



BCCPAC Advocacy Project

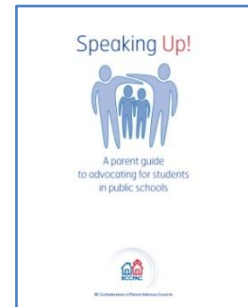
MAY 2008 NEWSLETTER

It was great to see those of you who attended the BCCPAC spring conference and Annual General Meeting and hear about some of the activities your DPACs are working on to support advocacy for students in your school districts.

Speaking Up!

BCCPAC released the revised *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools* May 2 at the BCCPAC spring conference. Conference delegates received a copy to take home and were encouraged to spread the word to parents and education partners in their school districts.

Speaking Up! has lots of helpful information for parents, including tear-out self-help guides (Problem-Solving and Meeting Survival) and new information on fairness in decision-making, provincial appeals, apologies and dealing with bullying.



This little book goes a long way toward confirming a statement we made in 1994 when the project began—The BCCPAC Advocacy Project is not about building an “advocacy bureaucracy” within the public education system. It’s about parents helping parents solve problems in the best interests of their children. It’s about parents working together to solve systemic problems to ensure a more responsive and credible public education system for all students in BC.

Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools has evolved over time and continues to support the information needs of parents as demonstrated through 14 years of individual casework by the BCCPAC Advocacy Project.

Help us get the word out!

Please help us get the word out that the new *Speaking Up!* is available. Parents have the right and the responsibility to speak up when their children are having problems at school. As parent leaders, you have a role and responsibility in helping parents find the information and support they need to advocate for their children. *Speaking Up!* is a tool you can give to parents to help them navigate the public school system and approach problem-solving effectively.

Help us make *Speaking Up!* the “go to” guide for parents. BCCPAC has made this edition (and separate files of the Problem-Solving and Meeting Survival self-help guides) available for free download at www.bccpac.bc.ca/advocacyproject/resources.aspx. You are welcome to create a link to this page on your PAC/DPAC website.

You can help by publishing information about the guide’s availability on the BCCPAC website in your PAC/DPAC newsletters (see sample promotional information below). Include information on where they can find your school district policies for problem-solving/complaints and appeals. Parents are often reluctant to ask at the school for a policy for making a complaint. Let parents know your DPAC is also available to help them find the policies they need. Parents who know how to find and use the school



district policies and processes available to them are more confident and more likely to advocate successfully on behalf of their children.

You can also help by asking your local schools and school district to post the policies prominently on their websites, provide a link to *Speaking Up!* and to let parents know in the “back to school” newsletter where they can find this information.

Use the new edition of *Speaking Up!* as a way to interest your local media in both promoting the guide’s availability and the positive work your DPAC is doing to help parents speak up for children in your school district. (You can adapt the sample promotional information to include information about the activities of your local project).

Finally, let us know what you are doing to promote the use of *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools* in your schools, district and media—we’d like to share your stories with other local projects.

Together we can make a difference for children in BC public schools!

A big “thank you!”

We want to thank our 2008 Speaking Up review committee of Ron Broda, Saanich (SD63), Lori Tedrick, Rocky Mountain (SD6), Dale Laluk, Prince George (SD57), Suzette Miller, Burnaby (SD41) and Kim Strasky, Peace River South (SD59). Their questions and comments on the drafts were much appreciated.

And we want to thank all the individual parents who have courageously used this guide and given us the feedback we need to continue to improve our service to others. We are exploring opportunities for translating information to provide better access to parents with limited English language skills.

Heads up

Yes, the time is fast approaching when we close the toll free message line. The line closes Friday, June 13 and re-opens Thursday, Sept 4. In case you’re wondering why the line closes mid-month, it enables us to meet the needs of the callers on the line, plan for next year and wrap up those administrative bits and pieces—all before the school year ends June 27!

If your DPAC plans to include a session by the BCCPAC Advocacy Project next school year, please call the line before it closes. We are well into our fall travel-planning and already thinking about spring, 2009!

DPAC spring elections?

Please remember to send us your new district contact information, including e-mail address.

We want to make sure we include everyone!

Janet, Cathy and Helen

BCCPAC Advocacy Project Toll Free Line

1-888-351-9834

Sample information to promote *Speaking Up!* in your school district

Feel free to use the following information to promote Speaking Up! Remember to include your school district information on where parents can find the processes/policies for complaints and appeals. Once you've finalized your copy, send it to your local PACs, schools and school district and ask them to include it in their newsletters and on their websites.

You can also adapt this information for use in your local media—take this opportunity to let your community know the positive ways that your DPAC is helping parents in your school district. If your local media doesn't follow up immediately, find out when they plan to prepare their "back-to-school" information and connect with them again then.

Parents often worry about how, when or even if they should speak up when their children are having problems at school. *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools* helps parents navigate the public school system and focus on solving problems in the best interests of their children.

The 2008 edition of *Speaking Up!* has lots of helpful information, including tear-out self-help guides (Problem-Solving and Meeting Survival) and new information on fairness in decision-making, provincial appeals, apologies and dealing with bullying.

Students are best served when parents use the processes available to them to work within the system to solve the problem. In place of a "parking lot" conversation, learn how to have a "solution-focused" conversation with the people who can help solve the problem!

Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools is available to order or download free from the BCCPAC website at www.bccpac.bc.ca/advocacyproject/resources.aspx.

The 44-page guide helps parents find the information they need that is available in their schools and school districts. For example, if parents in our school district have questions or concerns about their children's education, health or safety, they first try to solve the problem with the person closest to where the problem occurs—most often that is with the child's teacher.

You can get copies of our school district processes for solving problems from (*e.g. school and school district office, PAC/DPAC on-line website address*). The policies you are looking for include (*insert the name and number of your district complaints/problem-solving and appeals process/policies.*)

BCCPAC Vision for Advocacy

- To have all parents and students in public education respected, with parent and student needs and opinions reflected in school, district and provincial decision-making.
- To have PACs, DPACs and BCCPAC working together effectively, in the best interests of BC's students and parents, with recognition and support from the Ministry of Education.
- To have school districts provide the information and support parents and students need to resolve their issues effectively within school district processes.