office of the Superintendent  
School District No. 38 (Richmond)  
7811 Granville Avenue  
Richmond, BC V6Y 3E3

Phone: 604-668-6000

Fax: 604-668-6006

Email: [questions@richmond.sd38.bc.ca](mailto:questions@richmond.sd38.bc.ca)



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# LEARNING MATTERS

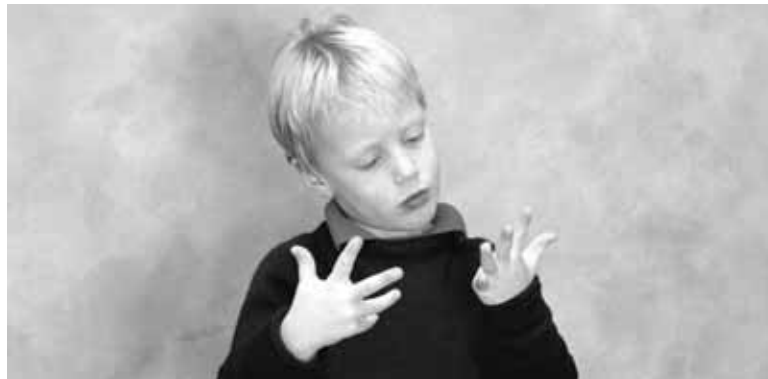
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## INTRODUCTION

Educating a child is a big challenge and, as parents, we need strong support to meet that challenge.

That is the reason we have produced this handbook, *Learning Matters*. Created by Richmond School District parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators working in partnership, its purpose is to uphold your efforts as parents in guiding your child's schooling.



"The school and I have one thing in common – my child. Whatever we can do to make the education for my daughter work, that's what matters."

Parent,  
Richmond School District

There used to be more of a separation between the responsibilities of parents and schools in educating children. However, we now know that education is not only an intellectual process but also includes the child's physical, emotional, and social development. As a result, our roles overlap. Our district therefore views public education as a shared commitment between home and school, with parents and the home environment playing a crucial role in a child's learning.

*Learning Matters* is based on the following assumption:

As a parent, you are willing to actively support your child's learning.

When both parents and educators assume that responsibility, everyone benefits – especially the learner.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

You can use this guide in one of three ways:

- Read it from beginning to end and gain an overview of our district and your vital role within it.
- Scan it for the topics that are of immediate interest and importance.
- Keep it handy so that you can refer to it as needed.

We hope this handbook will:

- invite you into our district as a partner in your child's education.
- offer specific suggestions for supporting your child's learning.
- tell you where you can get the information and support that you need.
- help you address your concerns about your child's education.
- identify who to contact if you have a concern.
- support you in resolving any problems that might arise.
- explain how we make decisions in our district.
- help make your experience in Richmond schools enjoyable.

# LEARNING MATTERS

## How This Guide is Organized

**Section One, Our Focus is on the Learner** – discusses what we know about children’s learning and how we can support it.

**Section Two, The Parent’s Role** – addresses the learner’s relationship with his first teachers – his parents. This section explores your essential role in your child’s learning and how to fulfill that role most effectively.

**Section Three, The Learner, Parent and Teacher Partnership** – explains Richmond School Board’s commitment to clarity, consistency and communication in the learner-parent-teacher partnership. Additional topics include the teacher’s role, curriculum, homework, and tips for approaching teachers with questions and concerns.

**Section Four, Spotlight on School and District** – clarifies how our schools and district are organized, and discusses how you can become involved at the school and/or district level.

**Section Five, Public Schools in BC** – explains the role of the School Board, and the Ministry of Education’s role as the ultimate policy-maker. It also explains the role of the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) as an advocate for parents.

**Quick Reference** – answers Frequently Asked Questions about our schools and programs, and includes a phone list and map of our district. It also decodes acronyms like PAC, IRP and SPC.

“Throughout this guide, the word “parent” includes the guardian or primary caregiver. Learners or students, as well as teachers and parents will be referred to alternately as “she” or “he;” “his” or “her.” All references to the learner/student, parent or teacher include both genders.”



## OUR FOCUS IS ON THE LEARNER

What is Best for the Learner?

Our district's motto is "Our focus is on the learner."

Wherever possible, our decisions and actions as a district have the learner in mind.

- **What program or classroom do we place a child in?**
- **Which building project do we take on first?**
- **How do we best support a child with special needs?**
- **How and where do we assign our teacher support services?**
- **What kinds of extracurricular activities do we offer?**

When we consider these questions, we ask ourselves – **What is best for the learner?** Some decisions affect the learner directly, others not so directly. But all the decisions we make have some impact on the learner's experience in our schools.

Focusing on the learner helps us to remain clear about our priorities, and to make choices that are in a child's best interests. We try to adapt to the child, providing the challenge and support that he needs, rather than forcing our students to conform to a "system."

This is our commitment as a district.



# LEARNING MATTERS

## How do Children Learn?

To understand what is best for the learner, we need to understand how learning takes place.

In their early years, children form neural connections, or synapses, very quickly. These synapses, or learning pathways, define the brain's organization and functioning throughout life.

What causes brain cells to form learning pathways? Genes control some of the process, but experience plays a big role. Every time a parent or caregiver interacts with an infant or toddler, connections are formed. Positive interactions with nurturing caregivers profoundly stimulate young brains. This stimulation causes new learning pathways to form, and strengthens existing ones.

In the first years of life, children form extra learning pathways. A three-year-old has twice as many synapses as an adult, which means that his brain is twice as active.

After age 10, as children move toward adulthood, trillions of extra connections are eliminated. Those synapses that have been used repeatedly in the early years have become stronger and tend to remain. Those that have not been used often enough are shed.

The result is a brain that is better organized and better suited for learning the more difficult concepts and skills that a young adult needs to master. Children whose neural pathways have been reinforced by positive early experiences will be better off when the brain's pruning process begins. New technologies have allowed scientists the opportunity to look inside living, thinking, feeling adolescent brains, and their discoveries are startling, and have implications for parents and all who work with teens. Around puberty, the outer layer of the brain thickens and then thins dramatically, as the brain is preparing for adult life. Interestingly, scientists are reporting that the adolescent brain does not take on its inevitable form until its early twenties. This rapid growth and change in the brain has several implications; the brain is very receptive to new information and the acquisition of new skills, while it is very vulnerable to environmental and chemical influences, at a time when the reasoning centre of the brain is several years away

"A newborn's brain makes connections at an incredible pace as the child absorbs its environment. The richer the environment, the greater the number of interconnections that are made, and learning takes place faster and with greater meaning."

David Sousa,  
author of "How the Brain Learns:  
A Classroom Teacher's Guide"



For more information about brain development, see the following websites:

[www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com)

[www.earlychildhood.com](http://www.earlychildhood.com)

[www.brainconnection.com](http://www.brainconnection.com)

[www.dana.org](http://www.dana.org)

[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

[www.brains.org](http://www.brains.org)



from functioning as it will as an adult brain. Scientists have noted differences in the development of male and female brains that have implications for both parents and teachers, and have discovered that sleep and nutrition significantly impact the development of the adolescent brain.

## How to Stimulate Children's Learning

University of British Columbia professor Clyde Hertzman, MD, says the period from pre-conception to age five is the "investment phase" of a child's life. Failure to provide the right conditions for a child's development during this time makes the brain physically different from the brain of a child who has been well cared for.



For more suggestions for supporting your child's learning at home, see page 12.

If the environment in which the child lives is safe, stimulating and nurturing, her brain development will be strong. If the environment is unsafe, under-stimulating or non-nurturing, her brain development will be weakened. These differences can have lifelong consequences.

New brain research confirms that reading to a child, talking to her, telling her stories, singing to her, and other kinds of language activities encourage early development. They not only support intellectual growth, but promote healthy emotional and social development as well.

## Children are Active Learners

Not only are children physically active, but they are active in seeking out new experiences. They learn from hands-on experience that involves all of their senses. They learn best in an environment where they can make decisions and choices appropriate to their age and level of development.

## Children Learn Through Physical Experience

Through looking, listening, smelling, tasting, and touching, children find out what things are like, how they work, and how they relate to one another. They combine these observations with more complex thinking like identifying patterns, interpreting, and drawing conclusions about what happens. These conclusions either add to children's existing ideas or cause them to adjust their thinking.



## 50 WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Look in their eyes when you talk to them.
- ▶ Listen to them.
- ▶ Play with them.
- ▶ Read aloud together.
- ▶ Tell them their feelings are OK.
- ▶ Set boundaries that keep them safe.

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[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

# LEARNING MATTERS

## Children's Learning is Affected by their Surroundings

Children learn best when they are safe and secure. You create this feeling when you treat them with warmth, respect, and caring.

Parents can further enhance their child's learning by creating a stimulating environment – one which provides a variety of opportunities and experiences, challenges the child at a level she is mature enough to handle, and establishes an expectation that she will learn.

## Children Learn Through Social Interaction

Children are influenced by the people in their lives, especially the adults who are important to them, such as parents, other relatives, and teachers. They also learn through interaction with their peers. As children relate to others, they make decisions about themselves and their actions based on the reactions they receive. They decide if their thinking and actions are “right” or “wrong” and adjust them accordingly.

## Children Learn Through Reflection

Children need to reflect on what they know. Caregivers can guide children to make connections between what they know now and what they want to know. This helps them to make connections between ideas and gives them clues for doing similar things in the future.

## Children Have Different Learning Styles

Each child is unique with his own personality, likes, dislikes, and styles of learning. Some children watch for a long time before trying something new. Others jump right in.

If you observe how your child likes to learn, you can give him chances to learn in those ways. Approximately 20 to 30 percent of school children remember best what they hear, 40 percent remember best what they see or read, and almost all children remember what they experience directly through touching, feeling and doing.

“...research reaffirms strongly that we learn best when we are actively involved in interesting and challenging situations and when we talk about the learning. Task-centered talking is critical to the memory process since it helps maintain focus while enhancing sense and meaning.”

David Sousa,  
author of “How the Brain Learns:  
A Classroom Teacher's Guide”



## Children are Intelligent in Different Ways

In the past, intelligence was based on language and mathematical abilities, but current research reveals many other forms of intelligence.

Psychologist Howard Gardner originated the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), and has identified eight different types of intelligence. He indicates that there may be more as well.



For more information on Multiple Intelligences, see "Frames of Mind" by Howard Gardner or "In Their Own Way" by Thomas Armstrong. You can also investigate the following websites:

[www.newhorizons.org](http://www.newhorizons.org)

[www.indiana.edu](http://www.indiana.edu)

[www.surfaquarium.com](http://www.surfaquarium.com)

Here are the ones Gardner has identified so far:

- **Logical-mathematical** – the ability to see patterns and approach situations logically. These children tend to be precise and methodical and to excel at mathematics and science.
- **Linguistic** – the ability to use words and language in many different forms. Reading and writing come easily to these children and they tend to do well at school.
- **Visual/spatial** – the ability to form a mental model and to maneuver and operate using that model. These children think in images and pictures and often excel at representative drawings.
- **Musical** – the ability to attune to rhythms, pitch and tonal patterns. These children easily remember melodies and are likely to hum and turn sounds into rhythms.
- **Bodily/kinesthetic** – the ability to use the body or part of it to solve problems and communicate. These children are well coordinated, like to participate in sports, and enjoy touching things.
- **Naturalistic** – the ability to attune to the natural environment and to use information gathered through the senses. These children enjoy outdoor activities, and tend to have a strong interest in animals, plants, stars, the weather, etc.



Another name for interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences is "Emotional Intelligence" (EI), identified by psychologist Daniel Goleman.

- **Interpersonal** – the ability to understand the feelings and intentions of others. These children work well in groups and often play a leadership role.
- **Intrapersonal** – the ability to understand their own feelings, motivations, strengths and weaknesses. These children often keep journals and enjoy solitude.



**50**  
**WAYS**  
**TO SHOW**  
**KIDS YOU CARE**

- ▶ Listen to their stories.
- ▶ Hug them.
- ▶ Present options when they seek your counsel.
- ▶ Suggest better behaviours when they act out.
- ▶ Share their excitement.

# LEARNING MATTERS

Observing your children's abilities and areas of interest can help you see what forms of intelligence are strongest. Then you can select activities to bring out their gifts and to gently encourage areas that are less developed.

Knowing your child's intelligences can help you identify the best ways to teach him. For example, a musical child may learn new information in the form of a song, a kinesthetic child in the form of a dance, and a spatial child in the form of a drawing.

It is important to remember that most of us exhibit more than one form of intelligence and intelligence can change over time. MI categories are fluid and should be used as a guide not a prescription. We all need to avoid labeling a child (or anyone else!) as "spatial but not linguistic," or "intrapersonal but not bodily/kinesthetic," and so on.

## Including All Learners

Learners differ not only in types of intelligence but in personality, culture, family background, and many other ways. In Richmond schools, we have a policy of inclusion which is our commitment to giving ALL learners an opportunity to fulfill their potential and reach their greatest success.

This means that we modify our curriculum and/or adapt our programs and services so that our learners, regardless of language, gender, learning style, culture, personality, intellectual ability, physical capability, fine arts ability, etc., have equitable access to learning, achievement, and pursuit of excellence.

Children vary widely in their neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses and this variation has powerful implications for educating all kinds of minds. No one can be good at everything. Many students possess highly specialized minds and deserve to be recognized for their abilities, while not being declared deficient for their shortcomings. Such an approach takes a positive view of neurodevelopmental diversity. In this approach students are not labeled. Instead, the day-to day observable phenomena and behaviors are described and learning profiles are created. In managing a learning profile, a student's strengths and affinities are strengthened, accommodations and interventions are provided to address weaknesses or dysfunctions, and students are made aware of their specific breakdowns in learning as well as their strengths. This awareness is called "demystification".

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

For a more detailed discussion about inclusion, see the Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Inclusion**, available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.



“The Richmond School District is dedicated to providing opportunities for all students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge which will enable them to enjoy a productive and satisfying life and to be positive, responsible participants in our democratic society and the global community.”

Richmond School District  
Statement of Philosophy

## The Principles of Learning

Given everything that we know about how young people learn, Richmond schools are guided by three basic principles of learning, established by our provincial system of public education:

- 1. Learning requires the active participation of the student.**
- 2. People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.**
- 3. Learning is both an individual and a group process.**

These principles underlie everything we do and are also important for parents to keep in mind in supporting children’s learning.



## 50 WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Give them space when they need it.
- ▶ Laugh at their jokes.
- ▶ Answer their questions.
- ▶ Tell them how terrific they are.
- ▶ Create a tradition with them and keep it.





## THE PARENT'S ROLE



"I'm at least 50% responsible for my daughter's education...

It can't just be the teacher."

Parent,  
Richmond School District

As parents, we are our children's first teachers and our homes their first classroom. Children first learn language, not by watching television, but by listening to us when we talk to them while cuddling or playing. As they get older, if we encourage them to speak and listen, and if we respond to what they have to say, their ability to use language expands.

### Benefits of Supporting Your Child's Learning

Studies show that when parents actively support their children's learning, their children:

- get better grades.
- improve in their language achievement.
- are more likely to graduate from secondary school and to go on to further education.
- are better behaved and have a more positive attitude.
- are more likely to expand in their intellectual development.
- have better relationships with their parents.



"Children do better in school when their fathers are involved in their studies, whether or not their fathers live with them."

From "Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools," U.S. Department of Education, 1997

### Alternatives...

Here are some alternatives to asking 'How was school today?'

- Tell me about one thing that you learned at school today.
- Tell me about the best thing that happened for you at school today?
- Tell me about the toughest thing that happened for you at school today?

When you are up to date on your child's schoolwork, you can ask specific questions – e.g., 'How is your Social Studies project coming along? What was your Math quiz like?'

## Creating a Supportive Learning Environment at Home

From birth to age 18, children will have spent only about 13 percent of their waking hours at school. This means that most of the remaining 87 percent is spent under the guidance of their parents.

There are many things that parents can do to create the safe, secure, and stimulating environment children need in order to learn. Here are some guidelines:

- Set high but reasonable expectations for your children and support them in meeting those expectations.
- Support and encourage your children's curiosity and desire to explore.
- Assist your children's efforts to master new skills.
- Acknowledge all of their efforts. Share the excitement of your child's projects and accomplishments in learning new skills. Remember to praise more than criticize.
- Be specific in what you admire about their accomplishments. (Say, *You kicked that ball really far!* or *Your essay is very well organized.* rather than *You did great!*)
- Provide a stimulating physical environment that includes music, books, games, crafts, and inspiration for creative play.
- Encourage visits from other adults who enjoy children and encourage their learning.
- Play games such as cards and board games with your children that promote a wide range of number and language skills.
- Supervise the amount of television and the kinds of television programs your child watches. Watch shows with your child and discuss what ideas and values are being portrayed.
- Help your children extend their general knowledge by visiting the outdoors and interesting places or events in the community, reading books, and watching and discussing educational television programs.
- Promote your children's language skills by talking with them and listening to them. Tell them stories and encourage them to tell you stories. Encourage them to discuss a movie or story.
- Encourage reading as a hobby.
- Use a bulletin board for family messages, interesting articles or pictures.
- Try the "Word-A-Day" game. Select a word appropriate to the child's age. See how many times a day the family can use the word correctly.
- Encourage fun activities such as sports, performing arts, and scouting.
- Select one meal a few times a week when your family has the opportunity to eat and talk together.
- Provide quiet time spent together as a family, without outside distractions.

These are guidelines, not rules. If there are some new ideas that you think might benefit your children, try out a few at a time rather than attempting to incorporate them all.



“Students who think of themselves as capable have stronger and healthier self-concepts than others, and are far likelier to be motivated to engage in learning activities such as school coursework.”

Dona Matthews and Daniel Keating,  
Education Canada

## Building Children’s Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an important factor in your child’s success at school and in life. As parents, we have a key role in building and sustaining our children’s self-esteem. Here are some suggestions:

- **Establish a Sense of Security.** Let your child know what kind of behaviour you expect. Enforce your rules consistently in ways that build a sense of responsibility. Build feelings of trust. Help your child feel safe.
- **Build a Positive Self-Concept.** Treat your child as an important person. Provide love and acceptance. Increase your child’s awareness of his strengths. Spend quality time with him.
- **Create a Sense of Belonging.** Build close family relationships. Teach your child to be a group member. Encourage service to others.
- **Develop a Sense of Purpose.** Have expectations for your child. Help your child set realistic goals. Demonstrate faith and confidence in your child. Expand your child’s interests and talents. Set up reward systems when he needs incentives.
- **Achieve a Sense of Personal Competence.** Help your child develop a plan of action for his goals. Provide encouragement and support for his efforts. Listen and give him feedback about the progress he is making. Teach your child that when he is unsuccessful, he can learn from his mistakes. Take pride in and support him for trying new and challenging tasks. Provide him with chores at an early age. Chores help children accept responsibility and feel confident.

## Building Children’s Communication Skills

The latest studies tell us that listening is a very large part of school learning. Between 50 and 75 percent of students’ classroom time is spent listening to the teacher, to other students, or to audio media.

Because children have a deeper involvement with their parents than with any other adult, parents are the best people to build children’s communications skills. Here are some suggestions for improving communication with children:

- **Be interested.** If you show that you are really interested in what they think and how they feel, your children will become comfortable expressing their thoughts with you.



## 50 WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Make yourself available.
- ▶ Show up at their concerts, games, and events.
- ▶ Apologize when you’ve done something wrong.
- ▶ Listen to their favourite music with them.
- ▶ Keep the promises you make.

# LEARNING MATTERS

- **Avoid dead-end questions that call for a yes, no, or one-word answer.** Ask open-ended questions that will extend conversation, that will invite children to describe, explain or share ideas. For example, ask *What did you like about the movie?* rather than *Did you like the movie?*
- **Reflect your child's words and ideas.** Respond to her statements by asking a question that uses some of the words she used. When you use her own phrasing, you strengthen her confidence in her conversational skills and reassure her that her ideas are being listened to and valued.
- **Ask for your child's opinion.** For example, if you are puzzling over what to wear or where to place a new bookcase or what to make for dinner, ask her what she thinks.
- **Reflect feelings.** Try to mirror your child's feelings by repeating them – for example, *It sounds as if you're frustrated with your Math assignment.* Paying attention to your child's feelings is useful when she is experiencing strong emotions that she may not be fully aware of.
- **Help clarify and relate experiences.** Using some of your child's words is important and so is stating your child's ideas and feelings in your own words. Your wider vocabulary can help her express herself more accurately and clearly, and can give her a deeper understanding of words and inner thoughts.

Parents play a vital role in their children's learning. The home is where students' beliefs and habits originate, and the home provides the environment that either enhances or hinders students' growth and development.

## Suggestions...

Here are some suggestions for open-ended discussion to extend your child's learning and to make it more fun!

- If he is having trouble with a Math problem, ask him, *Where did you get stuck on this problem?* or *Where can we go to find the answer?*
- If he asks how to spell a word, say something like, *There are six letters in this word. How many do you already know?*
- If you're discussing a book your child is reading, ask him, *If you were in this story, which character would you be?* or *Which of the characters would you like to have as your best friend?* or if looking at a picture book, *If you were hiding in this picture, where would you be?*
- If you're in the car or at the dinner table with a group of children, give them a problem to solve. For example, *What are the three most important inventions in the world so far? Why don't you talk for three minutes and see which three you can agree on?*

## THE LEARNER, PARENT AND TEACHER PARTNERSHIP



"We believe that since schooling is but one aspect of a child's education it is essential for schools to work in close cooperation with the home and the community."

Richmond School District  
Statement of Philosophy

### Our Commitment

The most important partnership in the district is the one among learners, parents, and teachers. This partnership is promoted through our commitment to support the qualities of **clarity**, **consistency**, and **communication** in the student-parent-teacher relationship, and in parents' and teachers' shared desire to provide the learner with the best possible education.

#### Here is what we mean by clarity:

- The learner is clear about what he is learning and why, what is expected of him, and how he is progressing.
- The teacher is clear about how the child learns best; what his needs, interests and abilities are; how he is feeling about his learning; and how the home environment can support his learning.
- The parent is clear about what the child is being taught, how and why it is being taught, what is expected of the child, and how he is progressing as a learner.
- The school district is clear in its expectations of the school and community, and in its support of these expectations.

#### Here is what we mean by consistency:

- The learner is consistent in developing strong work habits, producing quality work, and having positive attitudes toward herself and others.

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see the Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Consistency**, available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.

- The teacher's knowledge and organization of the curriculum is consistent with provincial and district guidelines. Instruction, assessment and evaluation are consistent with sound professional practice. Expectations for the learner's behaviour are consistent with the school code of conduct.
- Parents are consistent in supporting and preparing their child for school. Their support of her learning is consistent with the expectations and processes of the teacher and the school.
- The school and district are consistent in their organization and delivery of curriculum and in their expectations of the student.

# The Partnership

## Here is what we mean by communication:

- The learner lets his teacher and parents know whenever he has a question, interest, or concern about his school or classroom experience.
- The teacher lets the learner and his parents know what is being taught and why; what is expected of the learner in his work and behaviour; how his performance will be evaluated; and if there are any questions, concerns, or significant observations about his progress, conduct or experience in the classroom or school.
- The parents let the learner and/or teacher know their observations about the learner's needs, interests and abilities. They remain in touch with the teacher about their child's schooling, informing the teacher whenever they have a question, concern, or significant observation about the learner's progress, conduct or experience in the classroom or school.
- The school and district provide effective support to promote and guide communication among learners, teachers and parents.

In order for this partnership to work, everyone in the district needs to be committed to the cycle of continuous improvement, to take responsibility, and to be involved. It is a challenge upheld by a shared sense of caring for the student's overall well-being and promise for the future.

For more information, you can contact your school principal.

## The Teacher's Role

According to the BC School Act, teachers are responsible for:

- Using Ministry of Education guidelines in designing, supervising, and assessing educational programs to promote students' intellectual development, human and social development, and career development.
- Providing instruction and advice to individual students and groups.
- Monitoring the behaviour and progress of each learner, in keeping with provincial and local policies.
- Communicating with students and parents through reports, newsletters, and/or personal contact.
- Reporting to parents on student progress.

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

For a more detailed discussion about communication, see the Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Home-School Communication**. For detailed information about the teacher's role, see the Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Teacher Autonomy**. Both Papers are available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.

Every child is unique and our classrooms consist of students of different characteristics and ability levels. Because students' needs are so diverse, teachers make the decisions about content, resources, instructional design and assessment practices within the framework of Ministry of Education guidelines. This "professional autonomy" is set

forth in the Collective Agreement between teachers and the district.

Teachers also collaborate with other teachers, support staff and administrators to shape a student's educational program. It is becoming more and more important to create a close working relationship with parents and guardians as well. Every September, teachers provide parents and guardians with an overview of what they will be teaching in the upcoming school year and what their expectations are. Regular conversations can also enhance the parent-teacher relationship.

## Changes in the Teacher's Role

Besides their traditional role of providing instruction in the core subject areas, today's teachers have a number of additional roles:

- Providing students with extra emotional support.
- Identifying potential social and emotional problems – potential suicides, drug abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, date rape, etc.
- Identifying potential health problems – poor eyesight, hearing problems, speech defects, disease, etc.
- Providing instruction in tolerance, sex education, alcohol and drug abuse, environmental awareness, time management, media literacy, peer pressure, self-esteem, personal safety, harassment issues, etc.
- Becoming versed in different cultures' habits and mores and communicating these with students, parents, and colleagues.
- Providing liaison with government and other agencies such as the Ministry for Children and Family Development.



“While it was never a simple task, teaching today faces many new challenges. The economic and social environment is being transformed by the knowledge explosion and by the dizzying pace of technological change, as well as by globalization, growing competitive pressures, and changing social structures. The classroom and its occupants are also being transformed in the process. In big-city schools, one may hear a dozen mother tongues other than English or French. Many students are hungry; many come from broken homes; teachers are increasingly being called upon to fill a vacuum left by institutions that used to be the cornerstones of society, such as the family and the church. Mentally and physically challenged children have been integrated into the regular public school system. In many cities, violence in schools has grown, even in what are considered to be affluent neighbourhoods... In addition, (teachers) must swing with sometimes vast changes in educational philosophies and methodologies, only to find later that the pendulum has begun to move back towards the original position.”

Economic Council of Canada, 1992

“I think if parents understood the complexity of managing a classroom, what teachers have to deal with, that would make a big difference.”

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

“Teachers have to balance the needs of the individual student with the needs of the entire class. If the needs of their child are not being met to their satisfaction, some parents say that the teacher isn't doing a good job. They don't think about the other 27 kids in the classroom. Some of them don't know when to back off and say, ‘This is all you can do and that's good enough.’”

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

# LEARNING MATTERS

## Curriculum

In our schools, the educational program is designed and constructed by the teacher to meet learning outcomes prescribed by the BC Ministry of Education. These outcomes are set out in Integrated Resource Packages, called “IRPs,” that are produced by the Ministry of Education and issued to all schools in BC.

IRPs have a standard format from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and offer guidelines as to what students are expected to know and do in each subject area, and at each grade level. They also suggest teaching strategies, assessment techniques, and recommended learning resources.

## Teachers Interpret the Curriculum

All teachers are pursuing the same educational goals set out in the IRPs, but the methods they use and some of the content they choose will vary, depending on the needs, interests, and abilities of their students. The learning activities the teacher presents to students will also depend on factors such as current events, available resources, classroom dynamics, student interest, and the teacher’s experience and interests.

There are many different ways that learning can take place, and there are many different styles of learning. There is also a wide range of developmental levels at any given age. There is no such thing, for example, as “Grade 2 work” because children in Grade 2 have a range of abilities. Instruction and the choice of learning activities take into account these varied abilities. It is the teacher’s goal to adapt, develop, design what she is doing to suit each learner’s always-changing needs.

For this reason, a teacher will use a number of different resources with students. For example, in a reading program there may be several different books on a theme, as well as CD-ROMs, internet sources, and so on.

Curriculum handbooks for parents, available from the Ministry of Education, explain IRP’s in more detail. You can obtain these by calling 1-888-879-1166 or by visiting their website at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/parentguide](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/parentguide)



See *Children have Different Learning Styles* on page 6, and *Children are Intelligent in Different Ways* on page 7.



“Since students vary widely in their backgrounds, needs and abilities, and since there is no single approach to learning, schools should adapt their educational programs and services to the needs of each student insofar as an equitable application of resources will allow.”

Richmond School District  
Statement of Philosophy



## Instruction Takes Different Forms

Classroom instruction can take different forms, depending on the subject matter and the needs of the learner:

- **Full group instruction** is used to present and discuss information that is relevant to the whole class.
- **Individualized instruction**, in which students work on lessons, exercises or projects on their own with teacher support, gives them an opportunity to pace their own learning.
- **Small group instruction** allows students to witness many different perspectives and viewpoints. Since language and mental development are enhanced through speaking, teachers encourage students to speak with their peers. This isn't random chatter, but structured exercises that support learning outcomes.

Research tells us that students have to be actively engaged in their learning. For example, teachers may provide them with a choice of three activities to reinforce the learning of a skill, or they may choose one of three tasks that they have to complete by recess. The teacher still structures the framework within which students are choosing but students are given responsibility to the extent that they are capable.

While writing used to be taught after students had learned to read, it is now encouraged right from the pre-school level, with children scribbling and drawing their ideas. We now understand that writing is a foundation for reading and that reading and writing are not separate. Students are also encouraged to talk out their ideas before writing, because speech is a foundation for writing skills, and talking enables them to compose their thoughts.



“Research indicates that heterogeneous grouping promotes cognitive and social growth, reduces anti-social behaviour, and facilitates the use of research-based, developmentally appropriate instructional practices such as active learning and integrated curriculum. The wider range of ages and abilities in a multi-age classroom discourages misleading age-graded expectations and helps teachers focus on students’ individual learning needs.”

J. Gaustad, 1997

## Combined Classes

Two-thirds of the elementary classes in Richmond are combined classes (two and occasionally three grades in one class), and they are common throughout BC. They allow a greater number of students to be educated in a smaller number of classrooms, which makes better use of our available resources.

Research indicates that students from combined (or multi-age) classes perform as well or better academically than students in single-age classes. There is also evidence that students in combined classes often perform better in the areas of independence, responsibility, study habits, and attitude toward school.

“It’s at the classroom level, with their child and their child’s teacher, that parents want to be most involved.”

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

“Teachers really do want parents involved. My children’s teachers always know that I’m there for them and willing to support them. There’s a history of respect – they know that concerns will be dealt with respectfully. We can deal with difficulties and celebrate victories together.”

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

# LEARNING MATTERS

Teachers of combined classes follow the curriculum requirements as specified in the provincial IRPs. Age-appropriate curriculum is taught, but with different expectations of the students, depending on their ability. Many teachers do this by taking a theme or topic such as “Exploring the Universe” and designing learning activities that address a range of content areas (Science, Math, Language Arts, etc.) and a range of learning styles and developmental levels.

These classrooms offer benefits to students that aren’t as available in single-grade classes.

Younger students benefit by:

- being welcomed into a community of learners.
- observing older children and modeling their behaviour.
- having supportive older friends on the playground.

Older students benefit by:

- taking leadership roles and demonstrating mature behaviour.
- developing self-esteem, confidence, and responsibility.
- consolidating and extending what they have learned.

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see the Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Combined Classes**, available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.

## Creating Class Groupings

In composing classes, school staff consider a wide range of characteristics:

- abilities
- independence
- needs
- friendships
- learning styles
- cultures
- personalities
- gender
- social development

The intention is to create a balanced group that will work as a unit. Students with special needs, learning disabilities, or behavioural difficulties are distributed among the different classes. Factors such as which teaching style works with which child are also taken into consideration.

Parents are often consulted to determine a child’s likes, learning style, friendships, and so on, and this information is taken into consideration.

## Learning Plans for Students With Specific Needs

Students who require adaptations to their program in order to meet the standard learning outcomes prescribed by the Ministry of Education, or cannot meet these objectives even with support, will receive an Individual Education Plan, or “IEP.” IEPs are developed for students with special needs and for those students receiving more than 25 hours of learning assistance support per year.

Each student’s IEP is developed in consultation with his parents, teachers, and other staff on the school-based team. ESL (English as a Second Language) students have Annual Instruction Plans (AIPs).

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

To find out what the district homework policy is, see our website and click on Board Info>Board Policy>603.3 or contact our district office at 604-668-6000. You might also want to check out our Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Homework**, available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.

### Homework

Homework is a bridge between home and school and is most effective when student, teacher, and parent work together. Students in the earlier grades need your support with their homework. As students mature, they become more independent and assume greater personal responsibility. However, even graduating students benefit from their parents’ interest and encouragement.

Each school in our district develops its own statement about homework purposes and practices, based on district homework policy. The statement will also outline

school-wide procedures for communicating with the home and for addressing student, parent, or teacher concerns about homework. Staff and parents are involved in developing each school’s homework statement, and, at the secondary level, students are also included. Each school’s statement is reviewed annually.



## **50** WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Wave and smile when you part.
- ▶ Give them lots of compliments.
- ▶ Give them your undivided attention.
- ▶ Have fun together.
- ▶ Meet their friends.
- ▶ Get to know their teachers.

# LEARNING MATTERS

## HOMework

### The Student's Role

- to understand what is expected and to ask questions to clarify expectations when necessary.
- to contact the teacher to find out about homework assigned during his absence.
- to complete homework tasks to the best of his ability.
- to ask for help from the teacher when necessary.
- to submit homework on time.

### The Teacher's Role

- to provide interesting and challenging homework that reflects the instructional plan for the class and is appropriate for the students' different abilities and circumstances.
- to provide a balance of open-ended, creative and practice activities.
- to give clear, explicit instructions and feedback.
- to take a consistent approach to homework and explain that approach to students and parents.
- to teach the necessary skills required to complete homework assignments.

### The Parent's Role

- to establish a regular time and place for work to be done at home.
- to provide required supplies (e.g., pencils, stationery, dictionary).
- to create an encouraging and supportive climate for your child in the home.
- to check the student planner and assignment sheets and help your elementary child understand the tasks.
- to help your child plan her time to complete assignments in manageable stages and allow time for recreation and family events.
- to communicate directly with the teacher when necessary.
- to help their child by prompting her with questions which guide or extend her thinking, but not by doing her homework for her.
- to proofread for grammar, spelling and organization (but not by making changes for your child), if possible.

## How Students are Assessed and Evaluated

To understand how students are evaluated, we need to distinguish between “assessment” and “evaluation.” Assessment is the process of gathering data; evaluation is the process of making judgments based on that data.

Assessment is an ongoing and regular part of the teaching and learning process and important in the cycle of continuous improvement. Its purpose is to acquire information to make every child a successful learner. Teachers observe students carefully, listening to their use of language, and examining their daily work and larger projects. Teachers may also use homework assignments, learning logs, questions, tests, quizzes, and portfolios of students’ work to find out what students have learned.

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

For a more detailed discussion about evaluation, see the Hot Topics Discussion Paper, **Reporting and Conferencing**, available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.

Students often learn the criteria for successful completion of the task beforehand, as opposed to after they’ve received their mark. Frequently they have a say as to what these criteria will be and are asked, *How do you know if you’ve done a good job?* This motivates students and involves them in their schoolwork in a meaningful way.

Students’ written work is one way of assessing their learning. Depending on their abilities and interests, they may also be encouraged to draw a diagram, build a model, make up a song, make up a dramatic play, and/or write a poem to show what they have learned.

Assessment *for* learning (formative assessment) occurs during teaching and learning as opposed to after it and has ongoing improvement as its primary goal. It uses day-to-day classroom assessment activities to involve students directly in their own learning, increasing their confidence and motivation to learn by emphasizing progress and achievement rather than failure and defeat. Once students become involved, assessment *for* learning looks more like teaching than it does testing. It takes advantage of the power of assessment as an instructional tool that promotes learning rather than an event designed solely for the purpose of evaluating and assigning grades.

The main purpose of assessment *of* learning (summative assessment) is to gather and report evidence of progress or achievement. While there is a legitimate need for occasional summative assessment, it is a much less frequent task and not nearly as central to the instructional purposes of teaching and learning as is formative assessment.



## 50 WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Praise more; criticize less.
- ▶ Be consistent.
- ▶ Admit when you make a mistake.
- ▶ Enjoy your time together.
- ▶ Marvel at what they can do.
- ▶ Deal with problems and conflicts while they’re still small.

One example of evaluation is the formal assessment required under the School Act. Parents receive this evaluation most often in the form of a report card. The School Act requires three formal reporting periods in the year – in the fall, spring and at year end. There are also two informal reports, and/or parent-teacher conferences.

All progress reports from Kindergarten to Grade 7 describe:

- what the student is able to do.
- what areas need further attention or development.
- ways of supporting the student in his learning.

Students from Grade 4 to Grade 12 are assigned letter grades which are explained in each child's report card.

In Richmond schools, reporting means much more than report cards. It means a continuous flow of communication between home and school. Comments and marks on homework and other assignments, class newsletters or “homework books” that discuss assignments and class activities, open-house events, and regular informal communication with the teacher can often convey more than report cards about how your child is doing.

More detailed information on progress reports is available on the district website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca), or at your child's school. Please contact the classroom teacher any time you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress.

## A Successful Learner...

A successful learner is a student who:

- can apply knowledge to new situations.
- has a deepening knowledge of the facts and skills taught.
- is able to evaluate her learning success and set goals for future learning.
- is developing intellectually, socially, and emotionally.
- is engaged in learning both alone and with others.
- knows how to use resources to find answers.

## Building a Relationship with Your Child's Teacher

As a parent, creating a positive relationship with your child's teacher is one of the best things you can do for his education. It is best to develop this relationship at the beginning of the year. Then, if questions or problems arise later on, it is much easier to resolve them.



"It is my responsibility to support the teacher, for sure...I'm responsible for teaching my child what she needs...I see myself as being in a partnership with the school, to support the teacher at home. Part of it is teaching my child to have respect for the teacher."

Parent,  
Richmond School District

Here are some ways you can build trust and understanding with your child's teacher:

- Respect a teacher's uniqueness by not expecting all teachers to have the same teaching style and approach. One of the strengths of our public school system is the different experiences your child will have each year.
- Maintain an open line of communication with teachers. If you have a concern or a question, let your child's teacher know about it before it becomes a real problem. Let him know if there is an important change in your family. A death, an illness, extended absence of a parent, the death of a pet, a move, home renovations, or even a vacation to Disneyland, can all have an impact on a child's school-work. It's very helpful to teachers to know these things.
- Be courteous and respectful when you raise questions with teachers. Always speak to the teacher first, but if the issue cannot be resolved, ask to speak to the principal.
- Don't be too influenced by your secondary level son or daughter's message to not get involved at the school. Although adolescence is the age at which children begin to separate from their parents, they still need your interest in and support for their education.
- Always speak respectfully about teachers to your children and to other adults. Your child needs to respect her teacher as well as you, and she should not feel torn between the two.
- Support your child, and know when to encourage independence. Sometimes you need to speak with the teacher on your child's behalf. Other times it will be better to help her speak to the teacher herself.
- Take the time to respond to letters, questionnaires, etc., from school. Some teachers send home a description of what the class did for the week. If you sign it and write a response back, teachers will know that you are interested in what your child is learning.
- Take an active role by attending parent-teacher interviews and other school functions.



See *Tips for Talking to Teachers* on page 26.

"Say to your child's teachers, 'I am available at these times. Here are some of my talents and areas of interest. Please call me.'"

Parent,  
Richmond School District

"It's better to go talk to the teacher than to keep it inside or to complain on the playground."

Parent,  
Richmond School District

## **Tips** for Talking to Teachers

- If you have questions or concerns, ask when it would be convenient to meet with the teacher.
- Focus on the needs of the student.
- Act on facts, not hearsay. Issues are seldom as simple as they appear at first.
- Avoid name-calling and accusations. Be warm, caring, trusting and respectful.
- Ask questions to understand a situation instead of criticizing or accusing. Here are some examples:
  - *I would love to be able to help my child with her homework. Could you suggest some things I could be doing?*
  - *Something has happened that is very upsetting and I am really concerned about it. Would you be available after school today or tomorrow to talk about it? Or would it be better for you to phone me?*
  - *I am concerned about my son being in a combined class. Would you help me understand how you will handle having more than one grade to teach?*
- Listen completely, without interruption, when the teacher provides information or presents his side of the story. Repeat it back to him to show that you understand what he's saying.
- Guard against letting emotion and fear colour your opinions and actions. Do your best to avoid drawing conclusions until you've heard and thought about all sides of the story.
- Teachers have feelings as well. Respect them.
- Be sure to let teachers know when you appreciate their efforts or when your child is happy at school. Teaching is a challenging job and they need your support!

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences occur every fall and every spring. For many parents they can be a cause for concern: *Do I really have to sit in those little chairs? What do we say to each other? What if my child isn't doing well?*

Here are some things you can do to avoid such anxieties:

- Get to know your child's teacher right at the beginning of the year. Tell her how and when she can reach you and, if possible, make yourself available to help out in classroom and school activities. Having a relationship beforehand makes a parent-teacher conference much easier.
- Come to the meeting prepared with any questions or concerns you may have. If your child is experiencing learning or behaviour problems, the questions on page 28 may help guide the discussion.
- If there are no outstanding concerns, here are some questions you can ask that could make for a productive discussion:

**What does my child do that surprises you?** This will tell you what expectations the teacher has of your child and may reveal some surprises for you as well, since children sometimes behave differently at school than at home.

**What is my child reluctant to do?** You might find out more about your child's interests and dislikes than you would ordinarily know.

**What goal would you like to see my child achieve?** Even "good students" may benefit from setting goals in areas that need improvement or in which they might excel.

**What can I do at home to support what is being done at school?** This question is always appreciated and helps create a team feeling.



"I try to approach disagreements with teachers with the intention to deal with them in a respectful manner, with the attitude that we're both working toward the same goal, and we're both trying our best."

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

"Deal with things before they become a problem. Assume the best rather than the worst."

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

# LEARNING MATTERS

## Questions you can ask the teacher

### Behaviour Problems

**If your child is experiencing behaviour problems, here are some questions you can ask the teacher:**

- What type of misbehaviour are you noticing?
- Under what circumstances is it occurring?
- How is my child's behaviour different from what you expect from your students?
- What can you and I do to resolve the problem?
- When can we get together to discuss this with my child?
- When can you and I meet again to discuss how things are progressing?

### Learning Problems

**If your child is experiencing learning problems, here are some questions you can ask the teacher:**

- Can you describe the problem?
- What is being done to help my child overcome this problem?
- Is there anything else that can be done at the school level?
- What would be the best way to discuss this with my child?
- What can I do at home to help my child?
- When can you and I meet again to discuss how things are progressing?

**if your child is experiencing problems**

Children are far more likely to succeed in school if they see their parents and teachers working together cooperatively. The partnership among parent, teacher and student takes effort and commitment, but if we are willing, the learner benefits immensely and so does everyone else.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOL AND DISTRICT

### Focusing On The School

Schooling in Richmond is organized around three educational programs:

- The Primary Program, from Kindergarten to Grade 3
- The Intermediate Program, from Grade 4 to Grade 9
- The Graduation Program, from Grade 10 to Grade 12

For details about what is being taught and how you can best support your child's learning, be sure to contact your child's teacher.

### The Role of School Administrators

School administrators, which include principals and vice-principals, are responsible for:

- providing educational leadership
- supervising teaching and learning activities in the school.
- supervising student evaluation, assessment, and reporting to parents.
- ensuring the maintenance of school records.
- supervising the general conduct of students.
- performing the supervisory, management, and other duties required or assigned by the Board, including reporting on the work of a teacher and the classroom learning situation.
- performing teaching duties.
- administering and supervising placement and programming of students in the school.

Because our society has become more complex, much more is required of a school administrator than in the past. In addition to keeping up with administrative tasks, serving as a curriculum leader, and dealing with disciplinary issues and other daily emergencies, an administrator must also be versed in mental health issues, public relations, team-building, conflict resolution, multiculturalism, communication skills, and creating an inclusive school climate.

School leadership now involves sharing decision-making and sustaining a common vision amongst a diverse community of students, parents, and staff.

## The Role of School Support Staff

Non-teaching employees perform many different roles in support of school programs and services. These include:

- Educational assistants to help teachers support students with special needs or behaviour challenges and those learning English.
- Noon hour supervisors.
- Career counseling assistants, who provide secondary students with information on post-secondary programs, and administer interest assessment programs to help students find out what their skills are.
- Chef and kitchen aides in the teaching cafeterias.
- Library technicians, who assist in managing secondary school libraries.
- Media technicians, who maintain the district computer systems.
- Laboratory technicians, who help set up labs in the secondary schools' science and technology programs.
- Youth support workers, who work with students at risk.
- Clerical staff who ensure the smooth daily functioning of schools.
- Transportation staff, including bus drivers and bus attendants.

## Extracurricular Activities

In all of our schools many teachers volunteer to sponsor extracurricular programs, which enhances students' learning and provides opportunities for enjoyment.

There are clubs to support a range of interests – fine arts, hobbies, academics, athletics – as well as social activities to give students opportunities to make friends and to interact with their school-mates outside of the classroom.

To find out what programs are available for your son or daughter, contact your child's neighbourhood school. If you want to know about athletic programs being offered at the secondary level, contact the school Principal, the school Athletic Director, the District Athletic Facilitator at 604-668-6000 or see our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca) and click on Programs.

## Code of Conduct

In our district, discipline encompasses self-discipline, empathy, and citizenship. We try to create a culture in our schools that supports respect, responsibility, and safety.

There is a District Code of Conduct that stipulates that all members of the school community, including staff, students, parents, and guests will:

- respect the rights of others.
- respect the health and safety of others.
- respect the property of others – private and public.
- respect the legitimate authority of the school administrators and staff.
- respect and take pride in the school’s physical facilities.
- respect the diversity of the school community.
- respect the non-smoking environment in district schools and property.
- respect the individual rules within each school.
- behave in an ethical and lawful manner.
- behave in a considerate and courteous manner.
- behave in a safe and responsible manner.
- not threaten, harass, intimidate or assault, in any way, any person within the school community.
- not be in possession of weapons, dangerous articles, alcohol, or illegal drugs while in school or at school functions.

[www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)

For a more detailed discussion about discipline, see the **Hot Topics Discussion Paper, Discipline**, available on our website or by contacting your local school or the district office.



“Our code of conduct will mean much more to our students if it is reinforced at home.”

Administrator,  
Richmond School District

There are also separate district policies concerning dress code, student possession of a weapon, vandalism, smoking, alcohol consumption, drugs, conduct on school buses, and suspension.

In accordance with these district policies, all schools establish their own codes of conduct with corresponding rules and expectations for student behaviour. These are developed in cooperation with parents and students.



**50**  
**WAYS**  
**TO SHOW**  
**KIDS YOU CARE**

- ▶ Believe in them.
- ▶ Nurture them with good food, good words, and good fun.
- ▶ Be flexible.
- ▶ Delight in their uniqueness.
- ▶ Let them make mistakes.
- ▶ Be understanding when they have had a difficult day.

## Parent Handbooks

Some of the schools in our district provide a parent handbook or calendar that outlines the activities, events and practices particular to that school community. This also offers suggestions for how parents can get involved in the school.

## How to Become Involved in the School

The provincial School Act allows every school to have a Parent Advisory Council (PAC), which is a group of parents who meet regularly to learn and offer advice about school programs and activities. All parents or guardians with children enrolled at the school have the opportunity to participate.

Some PAC activities include participating in a school's planning process, conducting parent education evenings, helping plan school events such as dances and graduation celebrations, fundraising etc. For more details about PAC, you can pick up a brochure at your child's school or at the district office.

"What's most rewarding for me about being involved in my school's PAC group is to see my children benefit from my participation, and to make them aware of all the opportunities for them both at their school and district-wide."

Parent,  
Richmond School District



## The School Planning Council

The School Act requires each school in the province to have a School Planning Council, the purpose of which is to formally acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in improving student achievement. The role of the SPC is to prepare a school plan for improving student achievement in the school and for other matters contained in the school board's accountability contract relating to the school. The SPC must submit its school plan to the school board by a date set by the board. The board must approve a school plan for every school in the district.

Members of the SPC are:

- the principal of the school
- one of the teachers at the school, elected annually by secret ballot by the teachers who teach at the school
- three representatives of the school PAC elected annually by secret ballot by the PAC. Each PAC representative must be a parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school. One of the representatives must be an elected officer of the PAC. None of the representatives may be employed by any school district in the province.

- in schools that enrol grade 10, 11, or 12 students, one student of school age enrolled in one of those grades. The student is appointed annually by the principal after consulting with the students enrolled in those grades.

In addition, other members of the school community may attend SPC meetings as observers or advisors. Parent SPC members report back to and take direction from the Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

## 15 Reasons to be Involved in Your Child's School

1. You can meet other parents with children at the same age and stage.
2. You will have the chance to observe your children in another setting.
3. You will have a better idea of what your children are doing in school, so you will know what questions to ask if needed.
4. You will get to know your children's friends and see them in the school setting.
5. You will see some interesting projects, art activities and games that you can try at home to reinforce what your children are working on at school.
6. Your children will see that you are interested in their education and will likely be more motivated.
7. You will have the chance to chat informally with many school staff members, get to know them better, and feel more comfortable when you want to ask questions or raise issues.
8. You will have an opportunity to become familiar with the full range of behaviour, emotion and intellect of children at the same developmental stage as your own, as well as get tips on how to respond to each.
9. You will feel valued and will probably discover skills you didn't know you had
10. You will come to appreciate the role of the teachers and will feel more confident that you have chosen the right place for your child to learn.
11. You will learn about current education theories.
12. You will be a more informed advocate for your child and his school, when necessary.
13. You will learn about the resources that are available at the school.
14. Your child will feel special.
15. You will have fun!

"I'm new to the system, my children are young. I started going to the PAC meetings because I wanted to know what was going on. I think parents need to establish a relationship with teachers and principals and ask questions."

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

"I walk my kids to school for four reasons: Number 1, some days it's the only exercise I get. Number 2, it's better for the environment. Number 3, I have a lovely conversation with them that I wouldn't otherwise get. And number 4, I get to say hello to a couple of teachers at the other end. I get some information and some interaction and they get to know me."

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

## How to Build a Good Relationship with the School

Although your relationship with your child's teacher is of central importance in your child's education, getting involved at a school level not only helps your child, it also benefits you and your family. Feeling a part of the school community makes school much more enjoyable for your child and for you.

Here are some steps you can take to build a good relationship with the school:

- Get to know the school's administrators and other staff, along with your child's teacher.
- Offer assistance in the classroom – driving students to sites for field trips, counting money, cutting and pasting, etc.
- Offer assistance in the school – reading to children, helping at book fairs, sharing special talents and skills as a guest speaker, translating materials for the school, acting as an interpreter for parents with less English fluency, fundraising, helping with Food Days, driving teams to sports games, volunteering with the Multicultural Friendship Club, etc.
- Help to organize school carnivals, dances, and other events that build school spirit.
- Offer assistance at the district level – helping with interpretation and translation of non-confidential materials, serving on district committees.
- Attend PAC meetings or serve on school committees such as the School Planning Committee.
- Attend Fine Arts nights, Remembrance Day ceremonies, Science Fairs, Awards nights, etc. These kinds of events give you a bigger picture of the school than that seen through your son or daughter's eyes.
- A working parent can serve on the phoning committee, do translations or help out at evening and/or weekend events.

## Focusing On The District

Educating our young people is a collaborative effort among many partner groups in our district. All partners provide input prior to any major decisions that our Board of School Trustees make, and all partners serve on each of the district committees. The partner groups in our district include:

- **Parents** – represented by the Richmond District Parents Association (RDPA).  
604-668-6311
- **Teachers** – represented by the Richmond Teachers' Association (RTA).  
604-278-2539

- **School Administrators** – represented by the Richmond Association of School Administrators (RASA). 604-668-6000
- **Support Staff** – represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Local 716. 604-273-1651

## The Richmond District Parents Association

The Richmond District Parents Association (RDPA) is a non-profit organization which consists of representatives from each of the school PACs and an executive committee. Some of the purposes of the RDPA are:

- to encourage parental involvement in the education and safety of students.
- to be effective advocates for parents, children and youth within the school community.
- to advise the school board about parents' views concerning school district programs and policies.



Here's how to contact the RDPA:

604-668-6311 (phone)

604-668-6300 (fax)

president@rdpa.bc.ca

The RDPA produces a monthly newsletter for parents of all Richmond students, sends representatives to district committees, holds parent education sessions on educational or parenting topics, and hosts meetings to bring together parents and other partners to discuss current issues in the district. See their website at [www.rdpa.bc.ca](http://www.rdpa.bc.ca).

## The Richmond Teachers' Association

The Richmond Teachers' Association (RTA) is the governing body that serves as an advocate for the teachers in our district. Under the Labour Relations Code, the RTA's role is to represent teachers, ensuring due process in any disputes that might emerge. Some of its activities include providing professional support for classroom teachers, mentoring beginning teachers, and working with the universities to support pre-service teachers.

## The Richmond Association of School Administrators

The Richmond Association of School Administrators (RASA) is the professional body that represents principals and vice-principals in our district. Some of its activities include initiating and supporting administrative study groups focusing on school culture and curricular leadership, and conducting in-service sessions with other partner groups on effective working relationships.



## 50 WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Respect the choices they make.
- ▶ Make time to be with them.
- ▶ Appreciate their personality.
- ▶ Create a safe, open environment.
- ▶ Encourage them to help others.
- ▶ Make decisions together.

## The Canadian Union of Public Employees

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Local 716, is the collective bargaining unit for our district's support staff. As the official representative for these employees, it participates in district processes on their behalf and ensures that they receive due process in the event of any dispute.

In addition to the school-based support staff, CUPE includes secretaries and clerical staff at the board office handle finances, purchasing, payroll, and continuing education. Maintenance staff assist in the renovation and construction of new schools, repair and maintain heating, electricity and plumbing in over fifty buildings, build and repair furniture, and look after the school grounds and playgrounds. The engineers, building service workers, and rental custodians who make up our Operations staff, keep the buildings clean and safe.

## The Role of District Administrators

Administrators at a district level include:

- The Director of Instruction (Technology and Information Services), who is responsible for the development, coordination and management of technological and information systems and infrastructure within the district.
- The Director of Instruction (Learning Services), who oversees the Learning Services Department and coordinates staff development programs and support services for all students with special needs within the district.
- The Director of Instruction (Continuing Education) who coordinates Summer School and Adult Education
- The Director of Instruction (Personnel Services) who is responsible for employment of teachers and non-teaching staff
- One or more principals or vice principals may be assigned to assist district management in the board office as required. We call these District Administrators.
- Assistant Superintendents, who are members of the District Management Committee and the District Educational Leadership Team, supervise and support school administrators and are the primary connection between school and district.
- The Secretary-Treasurer, who oversees the business and facilities functions of the district.
- The Superintendent, who serves as the district's Chief Executive Officer and oversees the general organization, administration, delivery, supervision, and evaluation of all educational programs. He is also responsible for the financial and technical

operation of the district.

## The Role of the School Board

Richmond's Board of School Trustees consists of seven elected citizens. Every three years, eligible citizens in Richmond vote for the trustees of their choice. Trustees act as an interface between their community and the education system, establishing policies to govern the district and overseeing district management. Trustees are expected to represent the public interest in public education, ensuring that the diverse values and priorities of the Richmond community are reflected in the core purpose of education: student achievement. In Richmond, they do this by collaborating and consulting with staff, parents and members of the community.

Here are some of their key responsibilities:

- carrying out the School Act established by the BC Ministry of Education.
- making rules regarding the establishment, operation, administration, and management of schools, educational programs, and district facilities and vehicles.
- preparing annual reports.
- developing local policy.
- permitting people other than students to use board facilities, equipment, and personnel.
- making rules regarding student conduct, suspension, and attendance.

## How to Become More Informed About Our District

An informed parent is more effective in supporting a child's learning, and more able to obtain the resources needed to be an effective advocate for the child.

There are many ways to become more informed about our district. The list below offers a number of



At the board office, there are pamphlets that explain what happens at board meetings, and how to make a presentation. Contact the office of the district Secretary-Treasurer at 604-668-6012 for help in understanding procedures and preparing briefs or go to [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca).

"There are lot of opportunities out there to become better informed about the district, but you have to make a move. It will take your initiative to find out what you need to find out."

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District




School trustees meet the first and third Monday of every month at 7:00 P.M. in the main floor boardroom at 7811 Granville Avenue in Richmond. These meetings are open to the public. If you wish to ask a question of the Board, or to make a presentation at the meeting, please contact the district Secretary-Treasurer at 604-668-6012 or go to [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca).

"Parents are valued in our district. This isn't just rhetoric. I've been lucky to become involved and to be part of change in our district. If you sit on a committee, you can make a difference. Your input is valued."

Parent,  
Richmond School  
District

# LEARNING MATTERS

suggestions. You are invited to choose those that suit your needs and your schedule:

- Talk to the school principal. Ask a lot of questions.
- Attend Board meetings.
- Watch the Board meeting televised by Shaw Cable 4.  
For times, contact the school district at 604-668-6000.
- Get to know one of the trustees so you can call and ask questions.
- Visit our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)
- Read our annual newsletter.
- Attend our district information meetings.
- Read newsletters – from the school, the Richmond District Parents Association, etc.
- Read Notebook, a highlight sheet that comes out after each meeting of the Board of School Trustees. It can be found on the district website.
- With the fall and spring report card, you may receive report card inserts which include an update on school district news, programs, and activities.
- Talk to your Parent Advisory Council (PAC) chairperson. Your school can provide the name and phone number.
- Read letters, notices and memos that come home from the school.
- Check the PAC bulletin board at your child's school.
- Talk to your child's teacher.
- Talk to a member of the Richmond District Parents Association (RDPA) executive or attend an RDPA meeting. Check out their website at [www.rdpa.bc.ca](http://www.rdpa.bc.ca).
- Check your local newspaper for information about Richmond schools. Official notices include this symbol: 
- If you are a member of a community group, ask your group to contact the district office at 604-668-6000. We can provide speakers for your meetings to exchange ideas about education.
- Read your school handbook.
- Read district “Hot Topics” pamphlets and other Discussion Papers on a great variety of topics.
- Read this handbook!

“We believe that students, parents, and the community should share with trustees, teachers, and administrators in the selection and the shaping of our educational programs.”

Richmond School  
District Statement  
of Philosophy



## How Parents Can Affect Board Policies

Here are some ways that you and other members of the community can influence policies that affect how our schools operate:

- Attend Board meetings and ask questions or comment on topics on the agenda. You can also make a short statement or present a brief to the Board about any initiatives, issues, or concerns that you think the Board should be considering.
- Participate in Standing Committee meetings such as the Education Committee and Personnel and Finance Committee, both of which are open to the public.
- Write to the Board chairperson or to chairpersons of the Standing Committees.
- Respond to requests for input on drafts of district policies, regulations, proposals, and position statements. These are available at your local school or at the board office.
- Contact individual trustees directly. You can get their numbers by calling 604-668-6000.

The Education Committee meets at the district office at 7:00 PM on the fourth Monday of every month. For more information call the Secretary-Treasurer's office at 604-668-6012 or check the district calendar on our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)



## THE BIG PICTURE – PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BC

### The Role of the BC Provincial Government Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education is responsible for setting the overall funding and general policy directions for education in British Columbia for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12).

The Ministry establishes curriculum for the K-12 education system, and provides IRPs that define the expected learning outcomes for each subject or course.

The Ministry is accountable to the people of British Columbia for the content and quality of education in our province. It is ultimately responsible for keeping parents and the public informed about what BC children are learning and how resources are being used.

You can contact the Ministry of Education by calling 1-888-879-1166 or by accessing their website at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca)

### How Parents Can Have an Influence at the Provincial Level

The British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) is the provincial organization that acts on behalf of parents. Some of its more important roles include:

- Advocating for excellence and equal opportunity in public school education.
- Advocating for children and parents regarding provincial education issues. BCCPAC's advocacy service gives advice to parents about the best way to resolve disputes about schooling.
- Consulting with and advising the Ministry of Education on policies and programs.
- Supporting school and school district Parent Advisory Councils.

Teachers, non-teaching staff (CUPE), Principals and Vice Principals, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers, and Trustees also all have provincial organizations. (Note: these are all mentioned in the Acronym section on page 54.)

You can contact BCCPAC  
by calling 604-687-4433,  
or by calling the Advocacy  
service at 1-888-351-9834.

See their website at  
[www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca).



## The Role of the BC College of Teachers

Complaints regarding the conduct of a College member can be made in writing to the College. Parents are, however, encouraged to use the various processes available at the local level to resolve their concerns. Speaking to the educator directly, then to his or her supervisor and then going through each of the administrative levels often leads to a faster and more satisfactory resolution of the concern.

Once a complaint is filed with the College, the College is responsible for the appropriate disposition of the case, as it relates to the educator's teaching certificate. The College does not have the jurisdiction to mediate nor can it compensate the complainant.

A potential discipline proceeding could seriously affect the member's livelihood and the only parties to such a proceeding are the College and the member. The complainant will be advised of the status of the complaint and may be asked to cooperate in the process as a witness and provide further information as needed.

Details regarding the process and the complaint form are available at [www.bcct.ca](http://www.bcct.ca). Questions can be addressed to the Intake Officer at [intake@bcct.ca](mailto:intake@bcct.ca) or by calling 604-731-8170.

## The Role of the Provincial Ombudsman

The role of the provincial Ombudsman is to promote fairness in the administration of public services, including schools.

The Ombudsman will first investigate a claim of unfair treatment involving a student by exploring informal means of resolving conflict and supporting students and parents to address issues at a school and district level.

When these appeal process have been exhausted, the Ombudsman may conduct an investigation. If the claim is found to be valid, he will then recommend that a school or district take action to remedy the problem. The Ombudsman can arbitrate whether a fair district policy was in place and whether it was properly used, but he cannot overturn a decision if the process was fair and followed correctly. He may also report publicly on a matter if he considers it to be in the public interest to do so.

[www.ombud.gov.bc.ca](http://www.ombud.gov.bc.ca)



## 50 WAYS TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

- ▶ Welcome their suggestions.
- ▶ Tell them what you expect of them.
- ▶ Expect their best; don't expect perfection.
- ▶ Empower them to help and be themselves.
- ▶ Love them, no matter what.

# LEARNING MATTERS

## The Importance of Public Education

Public schools are the one place where people of all cultures, genders and social levels meet and learn to live and work together with common purpose to build our country.

Public education is not something any of us can take for granted. Having a role in shaping provincial education and society is a great privilege. Appreciating the broader public interest rather than just our own concerns makes us better citizens and better role models for our children.



## CONCLUSION

Our district is not a fixed structure, but a partnership, a dynamic co-creation of many different groups and individuals, including you.

Belonging to a partnership asks each of us to step out and ask questions, seek help, offer support, and build relationships with others – a child’s classroom teacher, the school secretary, a trustee, a parent whose child attends the same school, and so on. It also asks for our participation, whether it’s helping a child with her homework, attending a lunch day at school, hosting a “dry after grad,” serving on a district committee, going to a Board meeting, attending an information session, watching a school play, helping with fund-raising, or serving on the School Planning Council or the executive of the Parent Advisory Council.

We are proud of the high level of parent involvement in our district and we are glad that you have joined us.

# Conclusion



# Quick Reference – Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. General.

How big is the Richmond School District?

Richmond is British Columbia's fifth largest school district, with eleven secondary schools, 37 elementary schools, and 1 annex and a student body of nearly 23,000 plus over 200 international students.

How do I know what school to send my child to?

Normally students attend the school in their catchment area. If you are uncertain about which is your child's catchment school, call the board office at 604-668-6000. All schools, with their addresses, phone numbers, and names of the principal are listed on page 56.

What if I want to send my child to a school in a different neighbourhood?

You are required to fill out and sign a District Transfer Form, available from the district office or from the catchment area school. The form has to be initialed by the principal of the catchment school, and submitted to the principal of the requested school by March 1 of the preceding school year. Applications will be considered under the criteria listed in the district policy.

How are school grades organized?

Elementary school includes students from Kindergarten to Grade 7. Kindergarten to Grade 3 are the primary grades, and Grades 4 to 7 are the intermediate grades. Secondary school includes Grades 8 and 9 in the Intermediate Program and Grades 10 to 12 in the Graduation Program. Grade level is based primarily on the student's age.

At what age are children required to be registered at a school?

All children between ages 6 and 16 must be registered at a school. A child who turns 5 before December 31 of that year is eligible to attend kindergarten. The next year, attendance is compulsory, and a child who turns 6 before December 31 is placed in Grade 1. Students may remain in school until age 19 if they turn 19 before July 1 of that school year.

How do I register my child at school?

If your child is just beginning Kindergarten, if you have just moved to Richmond, if your child has been attending private school or home schooling, or if you have just moved to a new school attendance area within Richmond, you can go to your local school and register. In order to ensure placement in your catchment school for the following September, you must register your child by June 15 of that year.

If you are unable to register by June, then you may register your child at the District Registration Centre at the school board office during the summer. Details are in the Student Placement Policy folder under District Information, at our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca). If you don't have access to the internet, you can call the District Placement Officer at 604-668-6000.

If you register your child after June 15, he/she may be sent to another nearby school in the district, if the catchment school is full. If placed at a nearby school, the student may return to the catchment school at any time during the school year, once space and resources are available.

If your child is returning to school after school opening in September, you must complete a Notice of Late Return form, available from the school, and submit it to the school office by June 30. Without this written notification, she may be required to attend another school in the district if space doesn't allow attendance at her catchment school.

# LEARNING MATTERS

## When does the school year begin and end?

The school year starts in September, the day after Labour Day for most schools, and ends on the last Friday in June. (Secondary students do not attend regular classes during the last two weeks of June but may be writing exams.) For specific dates for this year, you can check the electronic calendar on our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca). If you don't have access to the internet, contact your catchment school. The phone numbers are listed on page 56.

## What hours do children attend school?

Most students attend school from Monday to Friday for six hours a day, although all kindergarten students attend for a half day. Since hours vary slightly from school to school, you can phone your school office and find out when the school day begins and ends. The phone numbers are listed on page 56.

## What about school holidays?

Students do not attend school on statutory holidays, winter and spring breaks, and summer holidays. They also don't attend on days set aside as non-instructional days.

Each school sends home information about holidays and other days that the school is closed for instruction.

Richmond schools respect cultural and religious holidays. Parents are asked to advise their child's teacher if their child will be away from school to observe special holidays.

## What are professional development (ProD) days, when are they, and what purpose do they serve?

Each school in the district has a number of Professional Development (ProD) days, or non-instructional days, set aside each year. On these days students do not attend school. Some ProD days are district-wide while others are organized by teachers at the school level.

The purpose of ProD days is to provide staff with the workshops, discussion groups or other forms of learning about current changes in curriculum, instruction methods or implementation of new programs. Professional development is more than the ProD days, as individual staff members, teams, and sometimes groups of schools pursue a variety of opportunities outside of the designated days.

To find out the specific holidays and ProD dates for this school year, check your school newsletter or school calendar, consult the electronic District Calendar on our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca) or ask your school.



## What medical conditions should I tell the school about?

You should let the school know immediately if your child has:

- a seizure disorder (epilepsy)
- diabetes
- asthma
- severe allergies
- anaphylactic shock due to severe allergies
- any unstable medical condition which might require calling an ambulance if the child's condition were to change.

# Quick Reference – Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if my child is to be absent from school?

Phone and advise the school before classes start in the morning. The school numbers are listed on page 56. Many schools have an Early Warning System to identify children who should be at school but aren't. Some schools require a note from home explaining the reason for a child's absence. If your child needs to leave the school during the day, check with your school or school handbook to find out the proper procedure.

Check your school's handbook, calendar or school newsletter to find out the Early Warning phone number – it is often different from the school number.



What happens if my child is ill and unable to attend school for an extended period?

Our Hospital/Homebound Program serves both elementary and secondary students who are away from school due to hospitalization and/or illness for periods of two weeks or longer. If you require this program, contact your child's school. Requests for this service are made by the school-based team.

## 2. Counseling Services

What counseling services are available at the elementary level?

We have Area Counselors who provide counseling for students in a “family” of elementary schools. Area Counselors help individual students deal with their needs, and they respond to critical incidents affecting students at school.

Area Counselors work as part of a team in determining difficulties of individual children, and they cooperate with teachers to find ways to support these children in the classroom.

Teachers or administrators will alert parents if there is a need for counseling, and they will also respond to parents' requests for counseling services.

If you have concerns about your child's learning, about her behaviour, or about anything else, please talk to the classroom teacher. The teacher can then make a request for area counseling services if needed.

For further information about Area Counselors, you can contact your school principal.

What counseling services are available at the secondary level?

Secondary counselors are available at any time during the school day. A request for service can be made by parents, school staff, or by students directly.

Secondary counselors assist students with personal concerns as well as with course selection, career exploration, scholarship opportunities, or applying to post secondary institutions.

## 3. Assessment of Kindergarten Students.

How are children of kindergarten age assessed?

**DISCOVER:** Learning Strengths (DLS) is a screening program to assess the learning strengths of kindergarten students. DLS is performance-based, which means that students carry out tasks such as drawing, counting, building, classifying, assembling puzzles, and storytelling.

DLS looks at all forms of intelligence – linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, kinesthetic, spatial, naturalistic, and musical.

# LEARNING MATTERS

## 4. Additional Student Support Services.

Are there any programs for children and youth whose needs cannot be met within the regular classroom?

Yes, our district has a number of such programs. However, our primary commitment is to provide an inclusive program and additional support as required to enable all students to be successful in their neighbourhood school.

For information about what options are available, you can contact your principal or the district office.

How do schools decide how the requirements for special needs students will be met?

Each school has a school-based team consisting of administrators, teachers, parents (of the child with a special need), counselors, educational assistants, ESL teachers, speech and language clinician, and other professionals as needed. These teams determine what kind of support children with special needs require.

The overall approach is to build a comprehensive program for each child, and, in the interest of providing continuity and establishing consistency in relationships, to minimize the number of professionals working with a child.

What support is available for Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired students?

The district has itinerant teachers who specialize in instruction for both hearing impaired and visually impaired students. They are part of the school-based resource team that decides how best to meet the child's learning needs.

What support is available for gifted students?

Teachers use a range of techniques for identifying gifted learners, which allow for language and cultural differences as well as different types of intelligence – linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, kinesthetic, spatial, naturalistic, and musical. Observations of parents, teachers, and the children themselves are key in the identification process.

The needs of gifted learners are assessed individually and extra support is provided when it is necessary for the student to thrive. That support can take many forms and is described in an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

What support is available for mental health needs?

In partnership with Richmond Mental Health Services, the school district operates the Richmond School Program, a mental health program for elementary aged children. All requests for service are coordinated through the Area Counselor at the child's home school. Treatment for children will not proceed without the involvement and consent of parents. This program remains open during the usual school breaks.

There are also community supports dealing with counselling related issues. School counsellors can help direct people to appropriate services.



# Quick Reference – Frequently Asked Questions

## 5. English as a Second Language.

What support is available for students for whom English is a second language?

The support needed for students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) comes under two broad categories. There are those requiring Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS), and those requiring Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Students who are acquiring conversational fluency (BICS) receive some support outside the regular classroom. When students move on to acquire academic language proficiency (CALP), support is required within the classroom.

Levels of support have been divided into five categories, ranging from the Level 1 beginner level to the Level 5 near-fluent level. Students in levels 1 to 4 receive direct support from an ESL teacher, either in their classroom or in the ESL teacher's room. In addition, all ESL students receive support from their classroom teacher.

How can I access the services of an interpreter?

District Cultural Interpreters offer service in a variety of languages that reflects the diverse linguistic population of Richmond. In addition to Cultural Interpreters the District also maintains a pool of trained volunteers who provide support to families and schools for general, non-confidential interpreting and translating needs.

Cultural Interpreters provide a bridge between school district staff and students and parents in situations where language or cultural differences impair communication. They also provide a translation service on occasion.

Because there are so many students and parents who require interpretation or translation services, it is not possible to provide an interpreter in every situation or to translate all documents. Therefore, the district is heavily dependent on parent and community volunteers. We also work closely with local immigrant serving agencies.

Parents may inform their local school of their need for Cultural Interpreters. The schools will then make the necessary arrangements.

## 6. French Immersion.

Can you tell me about your French Immersion Program?

Designed for students whose first language is not French, this bilingual education program is open to all Richmond students. Between Kindergarten and Grade 12, students follow the regular BC curriculum, studying approximately half of their time in English and half in French. Graduates of the program can participate easily in French conversations, take post-secondary courses with French as the language of instruction, and accept employment with French as the language of work.

Richmond's Early French Immersion program (EFI) is available for students who enter Kindergarten or Grade 1. For the first three years of the program, teaching is in French only. Then, from Grades 3 to 7, the English Language Arts is taught one hour per day. In Grades 8 to 10, 50% of courses are offered in English; in Grade 11, 75% of courses are offered in English; and in Grade 12, all courses but one are offered in English. Students receive a bilingual diploma upon finishing Grade 12.

There is also a Late French Immersion (LFI) program, which begins in the Grade 6 year. LFI provides an intense language learning experience that enables students to join the EFI students in Grade 8 French Immersion.

Richmond French Immersion programs are provided in schools that also offer the regular English program. The resulting multilingual school environments give students many opportunities to develop an openness towards other linguistic groups.

# LEARNING MATTERS

## 7. Career Development.

What Career Preparation programs does the district provide?

Career Preparation Programs offer an innovative approach to education that combines academic studies with realistic work placements in local businesses in the community. Career Preparation Programs are designed for students who wish to graduate from secondary school and, at the same time, develop career awareness and relevant skills. Students may begin their Career Preparation Program as early as Grade 10, however, most courses are completed in Grades 11 and 12.

All programs will lead to post-secondary education at Universities, Colleges, Vocational or Technical Schools. Upon graduation, a student's transcript will indicate completion of the Career Preparation Program. In some cases, this may lead to preferential admission to a post-secondary program.

The Work Experience component of a CP Program provides an opportunity for students to learn to assume responsibility; to gain knowledge and attitudes necessary for successful job performance; to acquire good work habits; to develop an understanding and appreciation of

the relationship between formal education and job success; to learn how to work cooperatively with fellow workers; and to put into practice skills learned in school.

### Career Technical Consortium Programs (CTC)

CTC Programs provide Entry Level Trades Training (ELTT) or Pre-Apprenticeship training. Some programs may be available within specific secondary schools, others are offered at Kwantlen University College (Newton Campus). During Grades 11 and 12 students can complete secondary school graduation requirements as well as Level 1 Technical Training in a specific trade.

### Secondary School Apprenticeship Program (SSA)

Apprenticeship training combines paid workplace training and technical, in-school training. Apprenticeships are two to five years in length depending on the trade chosen, including six weeks of technical training per year. Students start the first year of their apprenticeship while still in secondary school. The technical training will be given at one of the local colleges. This is a venture with students, employers, the Richmond School District, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Advanced Education, and the Industry Training Authority.



# Quick Reference – Frequently Asked Questions

Visit the Industry Training Authority website at:  
[www.itabc.ca](http://www.itabc.ca)

## Career Development Website

To find out more about Career Development opportunities visit: <http://public.sd38.bc.ca:8004/~careers/> This website includes the Career & Counselling Centre website (CCNews) and is applicable to Grade 10, 11 and 12 students. It provides information about career and post-secondary options such as career fairs, program information sessions, entrance tests, campus tours, scholarships, and exchange programs. The website also provides information on post-secondary applications, employment, volunteering opportunities and entrance tests.

## 8. Summer School.

Does the district offer summer courses?

Several summer school programs for both school-age and adult students are offered by our Continuing Education department: Full Credit Grade 10-12 courses, Remedial (failed) Grade 8-11 courses, English as a Second Language courses, and many Enrichment classes that both develop interests and support academic studies. Fees are assessed to recover costs.

## 9. Continuing Education.

Is there a Continuing Education program?

Continuing Education offers learning opportunities on a cost-recovery basis to youth and adults, making use of our school facilities afternoons, evenings and weekends.

You can obtain detailed information about Continuing Education programs by calling 604-668-6123. Course directories are distributed to all homes in the district and are available at libraries and community centres. You can also consult our website at [www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca). Click on Continuing Education & Summer School.



Program areas include Adult Secondary School Completion (Literacy to Grade 12), Arts, Business and Careers, Computers, Family Life, Health, Home Arts, Home Improvement, Languages (including Adult ESL and after-school ESL for youth), and Personal Development.

Several diploma programs such as Legal Secretary, Professional Florist, Medical Office Administration, Office Administration, Business Management, and Sales & Marketing enable students to find employment in these fields, or to continue to post-secondary studies.

## 10. Province-Wide Tests.

What province-wide tests do children receive and what are they for?

Province-wide tests are administered at all BC schools. Students in Grades 4 and 7 receive Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests in Reading, Writing, and Numeracy. Their purpose is to provide information to curriculum developers and policy makers about how the school curriculum is meeting the needs of students.

Mandatory Provincial examinations are administered to Grade 10 students in Science, Mathematics and Language Arts and to Grade 11 students in Social Studies and to Grade 12 students in a total of 21 academic courses. All Grade 12 students in British Columbia participate in at least one examination session per year, depending on their school's timetable.

# LEARNING MATTERS

These exams help to determine students' eligibility for graduation and for university entrance. Provincial exams are held annually in our schools in January, June and August.

## 11. Revised Graduation Program

How has the Graduation program changed?

The Ministry of Education has revised the Graduation Program Requirements for students beginning Grade 10 in 2004. There are several key changes to the Graduation program. Grade 10 is now considered part of the Graduation Program rather than the Intermediate Program. To graduate, students must complete a minimum of 80 credits over the three-year Graduation Program.

### Planning 10

Planning 10 is a required course designed to help students develop the confidence and skills they need to become self-directed individuals who display initiative, set priorities, establish goals, make thoughtful decisions, and take responsibility for pursuing their goals in an ever-changing society. This course replaces Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) 11/12.

### Graduation Portfolio

To graduate, students must demonstrate their achievement in information technology, personal health, employability skills, education and career planning, and art and design by assembling a Graduation Portfolio. The completion of this portfolio, which is mandatory for all graduates, is worth 4 credits towards graduation. It replaces the previously required completion of a Student Learning Plan.

### Provincial Examinations

As part of the 2004 Graduation program, all students are required to write a minimum of five Graduation

Program Exams:

1. Grade 10 Language Arts
2. Grade 10 Science
3. Grade 10 Mathematics
4. Social Studies exam attached to the Grade 11 or 12 course taken by the student.

These four exams account for twenty percent of a student's final course mark.

5. Grade 12 Language Arts exam attached to the required course taken by the student. Grade 12 exams account for forty percent of a student's final course mark.

## 12. Enriched Programs.

Does the district offer an International Baccalaureate program?

Yes, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program is offered at Grade 11 and 12 and is based on a curriculum originally developed for students whose parents moved frequently around the world and thus required a consistent course of study.

IB is also used as an enriched academic curriculum in selected public schools in North America. In Richmond, it is offered at Richmond Secondary School.

Students have the option of taking individual courses for an IB Certificate, or they may obtain an IB Diploma by taking a full program of IB courses. Upon completion of each course, all IB students must take a final exam administered through the program. Students may receive university credit for IB courses they have successfully completed.

# Quick Reference – Frequently Asked Questions

What is meant by Advanced Placement?

Several Richmond secondary schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) Courses, which are university level courses offered to Grade 12 students. A student who successfully completes an AP course and scores a high mark on the AP exam, may receive entry level university credit for that course.

Are there any other enriched courses available?

Yes, many schools have an Incentive Program for classroom groupings of students in Grades 8, 9, and 10. In these classes, teachers encourage students to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning.

13. Resolving Concerns.

Who should I contact if I have a question about my child's education?

The first person you should speak to is your child's classroom teacher.

What do I do if I have a problem that can't be resolved by speaking with the teacher?

The next step is to ask for more help by involving the principal of the school. Most issues can be resolved at the school level. If more help is needed, you can speak to the Area Superintendent for your school, then the Superintendent, and then the Board of Trustees. It's always best to solve the problem with the people directly involved.



## ACRONYMS

Like them or not, acronyms are everywhere, and they can be bewildering if you aren't "in the know." Below is a list of common acronyms that you may come across as you become better informed about our district.

- AP** Advanced Placement. (See page 53)
- BCCPAC** British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils. (See page 40)
- BCPSEA** British Columbia Public School Employers' Association. BCPSEA is the representative body and official bargaining agent for all school boards and authorities established under the School Act.
- BCPVPA** British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association.
- BCSTA** British Columbia School Trustees Association.
- BCTF** British Columbia Teachers' Federation. The BCTF is a union of professionals that advocates for the social, economic and professional goals of teachers, as well as promoting a quality pluralistic public school system.
- BICS** Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills. (See page 49)
- CA** Classroom Assistant (See EA).
- CALP** Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. (See page 49)
- CAPP** Career and Personal Planning. This is a mandatory K-9 course. CAPP consists of three segments: Personal Development (child abuse prevention, family life, healthy living, mental well-being, safety and injury prevention, substance abuse prevention); Career Development; and Career Planning. It is taught in different ways, depending on what works best for each school. Some schools integrate it into other courses; others offer it as a stand-alone course. At the elementary level, it is called Personal Planning; at the grades 8 & 9 level, it is called Career and Personal Planning.
- CUPE** Canadian Union of Public Employees. (See page 36)
- DLS** DISCOVER: Learner Strengths. (See page 47)
- EA** Educational Assistant. (See pages 30 & 48)
- EFI** Early French Immersion. (See page 49)
- ESL** English as a Second Language. (See page 49)
- FSA** Foundation Skills Assessment. (See page 51)

## ACRONYMS

IB	International Baccalaureate. (See page 52)
IEP	Individual Education Plan. (See pages 21 & 48)
IRP	Integrated Resource Package. (See page 18)
LA	Learning Assistance. This program consists of individual or small group support for students who may be having difficulty in a curriculum area. This support is provided by a teacher who is not assigned to regular classroom instruction.
LFI	Late French Immersion. (See page 49)
PAC	Parent Advisory Council. (See page 32)
RAS	Richmond Addiction Services. RAS provides community support for substance abuse issues. Occasionally they do presentations in schools, but generally they are a resource to which students are referred. RAS will work with the whole family if necessary.
RASA	Richmond Association of School Administrators. (See page 35)
RDPA	Richmond District Parents Association. (See page 35)
RTA	Richmond Teachers' Association. (See page 35)
SCC	Staff Collegial Council. This is a school-based committee that makes recommendations to the staff on a variety of school/education-related issues. These recommendations may be implemented based on a democratic staff vote. The size and membership of the committee is determined by the school staff, but includes both teachers and administrative officers.
SLP	Student Learning Plan. This is an "awareness document" for Career and Personal Planning. CAPP students are asked yearly to record their present marks, past marks, and future intentions. The goal is to make students aware of the work and education required to achieve their goals.
SPC	School Planning Council. An SPC consists of the Principal, one teacher representative, three parent representatives and, at the secondary level, one student representative. Other staff, students and parents may also participate. Its role is to prepare an annual school plan for improving student achievement in the school. (See page 32)
TOC	Teacher on Call. This is a substitute teacher who takes over a class when the regular classroom teacher is absent.

# District Phone List

## SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 38 (RICHMOND)

7811 Granville Avenue, Richmond, BC V6Y 3E3

Superintendent of Schools 604-668-6081 Fax 604-668-6006  
 Secretary-Treasurer 604-668-6012 Fax 604-668-6161

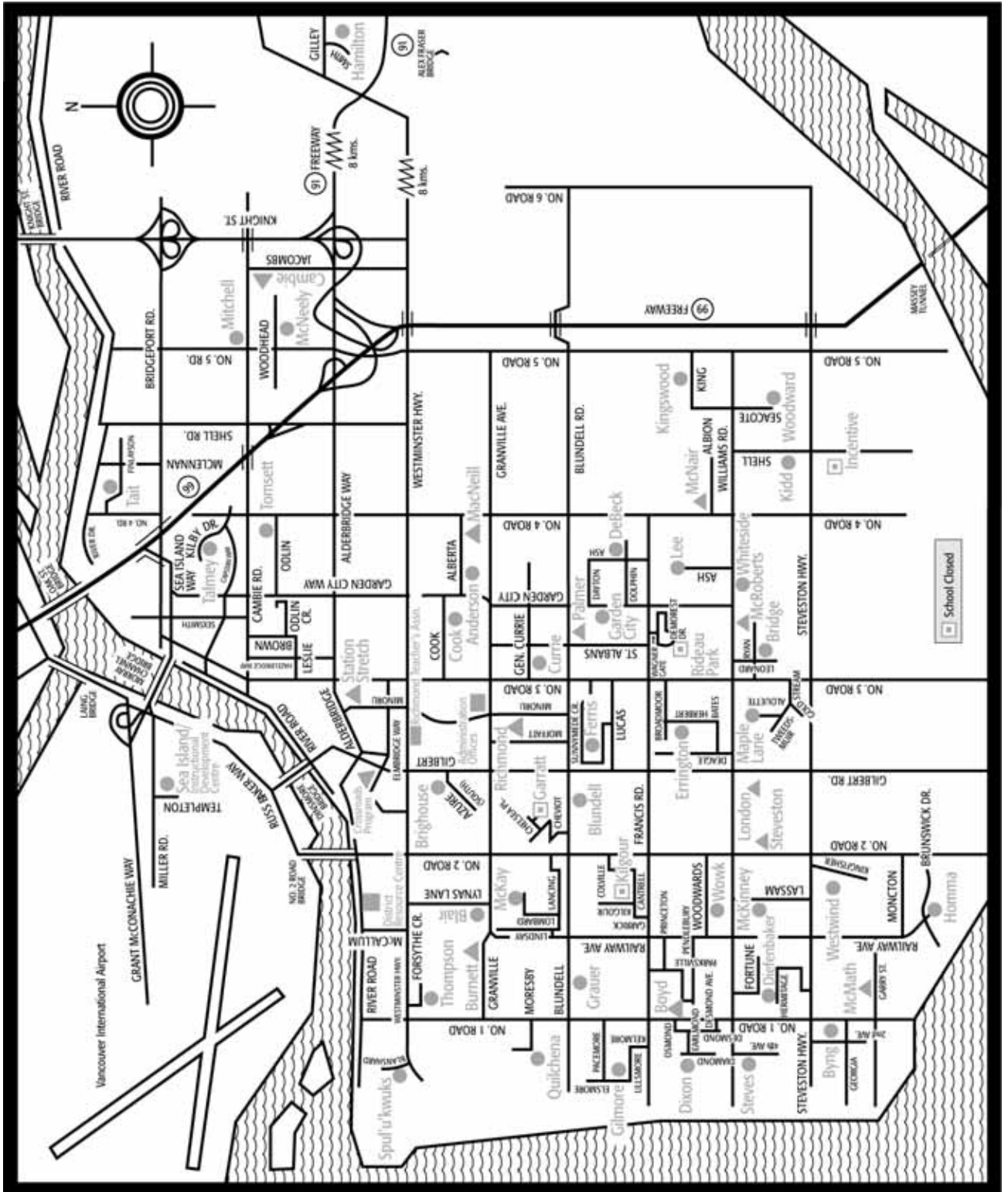
Secondary Schools	Phone (604)	Fax (604)	Address	Postal Code
Boyd	668-6615	668-6569	9200 No. 1 Rd.	V7E 6L5
Burnett (S)	668-6478	668-6484	5011 Granville Ave.	V7C 1E6
Cambie	668-6430	668-6132	4151 Jacombs Rd.	V6V 1N7
London (S)	668-6668	668-6672	10331 Gilbert Rd.	V7E 2H2
MacNeill	668-6212	668-6202	6611 No. 4 Rd.	V6Y 2T2
McMath (FI)	718-4050	718-4051	4251 Garry St.	V7E 2T9
McNair (S)	668-6575	668-6585	9500 No. 4 Rd.	V7A 2Y9
McRoberts (FI)	668-6600	668-6601	8980 Williams Rd.	V7A 1G6
Palmer	668-6288	668-6488	8160 St. Albans Rd.	V6Y 2K9
Richmond	668-6400	668-6405	7171 Minoru Blvd.	V6Y 1Z3
Steveston (S)	668-6500	668-6509	10440 No. 2 Rd.	V7E 2E3

(S) Semestered (FI) French Immersion

Elementary Schools	Phone (604)	Fax (604)	Address	Postal Code
Anderson* (EFI)	668-6355	668-6354	9460 Alberta Rd.	V6Y 1T6
Blair	668-6330	668-6317	6551 Lynas Lane	V7C 3K8
Blundell	668-6562	668-6214	6480 Blundell Rd.	V7C 1H8
Bridge (EFI)	668-6236	668-6483	10400 Leonard Rd.	V7A 2N5
Brighthouse*	668-6522	668-6418	6800 Azure Rd.	V7C 2S8
Sea Island*	668-6468	718-4087	1891 Wellington Cres.	V7B 1G6
Byng*	668-6649	668-6657	3711 Georgia St.	V7E 6M3
Cook*	668-6454	668-6137	8600 Cook Rd.	V6Y 1V7
Currie*	668-6440	668-6109	8220 General Currie Rd.	V6Y 1M1
DeBeck*	668-6281	668-6004	8600 Ash St.	V6Y 2S3
Diefenbaker*	668-6639	668-6645	4511 Hermitage Dr.	V7E 4T1
Dixon (EFI)	668-6608	668-6574	9331 Diamond Rd.	V7E 1P5
Errington*	668-6699	668-6698	9831 Herbert Rd.	V7A 1T6
Ferris*	668-6538	668-6546	7520 Sunnymede Cres.	V6Y 2V8
Garden City* (M)	668-7855	668-6274	8311 Garden City Rd.	V6Y 2P1
Gilmore* (EFI)	668-6268	668-6134	8380 Elsmore Rd.	V7C 2A1
Grauer*	668-6547	668-6555	4440 Blundell Rd.	V7C 1G9
Hamilton	668-6514	668-6516	5180 Smith Dr.	V6V 2W5
Homma* (EFI/LFI)	668-7844	668-6412	5100 Brunswick Dr.	V7E 6K9
Kidd*	668-6602	668-6102	10851 Shell Rd.	V7A 3W6
Kingswood	668-6280	668-6142	11511 King Rd.	V7A 3B5
Lee	668-6269	668-6414	9491 Ash St.	V7A 2T7
Maple Lane	668-6692	668-6192	7671 Alouette Dr.	V7A 1S1
McKay*	668-6470	668-6572	7360 Lombard Rd.	V7C 3N1
McKinney* (M)	668-6133	668-6691	10451 Lassam Rd.	V7E 2C2
McNeely	668-6250	668-6255	12440 Woodhead Rd.	V6V 1G3
Mitchell*	668-6225	668-6233	12091 Cambie Rd.	V6V 1G5
Quilchena	668-6224	668-6117	3760 Moresby Dr.	V7C 4G6
Spul'u'kwuks*	303-5100	303-5106	5999 Blanshard Dr.	V7C 5V4
Steves* (M)	668-6660	668-6666	10111 Fourth Ave.	V7E 1V5
Tait*	668-6444	668-6570	10071 Finlayson Dr.	V6X 1W7
Talmey*	668-6275	668-6173	9500 Kilby Dr.	V6X 3N1
Thompson	668-6420	668-6490	6211 Forsythe Cres.	V7C 2C4
Tomsett	668-6448	668-6172	9671 Odlin Rd.	V6X 1E1
Westwind*	668-6497	668-6292	11371 Kingfisher Dr.	V7E 4Y6
Whiteside (EFI/LFI)	668-6209	668-6419	9282 Williams Rd.	V7A 1H1
Woodward	668-6296	668-6247	10300 Seacote Rd.	V7A 4B2
Wowk*	668-6198	668-6118	5380 Woodwards Rd.	V7E 1H1

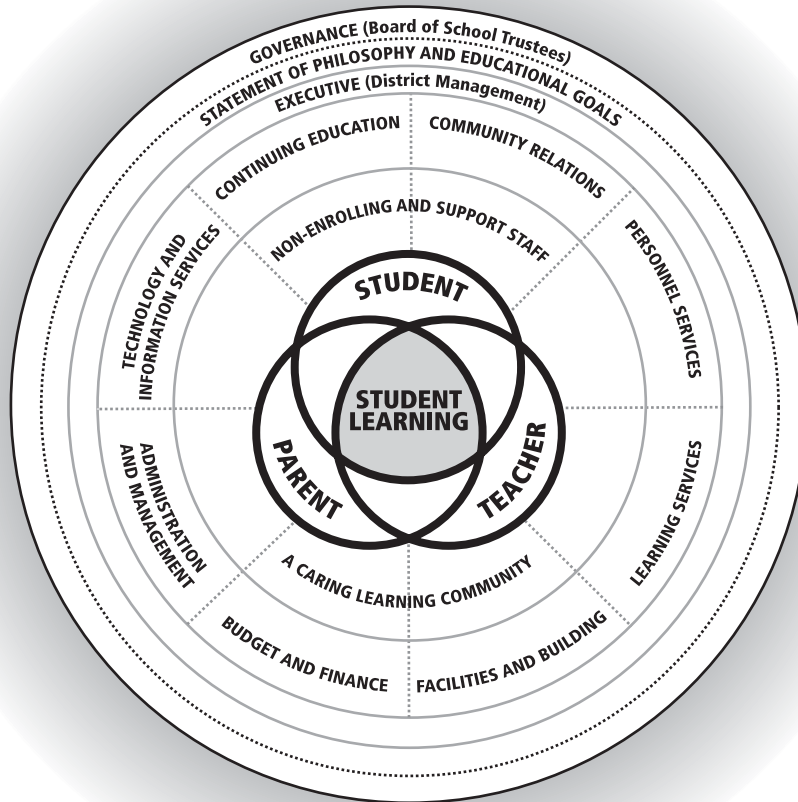
District	Phone (604)	Fax (604)	Address	Postal Code
Community Outreach	816-9491/6449	816-6161	7811 Granville Ave.	V6Y 3E3
Crossroads Program	668-6167	668-6165	173-7011 Elmbridge Way	V7C 4V5
Station Stretch	668-6204	668-6427	5280 Minoru Blvd.	V6X 2A9

\*Before/After School Daycare (EFI) Early French Immersion (LFI) Late French Immersion (M) Montessori





# Foundations

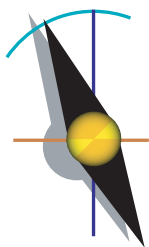


**What does this diagram represent?**  
 The partnership between student, teacher and parent is the **Foundation** for achieving our core purpose of high-quality student learning. The success of this partnership depends on a wide range of supports provided by others. These supports are represented as an array of functional areas and a layer of governance, all of which is intended to serve the core purpose.

**What does it mean for you?**  
 Everyone has a place on this diagram. It reminds us of our interdependence, whatever our role, and the common purpose shared by all. Through collaboration and open communication at all levels we promote the core purpose of student learning and strengthen public education in Richmond.

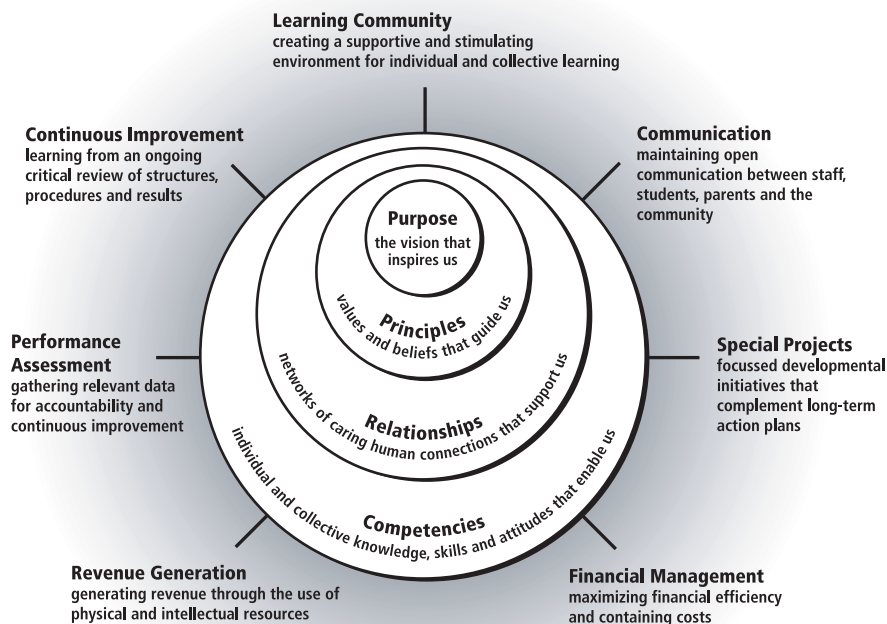


SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 38 (RICHMOND)



# Directions

A Framework for Building Common Understandings,  
Making Decisions and Taking Action



## What is Directions?

It is the big picture of what we are doing in Richmond's public schools. In the center of **Directions** there are four core ideas key to everything we do—serving our fundamental purpose to enable all learners, upholding our key principles of collaboration and inclusion, building strong relationships of support and common purpose, and continuously improving our individual and organizational abilities. To ensure that we maintain a balanced approach the framework highlights seven key issues that are important at the classroom, school and district level—Performance Assessment, Continuous Improvement, Learning Community, Communication, Financial Management, Revenue Generation and Special Projects.

## How does it affect you?

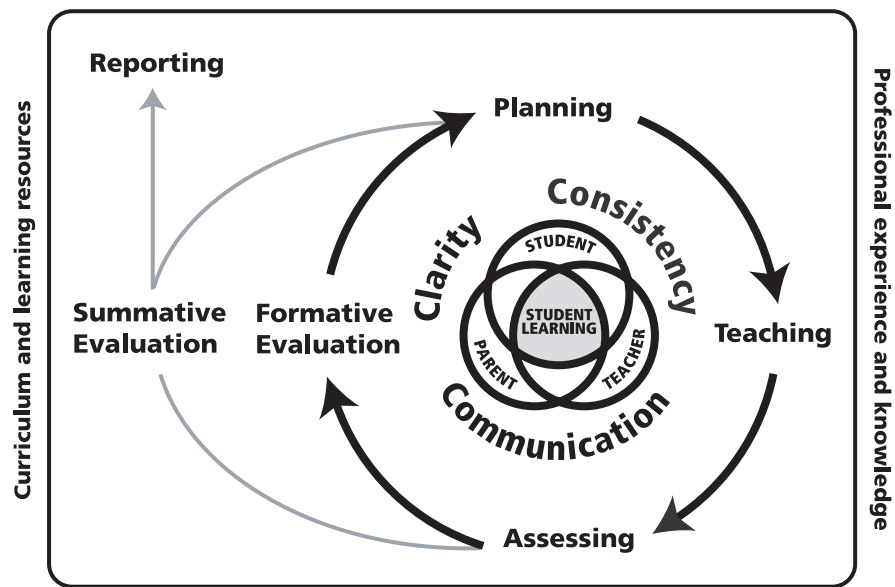
**Directions** is a way of looking at things, not a set of tasks. It is meant to provide all of us with a common language that will help us maintain a strong focus on our core purposes. The impact of **Directions** will depend on how you decide to use it. To learn more about how **Directions** is being used in your school, ask your principal. To learn more about how the District is using **Directions** check our website ([www.sd38.bc.ca](http://www.sd38.bc.ca)) and follow the links to **Directions**.



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 38 (RICHMOND)

## Continuous Improvement

Knowledge of children and how they learn



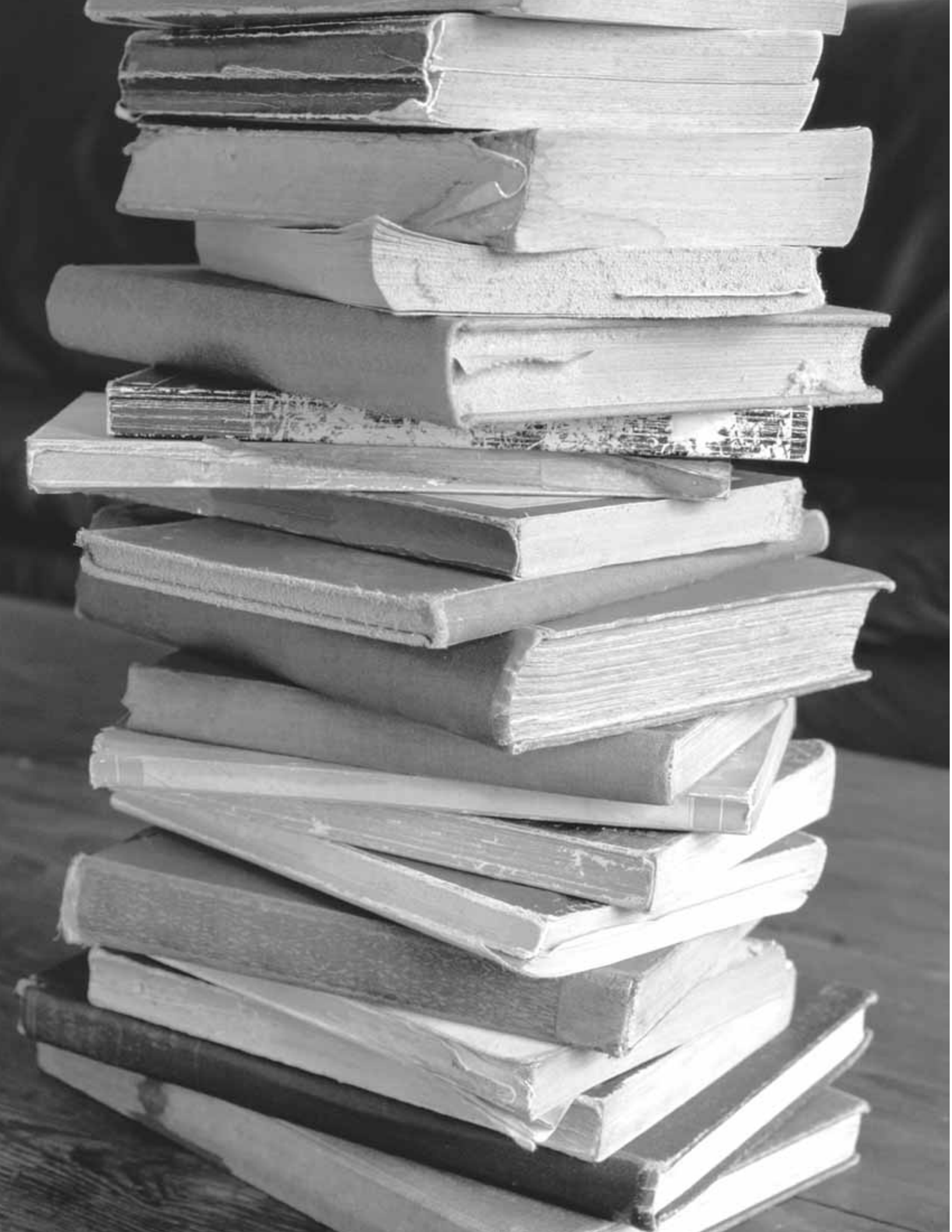
Assessment and evaluation resources (e.g. performance standards)

This cycle indicates how assessment provides information that focuses planning and teaching on the needs of students. In a classroom the cycle occurs continuously and represents a student-centered approach to instruction. At the school level it describes the annual process of developing and implementing a performance plan and, at the district level, the District Accountability Contract. It can also be seen to represent learning quite generally as a recursive process of planning, doing, observing and reflecting—whether by an individual or a group.



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 38 (RICHMOND)





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## What do you think of Learning Matters?

We are very interested in your impression of **Learning Matters**. Your feedback will help us make changes to our next edition.

- What did you like about it?
- What suggestions do you have to improve it?
- What other information should be included?

Please direct your comments to the:

Office of the Superintendent of Schools  
School District No. 38 (Richmond)  
7811 Granville Avenue  
Richmond, BC  
V6Y 3E3

Phone: 604-668-6000

Fax: 604-668-6006

E-mail: [questions@richmond.sd38.bc.ca](mailto:questions@richmond.sd38.bc.ca)