



## BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

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**Re: Proposed Revisions to the Standards for Educators in BC**

**Dear Registrar,**

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the June 2007 draft of the BC College of Teachers Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia. As one of the partners who took part in the Dialogue on Standards April, 2006, we are pleased to share with you our concerns and suggestions during the College's Mini-Forum on the topic of the revised Standards.

Parents and the public need and expect the College to be an independent body which is non-partisan, unbiased, and balanced. Such a body with broad based representation from all education partners who share a wide spectrum of beliefs, backgrounds and cultures will enhance the probability that the public will gain and maintain confidence in the profession of educators. In order to achieve a high level of public confidence in the profession, the college must stay focused on ensuring that all standards and decisions are based on these questions; "Is this in the best interest of all of the students?"; Are all discussions based on putting the interest of students first and foremost?" If we cannot answer yes to both of these questions we cannot be certain that the right decisions are being made.

At the Dialogue on Standards in April, 2006 parents came away with the knowledge that a set of criteria for each standard is important for accountability and clarity. That criteria bring the standards to life and articulate clearly to the public the knowledge and skills that professional educators require.

Overall we found the standards are not clear and concise. We believe that the general public may have some trouble understanding the intent of these standards. We also have a concern that it will be much harder to assess Educator performance against the more general statements contained in this document as opposed to the more specific statements in the former standards. As stated in application #3 *to establish a regulatory framework that guides the College in decisions related to teacher education programs, certification, fitness to practice and discipline*

We respectfully provide our comments on the following:

- a) We are concerned with the number of times that the word "should" shows up in this document. We believe that this word is too soft and provides the opportunity for perhaps inappropriate interpretation of what ought to be the threshold; or minimum behavior expected as implied by the word "standard". In general, parents have high expectations of the education system and those who operate it. Those expectations would be better reflected by replacing the word "should" with "shall" or "must" in the standards.

- b) This document mentions the notion of accountability to the public and serving the public interest, but gives scant attention to the educator's responsibility to students, including the duty to treat them with respect and dignity. The second paragraph under the heading Purpose and Meaning of the Standards in Practice makes the statement: "Standards are intended to support the goals of our society by helping to support the education of citizens to live productive and fulfilled lives. What is really meant by that statement? Isn't the product of a healthy, effective and efficient public education system in fact "good citizens"? The missing word from that statement is "students". Shouldn't the statement be that "Standards support the education of students to live as productive citizens and have fulfilled lives"?
- c) The first page summary seems to be all about what the definition of professionalism means to educators. Shouldn't the definition of professionalism as it relates to the educators in the public education system be one that is shared and widely held by the public at large? How can a true standard exist without such a shared understanding? How can true accountability take place without it? How can there be any confidence in any set of standards that uses such soft words as "should" rather than "shall" or "must"?
- d) The last sentence on page 1: Standards serve as a touchstone for this responsibility is a bold and powerful statement. A touchstone was formerly used to test the purity of gold and silver. Today it is commonly held to be an excellent quality or example that is used to test excellence or genuineness. Synonyms include the words; standard, measure, model and pattern. However the bold statement that page one concludes with is nullified by the very curious and ambiguous statement contained on page 2: "a deficit in a single standard is not necessarily a fatal flaw that destroys professional competence, though in certain substantive circumstances it may be." Really? What does that mean? Which of the standards is it okay for an educator to be deficient in?
- e) The last paragraph of page two titled Commitment to the Standards makes a bold claim. It holds out these standards as a contract between the educators in the public education system and parents that guarantees a safe, caring, competent and efficient education system in which parents can confidently entrust their children. Parents would sincerely like to believe that claim and sign onto that agreement. In order for that to occur the language of the standards and its supporting document must be clear and strong enough to reflect a pledge so solemn and vital to our society.
- f) Definitions Page: We believe that definitions for the following words and terms would be beneficial to this document :
- Consultation, dignity, diversity, respect, society, emotional and physical safety, privileged position of power and trust, role of parent.
  - In addition the definition of "student" needs to be expanded to reflect the current reality of the expanded mandate of the public education system that now includes both early and adult learners in addition to students of the K-12 system.
  - Also the definition of "authority" is confusing as it appears to be referring to three distinct things.

- g) The Standards are easier for the general public to understand when they are accompanied by point form clarifying statements rather than left to stand alone and open to interpretation, which may neither be accurate nor true to the intent. Recognizing the diversity of cultures in this province, wording that is clearer and/or in point form would likely be a benefit to many ESL families and further boost broad based public confidence.

In order to expedite and maximize a high degree of public confidence the College must provide the public with education packages that clearly explain the college, its role and the standards to the public. This information must also fully inform the public of the process for addressing a concern that any parent or citizen would like to have the college address.

Notes on the Standards:

Generally our impression is that the statements under each standard are weakly worded and can be interpreted in a number of ways. We are unsure that the general public will understand them. As the Standards are intended not only for educators but also the public whose interest the college is responsible to protect, these standards must be constructed with absolute clarity and with no room for misinterpretation or confusion.

### **Standard #1**

The wording does not consider the average literacy level of the public at large. It is not friendly to people with diversity issues such as ESL, recent immigrants, various cultures or ethnicity, learning challenges, etc.

### **Standard #2**

This standard needs definitions to some of the words it contains so that it is not left open to individual interpretation. Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. Does acting with integrity mean the same thing for all people? This standard also states that educators have a “general understanding” of the education system in BC and the law as it relates to their duties. Is a general understanding sufficient? Parents want to know that they have a very clear understanding of their role and responsibility. After all, this document does state that they are in a privileged position of power and trust, a position that also carries a heavy burden of responsibility.

Educators are accountable for their conduct both on the job and away from the educational setting... accountable to whom and how? This needs to be clearly articulated.

### **Standard #3**

This standard as currently written does not hold nearly the strength that it did as Standard #6 in the first draft. Educators are knowledgeable about how children develop... or understand and apply relevant theories of human development including demonstrating an understanding of individual learning difference and special needs. Which is the more powerful and clear statement? Also the notion to “develop children’s potential and love of learning” has been lost. What happened to “respond to specific situations in ways that respect children’s dignity”?

#### **Standard #4**

“Professional Educators demonstrate an understanding of the role of parents and the home in the life of students.” The new revised standards do not appear to recognize the that the public education system is educating the future citizens of our country. They are minors and the responsibility of their parents first and foremost. If the professional educator wants parents to respect the profession then he or she must lead by example and respect parents. These are our children. We need and expect to be included in the decision making process that affects them. Timely communication is not sufficient. What does communication mean? It is much more than merely being informed. Parents require meaningful consultation during the decision making process.

#### **Standards#5**

What exactly does this standard mean? What happened to maintaining records and reporting to administration and parents?

#### **Standard #6**

“Educators convey the values, beliefs and knowledge of our democratic society.” Whose values and beliefs? This is dangerous territory. Tread carefully. As parents most of us want our children to learn how to think critically applying knowledge to the principles, values and beliefs that we, their parents, instill in them so that they will form their own values and beliefs in a principled way as they become good and productive citizens.

#### **Standard #8**

We are not sure what this standard is supposed to be saying really. Is this not what would be reasonably expected to occur naturally within a true profession? Does this imply or in fact create a mandatory obligation for every educator to participate in meaningful and ongoing professional development? What are the consequences for those who opt out?

This is a summary of our concerns and suggestions. In our view more work is needed to ensure that this document in fact contains concrete standards that will be truly beneficial both to the education profession and the public at large. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the member Parent Advisory Councils of the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils.



Ron Broda  
First Vice-President