

Requesting That Your Child be Excused from FSA Testing

FAQs for Parents

This page is intended to provide information for parents who have decided to request that their children be excused from the FSA tests. For details about why teachers oppose the FSA tests, and for the withdrawal letters, please visit the FSA page on the BCTF website.

What are the rules for parents to request that their child may be excused?

Under Ministry of Education guidelines, parents may request that a school's principal excuse a student "in the event of a family emergency, lengthy illness, or other extenuating circumstances."

Will this automatically mean that my child is excused from writing the tests?

The withdrawal letter provided for parents to send to the principal asks that the parent's request be respected. Unfortunately, in the past, some school-based or district administrators have created roadblocks for parent who have made requests.

BC's public school teachers believe that parents have the right to choose to withdraw their children from school activities that are not part of the curriculum. Some school districts have written letters to parents indicating that they will respect the parental right to make such decision about participation in the FSAs.

What points can be raised with administrators about parental rights to decide about FSAs?

- Parents have the ultimate right to make decisions in the best interests of their child.
- FSAs are a waste of their child's time, better spent on genuine educational activities. FSAs are not curriculum, nor do they count toward a child's mark.
- Parents can choose to withdraw their children from school activities that are not part of the curriculum, such as field trips, extra-curricular sports, or because of religious beliefs.
- FSAs don't count for marks or on report cards. Missing them doesn't harm a child's education.
- The Fraser Institute has misused FSA data to create unscientific school rankings designed to promote private schools. One set of tests can never measure the quality of a school and the work of its educators, and nobody in the educational community believes in these discredited rankings.
- All provincial education-related partner groups are working together with the Ministry of Education to develop a better assessment that everyone can support.

What about keeping my child at home on days when the FSA tests are being written?

Parents should not be told to keep their children at home if they are not going to write the FSAs. Students have the right to be in school, and schools and school districts can easily accommodate students whose parents have exempted them from the FSA.

What can a parent do if their withdrawal request is not respected?

Any parent who has been pressured to have their child write the tests against their wishes, or has had their request to withdraw their child rejected can:

- contact school trustees in their district to insist that their parental choice be respected.
- appeal the decision under [Section 11 of the School Act](#). A letter to the principal should indicate the intention to appeal and a request that the decision be delayed until the appeal is heard. Should an appeal be unsuccessful, parents can then appeal to the Superintendent of Appeals.
- make their concerns known at a public board meeting, in letters to the editor, and through social media. Parents may wish to do this together as a group, and seek support of their PAC or DPAC.
- ask for a meeting of concerned parents with school trustees, MLAs, or the Minister of Education.

The 41,000 members of the BC Teachers Federation thank those parents who have chosen to take a stand for their children against these unnecessary and unhelpful tests.