

A Message from Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care

As we welcome the 2025-26 school year, I want to express how hopeful I am for what lies ahead. British Columbia's public education system continues to grow stronger thanks to the care, compassion, and commitment of the people who serve in it. This year is no different – we are building on momentum and investing in student success, well-being and equity, from kindergarten to graduation, despite the current fiscal and global uncertainty we are all facing.

This work could not be done without the leadership of educators, Principals and Vice-Principals throughout B.C., and I'd like to express my heartfelt appreciation. The work you do every day to support students is nothing short of inspiring. Whether you're leading a school community, supporting diverse learners or managing the many behind-the-scenes details that keep schools running, you are the heartbeat of B.C.'s world-class public education system.

Your leadership has also been essential in expanding access to licensed child care on school grounds – helping provide continuity for children, supporting families and ensuring more kids can have the care they need, where and when they need it. We continue to recognize the vital connection between early learning and K-12 education. That's why our government is expanding access to licensed child care, particularly on school grounds, so families can access quality care where and when they need it.

Let me state here that creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming school environment remains top priority for our government. Every student deserves to show up as their full, authentic self and to know they belong. We are also celebrating the continued

increase in graduation rates, especially among Indigenous learners, made possible through strengthened partnerships with First Nations and continued implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and Action Plan in our education system.

This school year, we continue to support policies that create focused, healthy learning environments. Policies to limit cell phone use in classrooms were in place provincewide beginning last school year – thank you for championing this. School food programs have also seen expansions. Since Feeding Futures funding was introduced, almost 90% of B.C. schools now offer food programs. Our combined efforts work towards ensuring that students are not hungry so they can focus on their learning.

Student safety both in and out of the classroom is strengthened by introducing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) learning into the Grade 10

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Physical and Health Education curriculum this year. Thank you for your work as a new policy begins to be rolled out this year to ensure life-saving equipment like AEDs and naloxone are available in every school.

Our education system must meet the needs of every learner. That's why, with your schools' continued work, early literacy screening will begin in all school districts this year, starting with kindergarten students. Many of your schools are already doing this important work. By catching challenges early, we can provide timely supports and give students a strong foundation in literacy. We've more than doubled funding to school districts for inclusive supports since 2017, bringing that total to more than \$1 billion this school year. Two Provincial School Outreach Teams made up of learning services teachers, behaviour analysts, counsellors and therapists are also supporting schools in regions throughout the province, especially rural and remote communities. Their work is having a real, positive impact on students and educators alike. Even with the incredible challenges we are facing, we're protecting and supporting the education services that students and their families need because we know that's how to keep B.C. strong.

And we know that strong schools need strong educators. That's why we're investing \$12.5 million over three years to support teacher training, recruitment, and retention – with a focus on increasing the number of Indigenous teachers and supporting rural and remote communities with their recruitment needs. And, because mentorship plays a key role in retention and professional growth, we are working with sector partners to re-establish a Provincial Teacher Mentorship Program.

In addition, we're making the largest-ever investment in school infrastructure in B.C.'s history. Through our new Ministry of Infrastructure, we're investing \$4.6 billion over three years to build and upgrade schools including new classroom spaces, seismic safety upgrades, and accessible, modern learning environments.

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Since 2018, we have also funded the creation of tens of thousands of new licensed spaces on school grounds throughout the province. By expanding access and reducing the cost of child care, we're working together to help provide children with early learning experiences that set them up for success in school and beyond.

I am filled with appreciation for your leadership, your resilience, and your dedication to students. While I know that we do face challenges in our current circumstances as we all face an uncertain global context and a demanding fiscal reality, your continued collective efforts are helping create the kind of school system we can all be proud of: one that is inclusive, responsive, safe and rooted in the values of care, equity, and opportunity.

As we step into this new school year, I look forward to continuing our work together. Thank you for everything you do to make British Columbia's education system strong, innovative, and welcoming for every learner.

Warm regards,

Hon. Lisa Beare

Minister of Education and Child Care