The British Columbia Primary Teacher’s Association BCPTA

Examines  the BC Education Plan

Opening Statement

The British Columbia Primary Teacher’s Association continues to support the philosophy of the “Primary Program A Framework for Teaching (2000).”  The “Principles of Learning” (The 1994 Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan) still guide us today:

**• Learning requires active participation of the student.**

**• People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.**

**• Learning is both an individual and a group process.**

We set out  to view the BC Education Plan through the lens of the Primary Document: A Framework for Teaching (2000) and the “Principles of Learning”.

**1) Personalized learning for every student**

“In the primary years, children who pursue topics of personal interest and relevance, asking their own questions, solving problems, and reflecting on their own thinking, gain increasing level of confidence.  They also experience the joy of learning.” pg. 43  The Primary Program; The Framework for Teaching.  Current research on the importance of play in helping children learn, including the recent emphasis on the development of self-regulation skills is a key component for life long success.

Action Steps for Successful Implementation

1) Continue to promote best practices for quality teaching and learning as supported by the **Primary Program: A Framework For Teaching** by providing opportunities for meaningful discussion and professional development.

2) Support lower class size for BC classrooms to enable teachers to support the diversity of individual students [(Pate-Bain, H., & Achilles, C. (1992, November). **Class size does make a difference**.](http://www.workingtv.com/achilles.html) [Phi Delta Kappan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phi_delta_kappan))

3) Support restoring learning specialist **teacher** positions including teacher-librarians, ESL, learning  assistance teachers, counsellors, special education teachers, and other teachers providing specialized curriculum and instruction.

**2) Quality teaching and learning**

Teachers are educational leaders and professionals.   We understand the need for ongoing professional development.  Teachers know best the unique needs of their students in their classrooms.  In order to better personalize learning for students, teachers need to have choice and flexibility to personalize their own professional development.

Action Steps for Successful Implementation

1)  The BCPTA will continue to provide high quality professional development opportunities for teachers.

2)  The Ministry of Education partner with BCTF and BCPTA to provide support for the implementation of new initiatives and curriculum with adequate funding and time.

3) The Ministry of Education partner with BCTF and BCPTA to provide support for new teachers.

4) The Ministry of Education partner with BCTF and BCPTA to call for funding for mentoring programs throughout the province.

**3) Flexibility and choice**

A strong **public** education system is vital to maintain choice and flexibility for equal access BC families.

“In the primary years, human and social development is especially important because it supports and enhances children’s intellectual development.” (pg. 14  The Primary Program; A Framework for Teaching)  In the primary years, “children are helped to move beyond an egocentric view of the world.  Experiences help the learn empathy, critical thinking, conflict resolution, individual and collaborative decision making, and a sense of community. The ability to work and to learn with others is essential for success in social situations and in one’s career.” (pg 27; The Primary Program; A Framework for Teaching).  Personalization that includes flexibility and choice needs to be balanced with collaborative learning opportunities within a group or classroom.

Action Steps for Successful Implementation

1)  The BCPTA  will continue to advocate for a well funded public education system that is responsive to needs of families and children in BC.

**4) High standards**

The BCPTA will continue to honour the diverse developmental nature of children and learning.

“Developmentally appropriate teaching fosters children’s development in all areas rather than focusing narrowly on intellectual development or academic achievement.” (pg. 83, The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching)  “It is more beneficial to take a broad perspective that considers all areas of development” (pg. 83, The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching)

Action Steps for Successful Implementation

1) The BCPTA will continue to advocate that the five areas of development to be included in the core curriculum that together address the development of the whole child.

The five areas of development are as follows:

• aesthetic and artistic

• emotional and social

• intellectual

• physical development and well-being

• social responsibility

2) The Ministry of Education partner with BCTF and BCPTA  to create a developmental continuum of learning for K-3 and support its implementation through teacher inservice.

3) The BCPTA will advocate for better services to students requiring additional support and support restoring learning specialist **teacher** positions including teacher-librarians, ESL, learning  assistance teachers, counsellors, special education teachers, and other teachers providing specialized curriculum and instruction.

**5) Learning empowered by technology**

The BCPTA believes students need new skills to thrive in tomorrows world.  Technology is just one of the tools within the tool box of the primary teacher and these will continue to change and update.  “As society becomes more technologically advanced, experience with a range of technologies becomes increasingly important for learners of all ages, including young children.  Children need access to both traditional materials and new technologies.” (pg. 49 The Primary Program; A Framework for Teaching)

Action Steps for Successful Implementation

1) The Ministry of Education needs to provide up-to-date technologies for student and teacher use along with inservice to effectively use these new tools to enhance student learning.

2)  The BCPTA  will help to raise awareness of current research on brain development and effective use of technology through professional development opportunities.

3) It is an necessity that the Ministry of Education ensure equity of access to technologies throughout the province

**Summary**

In our review of the BC Education Plan, the BCPTA endeavoured to look at how the Primary Program and the new BC Ed Plan fit together.  Overall, we were pleased that  the BC Education Plan reflects many of the current best practices of primary teachers throughout the province. However, we realized that there are a few areas of the plan needing further development, and that includes balancing the value of group learning and social processes with that of personalized or individual learning. We have also made recommendations called  “Action Steps of Successful Implementation”, as there are supports needed in order to make this plan more effective for all learners. We also recognize the value of technology as a tool for learning, but this needs to be balanced with other strategies a teacher uses to best meet the needs of students.  If the aim of the BC Education Plan is to build on our current strengths as we move towards tomorrow’s world, the support of teachers is an integral part of the successful implementation of this plan.

***The BCPTA is willing to partner in the development of a plan to effectively implement change for British Columbia schools.***