

# Ministry of Education

## OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

### GENERAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INFORMATION

#### 1. HISTORY

- The first privately-run school in British Columbia, open to the public, was founded in 1858.
- Prior to 1977, independent schools were unregulated and received no grants. From the early 1950's schools were able to receive government-approved textbooks free of charge.
- From 1977 on access to partial funding was provided to qualifying schools only.
- From 1977 to 1989, schools that did not qualify for funding were unregulated.
- In 1989, following the Report of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education, a revamped *Independent School Act* came into being, which required the regulation of all independent schools, funded and non-funded.
- The Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools is responsible for the administration of the *Independent School Act*, classification and funding of independent schools, home schooling, as well as certification of offshore schools. The Office functions as the regulatory agency of Government.

#### 2. CLASSIFICATION & FUNDING

##### CLASSIFICATION

- The 1989 *Independent School Act*, and later amendments, provides for the following classification of British Columbia independent schools:
  - Group 1 schools (funded):
    - have educational programs consistent with ministerial orders;
    - employ British Columbia certified teachers;
    - meet Ministry of Education instructional time requirements;
    - provide a program that meets the learning outcomes of the British Columbia curriculum;
    - meet various administrative requirements regarding student records, student safety, emergency procedures, etc.
    - maintain adequate educational facilities;
    - comply with municipal and regional district codes;

- receive per student operating grants of 50% of adjusted per student operating cost in local public district, and
- are fully evaluated at least every six years, and inspected every two years.

Group 2 schools (funded):

- meet the same requirements as Group 1 schools; and
- receive per-student grants at the 35% level, because per-student operating costs exceed those of the local public school district.

Group 3 schools (not funded):

- are not required to employ BC certified teachers or have educational programs consistent with ministerial orders;
- maintain facilities that meet all municipal and regional district codes;
- not eligible for provincial grants; and
- are inspected every two years.

Group 4 schools (not funded):

- cater mainly to non-provincial students;
- meet the same educational program requirements as Group 1;
- must have a minimum of 80% of their teachers certified;
- may issue “Dogwood” Certificate when 100% of teachers are certified;
- not eligible for provincial grants;
- must be bonded; and
- fully evaluated at least once every two years and inspected on alternate years.

In addition to Group 1 - 4 independent schools, as part of a pilot project the Ministry also presently inspects and certifies one offshore school which:

- meets the same educational program requirements as Group 1;
- employs British Columbia-certified teachers;
- maintains adequate facilities;
- is not eligible for provincial grants;
- is fully evaluated every year.

## FUNDING

- Grants to qualifying independent schools are tied to the cost per student in public school districts. Group 1 independent schools receive 50 % and Group 2 schools receive 35 % of the per-student operational grant issued to their local public school district (for more details refer to the grant calculation explanation below). The independent schools funding formula is structured in such a way that any change to the per student operating costs in the public school districts affects the grants to independent schools in the same proportion.
- The grants are calculated as follows:

- Student counts are based on each school's audited full year enrollment;
  - The grant base for independent schools is directly related to the public school district per student operating cost. The grant base is arrived at by subtracting all monies provided to public schools for local capital expenses and annual capital allowances;
  - The per student grants are a percentage of the grant base: 50% for Group 1 schools and 35% for Group 2 schools;
  - A school's grant equals the product of the audited enrollment, the grant base, and the applicable percentage.
- Special education grants are issued to Group 1 and 2 independent schools for qualifying special needs students. The rate is 50% of the amount granted to public schools for each level of need.
  - Independent schools receive no capital grants. All grants received must be used for operational purposes only. The school's operational expenditures must exceed its grant.

### 3. SUMMARY OF STATISTICS - 2003/2004

#### ENROLMENTS

- Average annual enrolment growth over the last five years is 1.25%.
- Independent schools enrol approximately 10% of BC's K-12 population.
- Headcount enrolment by Group:
 

Group 1 - funded at 50% of per student cost	47,653
Group 1/3 & 2/3 - Group 1 & 2 portion funded at 50% & 35%	878
Group 2 - funded at 35% of per student cost	12,553
Group 3 - not funded	1,148
Group 4 - not funded and bonded	<u>1,155</u>
Total headcount:	63,387

#### NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

Group 1 - funded at 50% of per student cost	241
Group 2 - funded at 35% of per student cost	58
Group 1/3 & 2/3 Group 1 & 2 portion funded at 50% & 35%	9
Group 3 - not funded	30
Group 4 - not funded and bonded	<u>14</u>
Total school count:	352

#### FUNDING:

- The breakdown below represents the total independent school funding of \$163.5 Million:
  - \$156 Million in regular per student grants to 304 Group 1 and 2 schools;
  - \$7 Million in special education grants to qualifying students in Group 1 and 2 schools;

- \$5 Million in home schooling grants to Group 1 and 2 schools for 3,021 registered home schoolers. (Independent schools registered 3,045 of the total 3,329 home-schooled students in BC).
- To educate the 63,387 independent school students in the public system would cost \$415 Million in operating grants to public school districts, i.e., \$259 Million more than current grants to independent schools - based on the average 2003/04 public school per student operating block grant of \$6,547.
- An estimated \$750 Million to \$1 Billion of new capital funding would be required to accommodate all independent school students in public schools.

#### DIVERSITY

- Independent schools are operated by diverse communities:

• Roman Catholic Schools:	21,417
• Society of Christian Schools:	8978
• University-Prep/British Model Schools:	9,575
• Non-aligned Schools*:	<u>23,417</u>
• Total <u>funded and non-funded</u> headcount:	63,387

(\* Non-aligned independent schools include: First Nations, Christian Church Schools, Jewish, Mennonite, Montessori, Muslim, Seventh Day Adventist, Secular, Sikh, Special Education, Waldorf, etc.)

- In general the following applies:
- The *Human Rights Code* applies to independent schools, with the exemption that a school that is not operated for profit and which has as a primary purpose the promotion of the welfare of an identifiable group of persons, e.g., a common religion, will not be considered to be contravening the Code because it grants a preference to members of the identifiable group (section 41);
- Most independent schools accept special needs students, also in categories for which no special education grants are made available;
- Families representing all strata of society, including single parent families, who generally have access through bursaries, scholarships and tuition assistance when payments of tuition are beyond their reach.

#### **4. RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Freedom to operate an independent school is balanced by provincial standards the school is required to meet. Provincial requirements establish a framework within which independent schools have freedom to operate. The greater the degree of certification and funding provided by the Ministry, the greater the requirements that the school must meet.
  - a. For example, independent schools have freedom to address the curriculum from their own religious perspectives, but they are bound by section 1 of the Schedule of the *Independent School Act*. This section reads:
 

*"to grant mandatory certificate of group classification to an authority the inspector must be satisfied that: "no program is in existence or proposed at the independent school that would, in theory or in practice, promote or foster doctrines of*

    - *racial or ethnic superiority or persecution*
    - *religious intolerance or persecution*
    - *social change through violent action, or*
    - *sedition"*

[*Independent School Act* Schedule 1(a)]
  - b. Independent schools have freedom to approach the curriculum from their own pedagogical perspective, but their programs must meet specified learning outcomes of the BC curriculum for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and French (or another choice of mandatory second language) from Kindergarten - Grade 10. In Grades 11 and 12 all subjects that contribute to BC graduation (Dogwood) certificate, must meet BC curriculum requirements [Educational Standards Order].
  - c. Independent schools may employ teachers who reflect their schools' perspective, but all teachers must be BC - certified [*Independent School Act* Schedule 3(a)], and employment practices must be in compliance with the *Employment Standards Act*. In hiring of staff, or admission of students, the *Human Rights Code* allows independent schools to grant a preference to teachers and students whose religious affiliation match that of the school's [*Human Rights Code* - section 41].
  - d. Independent schools may purchase property and construct buildings to meet their specific needs, but the school must be in compliance with all provincial and municipal codes and regulations [*Independent School Act* - section 1].
- Parents may choose to send their children to independent schools, but they are required to pay the same school taxes as others. As independent schools receive 35 % or 50 % of the school district's per-pupil operating grant, the remaining cost needs to be paid by tuition and donation [Independent School Regulation 4].

## 5. CHOICE IN EDUCATION

Government strongly supports a public system of education which provides a publicly-funded quality education for all. In a democratic society, however, parents have a right to choose from various educational alternatives for the education of their children, such as public schools, distance education schools, home schooling and independent schools.

- Partial funding of independent schools has recognized the contributions these schools have made to the education of children in our province. It has also increased options for more parents to select schools of their choice. These choices often reflect the goals, educational pedagogy, culture/religion and values parents desire for their child(ren).
- Parents are increasingly demanding more choices regarding their children's education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), cosigned by Canada, states: *"Parents have the prior right to choose the kinds of education that shall be given to their children."* First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, co-signed by Canada states: *"No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure that such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."*
- The Sullivan Royal Commission concluded that, *"We therefore deem it proper that non-public schools should continue to receive provincial financial assistance, such aid we believe to be a normal tangible manifestation of the freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To assume otherwise would be to deny accommodation of social diversity and multiculturalism, the recognition of individual differences and the rights of parents to participate in educational choice - all principles which remain fundamental parts of the democratic system we hold dear."*

**Prepared by:**

Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools

Phone: 250 356-2508; Fax 250 953-4908