

Leigh Glancie

From: Leigh Glancie
Sent: Thursday, January 11, 2024 2:54 PM
To: Leigh Glancie
Subject: Urgent Alignment with BC Ministry of Education Appeal Guidelines

From: Gary Ng [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 November 2023 12:18
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Subject: Urgent Alignment with BC Ministry of Education Appeal Guidelines

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Dear Saanich School District Policy Development Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concern and to prompt immediate action regarding the Saanich School District's adherence to the BC Ministry of Education's appeal guidelines. It has become increasingly evident that our district lags in providing a supportive and non-adversarial appeals process as mandated by the guidelines updated in November 2022.

Neighbouring districts such as Victoria have set commendable precedents such as offering a one-page PDF on their websites to facilitate easy submissions for appeals, to go with a flow chart of the process. This streamlined approach significantly reduces the burden on parents, who are not required to construct their own responses from scratch.

Unfortunately, Saanich School District's current practices do not afford such convenience or clarity, which is not only an oversight but also a deviation from the Ministry's vision of a parent-friendly process.

Both Victoria and Sooke districts also specifically state that a Notice of Appeal can be submitted by parents or students, at any step of the complaints process, noting that decisions are to be rendered within 45 days upon submission.

Here are the examples below--bold emphasis ours:

Sooke: "If your concerns can't be resolved at the school or District level, you can request in writing to the Superintendent for the Board to hear an appeal. This must be done within 30 school days from when a decision was first made by an employee. **The decision could have been made in Levels 1, 2, 3, 4.**"

Victoria: "A student, parent or guardian has the **right to appeal a decision to the Board at any point in this process** as set out in Bylaw 9330.1."

But Saanich requires pre-steps before a Notice of Appeal can be submitted, unlike other districts which have made processes up to date. My question is why has Saanich not kept up with its neighbouring districts and B.C. Ministry of Education guidelines?

Furthermore, the Ministry's guidelines emphasize that the appeals process should be supportive rather than adversarial. Regrettably, this has not been our collective experience with the Saanich District staff thus far. The lack of clear, accessible resources and a supportive approach has unnecessarily complicated what should be a straightforward procedure.

To reiterate, both Victoria and Sooke School Districts have demonstrated best practices by providing clear, accessible, and easy-to-navigate resources for appeal submissions. These resources are in the spirit of the Ministry's directive, which advocates for a non-intimidating process, ensuring that all parties are treated with respect and dignity.

I implore the Saanich School District to take immediate action to meet the standards set by the BC Ministry of Education and our neighbouring districts. The need for accessible, clear, and supportive guidelines, including a simple one-page PDF for appeal submissions, is imperative. The parents and guardians in our community deserve an appeals process that is aligned with the Ministry's guidelines — one that is constructed with the intent to support rather than to challenge.

Numerous elementary school websites and the district's website are poorly designed and hard to navigate (especially on mobile devices), compared to Victoria and Sooke. Plus they omit crucial information regarding Notice of Appeal steps and procedures (for example, KELSET and Deep Cove websites have no info on the Notice of Appeal process).

This creates an imbalance of power that favours the Saanich School District and ultimately leaves parents and students at a disadvantage, as there are no transparent complaints and procedures steps outlined, as required by B.C. law.

As elected Trustees and members of the Policy Development Committee, you bear the responsibility to ensure our district's compliance with provincial legislation and to uphold the values of our education system. I trust that you will address this matter with the urgency it deserves.

I look forward to a timely revision of the Saanich School District website and its resources to reflect a more supportive approach, in line with the Ministry's latest guidelines and the practices of our neighbouring districts.

Are you able to provide a specific date for when these changes will be implemented by Saanich?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gary Ng
