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January 26, 2004

Honourable Tom Christensen
Minister of Education

Dear Colleague:

Since June 2001, our government has been working to implement our *New Era* vision to revitalize the economy, restore sound fiscal management, and put patients and students first.

Our *New Era* platform contained 201 specific commitments that our government would undertake on behalf of British Columbians. These included a commitment to “establish service plans that include measurable performance standards and targets for all programs that are annually audited and published, for all taxpayers to see.”

On June 25, 2001, I sent your predecessor a letter of instruction setting out the key priorities for your Ministry, including a list of the *New Era* commitments assigned to your Ministry. These commitments were also included in the Government Strategic Plan and Ministry Service Plans that were tabled in the Legislature in February 2002, covering fiscal years 2002/03 through 2004/05.

The Service Plan you are tabling today represents the final year of the first three-year plans. And it shows that we have made significant progress toward honouring our commitments. Specifically, of the 11 *New Era* commitments that involved your Ministry, the province has now completed or begun work on all of these. Accomplishments in your Ministry over the past two-and-a-half years include:

- Amended the *School Act* to increase choice and flexibility in public schools.
- Announced new graduation requirements that will improve student performance and better prepare students for life after high school.
- Restored education as an essential service in the *Labour Code*, and guaranteed the right of parents to volunteer in their children’s school.
- Created School Planning Councils to give parents a greater role in school planning and decisions that impact their children’s education.

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In the coming year, the province will continue work on a number of priorities to honour the commitments that we have made. These are detailed in your Ministry Service Plan, and include:

- Continue to implement policies that focus the attention of the entire education system on continuous improvement of students' education outcomes.
- Remove barriers to flexibility and choice for school boards, parents and students.
- Continue to encourage parents to become more involved in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system.

It is important to note that all of the province's achievements to date, and our priorities for the year ahead, will be accomplished while balancing the budget in 2004/05, and having significantly increased funding for health care and education.

Clearly, we will do more if we can, as new resources are available, to build on the funding priorities detailed in this Service Plan – in a way that is consistent with our balanced budget commitment.

As our measures to revitalize the economy continue to create new jobs, growth and investment, this will allow us to continue strengthening public services for the benefit of British Columbians. Opportunities like the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will showcase British Columbia to the world and generate economic benefits all across our province. Future service plans will further demonstrate those benefits.

I know that you will continue to build on the progress your Ministry has made. Let me conclude by thanking you for your commitment to serving the best interests of all British Columbians.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gordon Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end.

Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier



Ministry of Education



I am pleased to present the Ministry of Education's 2004/05 to 2006/07 Service Plan. This plan continues the government's work to improve student achievement in British Columbia's schools. Priorities this year will include literacy, safety, implementation of more flexible graduation requirements, and encouraging healthy lifestyles and physical activity in our schools.

The ministry is focused on our overarching goal of encouraging improved student achievement, increased choices available to students, and increased parental involvement in children's education. We believe these three initiatives are key to helping students across B.C. reach their full potential and become tomorrow's successful citizens.

The government has provided significant autonomy to school districts as we believe that locally elected school trustees are in the best position to set the educational priorities for their communities. Improved accountability measures, including satisfaction surveys, accountability contracts, and district reviews, are proving to be effective tools to assist school districts in determining what they are doing well and where their efforts need to be adjusted. These measures are also providing invaluable information to assist the Ministry of Education in assessing the overall performance of the education system in British Columbia.

School Planning Councils have provided an effective tool to ensure teachers, parents, students and school leaders are working together to focus on enhancing student achievement in individual schools. As part of the Achieve BC initiative launched by the Premier in 2003, the government is encouraging improved student achievement by providing additional information for students, parents and teachers.

School Districts from all parts of British Columbia have responded to the government's encouragement to develop new programs and choice schools to accommodate the diverse needs of students. The new graduation requirements will allow students to focus on courses that reflect their interests while ensuring all graduates have a strong base of knowledge to prepare them for their futures. These initiatives better accommodate programs in skills and trades training and, working with the new Industry Training Authority established by the Minister of Advanced Education, schools are placing students a step ahead in obtaining skills training.

As British Columbians, we are fortunate to have one of the best public education systems in the world. To continue to meet the needs of students in a world that changes quickly,

we must always look forward and strive to improve. This service plan explains how we will continue to develop British Columbia's high quality education system and ensure that our students are provided the best possible start in life after graduation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Christensen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Honourable Tom Christensen
Minister of Education

February 4, 2004

Accountability Statement

The 2004/05 – 2006/07 Ministry of Education Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 30, 2004 have been considered in preparing the plan and I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.



Honourable Tom Christensen
Minister of Education

February 4, 2004

Ministry Overview

The role of the ministry is to provide funding, establish governance structures, set educational standards, monitor student performance and report the results to the public. These structures and resources provide the framework school boards need to work with schools and communities to improve student and school performance. British Columbia's K-12 system serves approximately 578,800 public school student FTE's, approximately 59,600 independent school student FTE's and over 3,600 home-schooled children.

Improving student achievement is the overarching goal in the ministry and all parts of the education system. Key indicators, Foundation Skills Assessments, completion rates, Grade 12 performance, scholarships and national/international assessments will continue to be used to measure student performance. Over the next three years, the ministry will focus on quality learning, early literacy, physical activity and safety in our schools. To further support improved student achievement, the ministry will follow through on recommendations from the Student Achievement Task Force Report and the Task Force on Rural Education. In addition, the ministry will be working to implement the 2004 Graduation Program. To support our number one goal of improved student achievement, the ministry is committed to local autonomy for school boards, strong accountability measures, increased flexibility and a broader range of choice for students and parents.

School board autonomy means that the ministry will continue to eliminate unnecessary regulations and allow boards to do their work with as few strings attached as possible. It allows locally elected school boards to be more responsive to their communities and gives them the opportunity to explore entrepreneurial opportunities.

Strong accountability measures include individual accountability contracts with each school board, plans for improvement developed by each school, Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements and district reviews. Schools, school boards and the ministry will monitor progress towards improving student performance and will report these results to parents and the community.

Increased flexibility and choice means that schools can offer locally developed programs of particular interest to their region, or develop magnet schools to attract students from all over the province. As well, changes to the *School Act* allow parents and students to choose a school that matches their child's specific learning needs or interests. Students can now attend any school in the province, provided there is space available.

Involvement of parents and the wider community is critical to the success of the K-12 education system. School Planning Councils are operating in every public school, giving parents a venue for meaningful contribution in developing school improvement goals. Satisfaction surveys will continue to be administered and will enable schools, districts and

the ministry to monitor and report publicly satisfaction levels of students, parents and staff in the education system.

British Columbia's system already performs at high levels, which means that future improvements require continued commitment, creativity and innovation on the part of educators, administrators and the ministry in order for the province to remain at the forefront of educational performance.

Resource Summary

Operating Expense, FTEs and Other Financing Transactions Ministry of Education

Core Businesses	2003/04 Restated Estimates	2004/05 Estimates	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
Operating Expense (\$000's)				
Public Schools	4,075,312	4,147,463	4,188,157	4,338,409
Independent Schools	167,349	176,777	186,535	195,691
Debt Service and Amortization	567,751	564,955	574,255	584,847
Management Services	18,032	18,032	18,032	18,032
Executive and Support Services	31,621	35,938	35,938	35,938
Total	4,860,065	4,943,165	5,002,917	5,172,917
FTEs by Core Business	2003/04 Restated Estimates	2004/05 Estimates	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
FTEs				
Management Services *	99	98	98	98
Executive and Support Services	217	211	211	211
Total	316	309	309	309

Public Schools

CRF Capital Categories	2003/04 Restated Estimates	2004/05 Estimates	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
Ministry Capital Expenditures Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) (\$000's)				
Management Services	1,079	310	310	310
Executive and Support Services	4,050	14,100	2,200	2,200
Total	5,129	14,410	2,510	2,510
Consolidated Capital Plan (CCP) (\$000's)				
CCP Categories	2003/04 Restated Estimates	2004/05 Estimates	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
Public Schools	195,000	134,500	120,000	187,000
Total	195,000	134,500	120,000	187,000

* Management Services provides for corporate services to operating programs including financial, human resources, information management, administrative services, freedom of information and privacy services, and general services and assistance to the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour.

Including School Districts in the Government Reporting Entity

The *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* requires provincial budgets and financial statements to fully comply with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) by fiscal 2004/05. Full compliance with GAAP requires the consolidation of the school districts into the government reporting entity.

In accordance with the *School Act*, school boards are responsible for the delivery of educational programs. As a result, most of the performance measures and targets included in this Service Plan are within the ministry's sphere of influence, but are more directly affected by local school boards and schools.

Fully consolidating the school boards will bring all of their assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses into the government's budget and financial reports. The majority of the school boards' revenues, and a substantial portion of the funding for capital acquisitions is provided by the province.

There will be some changes in ministry and school districts' financial administration since inclusion of these organizations in government budgets and financial reports will require much closer coordination of financial processes and timelines. There will also be some challenges as we learn from each other in the first year or so of consolidated reporting, however, the process will improve as we gain experience.

School Districts — 2003/04–2006/07 Forecast Amounts (\$ thousands)	2003/04 Forecast	2004/05 Budget Estimate	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
Total Revenue	4,394,000	4,468,000	4,500,000	4,507,000
Total Expense	4,373,000	4,451,000	4,490,000	4,510,000
Operating Results	21,000	17,000	10,000	(3,000)
Gain (Loss) on sale of capital assets	1,000	(1,000)	0	(1,000)
Net Results	22,000	16,000	10,000	(4,000)

Core Business Areas

Public Schools

The ministry provides operating funding to school boards and others to support the K-12 public school system. School boards are responsible for and will be held accountable to improve student achievement and publicly report results. The ministry also provides capital funding for public schools.

Independent Schools

The ministry provides operating funding to approximately 345 independent schools as outlined in the *Independent School Act*. Approximately 10.5 per cent of the K-12 population is currently enrolled in independent schools.

Debt Service and Amortization

The ministry provides funding to public schools to finance capital projects including upgrades, renovations, expansions, new facilities and buses. This area includes servicing debt and amortizing the school board assets acquired with that debt.

Management Services

Management Services provides corporate support services to operating programs including financial, budget, human resources, information management, administrative services, freedom of information and privacy services, and general services assistance for the ministries of Education, Advanced Education and Skills, Development and Labour.

Executive and Support Services

The ministry provides leadership and develops policy and legislation, oversees system governance, sets results-based standards and accountability frameworks, monitors performance and reports results. This area includes the Minister's Office and Ministry Program Management.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

Ministry Goals

The ministry has identified two goals for education:

1. improved student achievement; and
2. a high quality, performance-oriented education system.

The following tables identify the goals, core business areas, objectives, strategies and performance measures that the ministry intends to undertake during the three-year period covered by this Service Plan (2004/05 – 2006/07). Human and financial resources devoted to the ministry’s activities in the next three years are indicated in the Resource Summary section on page 8 of this plan.

The baseline figures quoted in the following tables are for the 2002/03 school year and are provincial rates and do not reflect the unique educational challenges of individual districts. Rather than setting arbitrary targets at the provincial level, the ministry has established an accountability framework to improve student achievement results at the district level. Through year-over-year improvements in the district results, the provincial results will be raised.

There is evidence of improvements in system performance already, however efforts must be sustained over the long-term to achieve the stated goals.

Linkages of Goals and Core Business Areas

Goals	Core Business Areas
<p>Improved Student Achievement: To provide ALL students with opportunities for improvement, regardless of their ethnic origin, gender, geographic location, physical characteristics or socio-economic status and recognize ALL achievements.</p>	<p>Public Schools Independent Schools Executive and Support Services</p>
<p>A high quality performance-oriented education system: To focus the entire system on a data driven, results-based approach to improving student achievement and preparing students for tomorrow.</p>	<p>Public Schools Independent Schools Executive and Support Services Management Services Debt Services and Amortization</p>

Goal 1: Improved student achievement.

Outcome: *Students demonstrate progress in high quality academic and life skills capabilities through K-12.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Executive and Support Services.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
<p>Objective 1: Improved student achievement in areas of intellectual development.</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide support for early literacy. 2. Encourage early intervention to improve success in reading. 3. Develop, manage and encourage participation in a province wide assessment of reading, writing and numeracy. 	<p>Percentage of public and independent school students meeting or exceeding expectations on Foundation Skills Assessment².</p> <p>FSA provides a snapshot of student achievement at three grade levels in three core academic areas.</p>		The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school levels.		
	Reading Grade 4	77 %			
	Reading Grade 7	77 %			
	Reading Grade 10	74 %			
	Writing Grade 4	94 %			
	Writing Grade 7	79 %			
	Writing Grade 10	83 %			
	Numeracy Grade 4	87 %			
	Numeracy Grade 7	84 %			
Numeracy Grade 10	78 %				

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

² Grade 10 FSA will be replaced by the 2005/06 school year with more formal graduation program exams.

Outcome: *Students complete K-12.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Independent Schools, Executive and Support Services.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures ¹	2003/04 Base ²	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
4. Implementation of new Graduation Program 2004. (Graduation Portfolios will assess students learning from the classroom, at home, or in the community.)	Completion rate (Percentage of public and independent students who start Grade 8 and graduate from Grade 12 within 6 years.)	79%	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial and school district level.		
5. Encourage Board/Authority Authorized course electives designed to meet student needs and interests.	Aboriginal completion rate (Percentage of public and independent Aboriginal students who start Grade 8 and graduate from Grade 12 within 6 years.)	46%	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level until parity with non-Aboriginal students is reached.		
6. Set standards for curriculum and student performance. 7. Monitor and report student performance.	Rural completion rate (Percentage of public and independent rural students who start Grade 8 and graduate from Grade 12 within 6 years.)	Baseline	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level until parity with urban students is reached.		

¹ Completion rates indicate successful transition through K-12.

² Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

Outcomes: *Grade 12 students demonstrate high quality academic and life skills capabilities.
Secondary students demonstrate an interest in trades.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Independent Schools, Executive and Support Services.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
8. Set standards in two core academic areas, monitor and report student performance in Grade 12.	Percentage of public and independent students successfully completing (with 'C' or better) Grade 12 courses. ²	English 83% Principles of Math 82%	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		
9. Provide an incentive for exceptional student performance.	Performance in two core subject areas provides a snapshot of Grade 12 student achievement.				
10. Acknowledge learning outside of the classroom.	Percentage of public and independent Grade 12 graduates receiving exam scholarships. Scholarships awarded indicate exceptional student performance in Grade 12.	12%	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		
	Number of students in secondary apprenticeship programs. Participation in apprenticeship programs indicates possible employment path to trade occupations.	Baseline	Increased participation year-over-year.		

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

² Participation rates are available on the ministry's website: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/exams/standrep/participation.htm.

Outcomes: *Students demonstrate high quality academic and life skills capabilities.
Students are knowledgeable about health, life choices and safety.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Independent Schools, Executive and Support Services.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
11. Participate in national and international assessments.	National/ international assessment results. The content and frequency of assessments varies from year-to-year and indicates how well BC students compare to other jurisdictions.	BC performs as well as Canada and second only to Alberta in SAIP ² Writing III (released May 2003).	Perform in the top 10–25% of all participants.		
Objective 2: Improved student health and well-being. Strategies:	McCreary Survey The McCreary Survey indicates health of adolescents in BC.	McCreary Survey results will be available in 2004.	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		
1. Work with other social policy ministries to develop strategies that support fitness/healthy living for K-12.	Percentage of public school students who report feeling safe in school. ³	Before the new Safe, Caring, Orderly Schools initiative.	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
	Elementary Secondary	80% 70%	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

² Student Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) is a national assessment administered by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

³ Participation rates for the Satisfaction Survey are available on the ministry's website: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/.

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
2. Through consultation, develop and set provincial standards for schools and districts to ensure schools are safe, caring, and orderly.	Percentage of public school parents who report that their child feels safe at school.	Before the new Safe, Caring, Orderly Schools initiative.	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
	Elementary	86%	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		
	Secondary	78%			

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

Goal 2: *A high quality performance-oriented education system.*

Outcomes: *Access to quality education for all students.
Learning choices for parents and students.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Independent Schools,
Executive and Support Services.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
<p>Objective 1: Parents are empowered to become more involved in the K-12 education system.</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <p>1. Provide more opportunities for parents to contribute to their child’s learning, such as School Planning Councils and the Parent Learning Centre.</p> <p>2. Provide information for parents, Achieve BC Web site and “Helping Your Child Learn” booklets.</p>	Percentage of public school parents who report they can play a meaningful role in their children’s school. ²		The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		
	Elementary	63 %			
	Secondary	48 %			
	Percentage of public school parents satisfied with their child’s school and education.		The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		
	Elementary	71 %			
	Secondary	56 %			

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

² Satisfaction Survey participation rates: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/

Outcomes: *Access to quality education for all students.
Learning choices for parents and students.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Independent Schools,
Executive and Support Services.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
<p>Objective 2: An environment of choice and flexibility exists in the K-12 education system.</p> <p>Strategies: 1. Provide student achievement and satisfaction data results to parents and students. 2. Monitor implementation of legislation related to increased choice and flexibility. 3. Maintain alternatives to the public system that meet provincial standards by providing certification, funding and conducting inspections/visits.</p>	Percentage of public school parents and students reporting satisfaction with program choices available to them. ²		The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial and school district level.		
	Elementary Parents	69%			
	Secondary Parents	59%			
	Students (Grades 10 and 12 were asked.)	46%			
	Percentage of qualifying independent schools that received funding. Measure indicates the percentage of schools that meet provincial legislated requirements.	100%	100%	100%	100%

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

² Satisfaction Survey participation rates: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base ¹	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
<p>Objective 3: An environment exists that supports quality teaching for quality learning in public schools.</p> <p>Strategies: 1. Provide support for the development and implementation of a program assisting principals in more effectively supervising student learning in classrooms.</p>	<p>Percentage of (public school) Principals and Vice Principals Association members who report spending over 90 minutes per week supervising learning in the classroom.</p> <p>Time spent supervising learning in the classroom indicates support for quality teaching.</p>	31 %	The target is year-over-year improvement at the provincial, district and school level.		

¹ Base measures are provincial rates. These data are for the 2002/03 school year.

Outcome: *Increased efficiency and effectiveness throughout the system.*

Core Business Areas: *Public Schools, Independent Schools, Executive and Support Services, Management Services, Debt Service and Amortization.*

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Objective 4: Increased school board autonomy through de-regulation and streamlining processes while creating an environment of accountability.	Percentage of satisfaction surveys administered online.	24%	Year-over-year increase until 100% of surveys are administered online.		
	Proportion of the acts, regulations, policies and policy instruments reviewed, eliminated and/or modified.	Additional 8% (in addition to 12% in 2002/03).	Additional 3% (in addition to the 20% in 02/03 – 03/04).	Maintain the agreed to 23% targeted reduction in regulation count.	
	Strategies: 1. Administer a portion of Satisfaction Surveys online. 2. Reduce unnecessary administrative procedures and paperwork. 3. Increase flexibility of boards to plan by providing rolling three-year funding. 4. Require boards to submit annual accountability contracts.	Funding envelopes allocated to school boards on time.	100%	100%	100%

Objectives and Strategies	Performance Measures	2003/04 Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
5. Introduce a more formal approach to managing risk.	Consultation for and pilot of implementation of a ministry-wide risk management plan.	Consultation year	Plan developed	Phase 1 pilot — executive	Phase 2 pilot — managers

Related Initiatives

Deregulation

By 2004/05, the ministry will have met its deregulation targets through the review, elimination or modification of regulations, policies, and practices that have inhibited the ability of school boards to effectively respond to the educational needs of students.

The ministry's regulatory reform reflects the minister's strategic directions, in particular, supporting board autonomy, and greater flexibility and choice for school boards, students and parents. This in turn supports government's strategic plan and the *New Era* commitment to cut "red tape" and regulatory burden by one-third within three years. (See chart on previous page for percentages for the ministry.)

Risk Management

Government intends that enterprise-wide risk management be applied to decision-making processes for planning, major projects, programs and investments. Through strategic planning processes, the Ministry of Education will formalize its approach to risk management.

Appendix 1. Strategic Context

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

The ministry's vision is a high quality education system that puts student achievement at the centre of all decision-making.

Mission

The system's mission is defined in legislation as:

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

Continued progress towards the province's social and economic goals depends upon well-educated citizens. School boards and independent schools have a primary responsibility for students' intellectual development and a shared responsibility with families and the community for students' human, social and career development.

Key Beliefs
<i>The ministry is committed to some specific key beliefs and values for all staff.</i>
We are a professional, non-partisan public service that respects the "Standard of Conduct for Public Service Employees". We are an organization that works together to improve student achievement in the province of BC.
We agree it is important to demonstrate the following behaviours: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behave with integrity, promoting relationships of mutual trust, confidence and respect.• Provide high levels of service to everyone with whom we come in contact.• Ensure information is shared in a relevant and timely manner.• Identify and acknowledge problems and work together to resolve them.• Acknowledge each other's contributions.

Planning Context

Examination of the ministry's internal and external environments helps to identify those factors that are likely to affect the conduct and success of education in British Columbia. A summary of observations is presented here.

The social and economic environment influences the system's operation and effectiveness. Factors such as the number and location of students, provincial funding levels, workplace requirements, special needs of children and the level of support that the public is willing to provide to K-12 education all affect the operation and performance of the education system.

Summary of Observations:

- British Columbia's students perform very well compared to other Canadian and international jurisdictions.
- Government is working collaboratively with its partners in Western Northern Canadian Partners (WNCP), and with Alberta, through initiatives to share expertise in education, which will benefit member jurisdictions and enhance economic development.
- The Aboriginal population in British Columbia is young and growing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population.
- Province wide, student enrolment is declining. The primary drivers of this decline are a declining birth rate and an aging population, with the larger proportion of the student population now in the later grades. With fewer students entering into Kindergarten each year, this trend is expected to continue for about 15 years. Rural regions are experiencing more extreme enrolment declines due to economic influences in local resource-based industries.
- As enrolment declines, the per pupil amount will increase.
- Also built into the increase are resources for seismic mitigation.
- The number of children identified in special needs categories that qualify for supplemental funding in British Columbia is growing due to medical advances, notably children requiring intensive and expensive interventions. Court decisions may require school districts to provide more costly and higher level of support.
- A growing proportion of our students are ESL, and they are more likely to graduate than non-ESL students.
- There are still a significant number of students (23 per cent of Grade 4 students) that have difficulty reading. This indicates that children are not well prepared when they come into the school system, and indicates that they are likely to have difficulty in school in the future.

- Working parents are requesting that schools provide or link to additional services such as preschool and full-day kindergarten. In addition, research studies indicating the importance of early development in a child's school success are becoming widely known. Such factors are creating pressure to provide early assessment, identification, and preschool programs.
- Child obesity rates are increasing dramatically as are incidences of Type II Diabetes. The need for education about fitness and healthy lifestyles has become a key focus in the prevention of these conditions.
- Schools do not perform well in serving some groups — Aboriginal students are the most visible example. Aboriginal students achievement is improving, but there is still a significant difference between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups.
- Children from economically disadvantaged families also fare relatively poorly in schools across the province.
- Rural students show an achievement gap behind urban students across Canada, including BC students, in reading and numeracy.
- Pressure for admission of British Columbian students to colleges and technical schools has increased significantly in the last decade.
- An aging workforce will lead to a growing need for qualified young people to meet employers' demands. As baby-boomers retire, the average age of the workforce will be reduced.
- The trades sector is expanding, and there will be a long-term requirement for employees with specific trades and technical skills. Across many occupations, technological advances necessitate higher levels of employee knowledge and skills, even in entry-level positions.
- The service industry continues to be the main employer in British Columbia. Many students are entering this sector directly from Grade 12.

Highlights of Changes from Previous Plans

This year, the ministry continues to streamline its objectives and performance measures to support the main focus for the entire system, improving student achievement. Key measures are presented in this plan. Supplemental performance information is available on the ministry's Web site (www.gov.bc.ca/bced). The ministry continues to improve its reports making them more clear, concise and understandable as outlined in the BC Reporting Principles (<http://www.bcauditor.com/performance/guides>).

Consistency with Government's Strategic Plan

Education is a top priority of the government as outlined in the *New Era* document, in the Premier's service agreement letter to the Minister, and in the government's strategic plan. Themes in the government's strategic plan directly relating to education include: increased flexibility and choice in public schooling, improved access to online learning, delivery of consistent and quality education, performance-based accountability agreements, enhanced development for Aboriginal people, promotion of fitness/healthy lifestyles, and prevention of violence. The education system is also an essential element in support of three other government priorities: safer streets and schools in every community; better services for children, families and First Nations; and responsible, accountable management of British Columbians' public resources and tax dollars.

Government's Priorities Related to the Ministry

- A top-notch education system for students of all ages.
- Safer streets and schools in every community.
- Better services for children, families and First Nations.
- Responsible, accountable management of British Columbians' public resources and tax dollars.



Ministry Goals

- Improved student achievement.
- A high quality performance-oriented education system.



Ministry Strategies Focus on Six Key Areas

- **Achievement:** focusing the attention of the entire education system on continuous improvement of students' educational outcomes.
- **Accountability:** ensuring effectiveness and efficiency at all levels of the system.
- **Autonomy:** allowing school boards to determine how they will reach their goals, but holding them to account for achieving those goals.
- **Choice:** removing barriers to flexibility and choice for school boards, parents and students.
- **Funding:** to ensure the funding formula is an understandable, transparent, comprehensive and population-based formula for school districts.
- **Parent Involvement:** empowering parents to become more involved in the K-12 education system.



Achievements in 2002/03 School Year

- Improved student achievement in several areas evidenced by FSA, completion rates, scholarships.
- Launched task forces on Rural Achievement, Student Achievement and Student Safety and released the Rural Achievement Action Plan.
- Two new Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements drafted and signed.
- Accountability Contracts revised and improved.
- School Planning Councils established in some schools (transition year), student members added.
- Increased parent and student satisfaction.
- Graduation Requirements Review completed and Grad Program 2004 announced.
- District Review teams reviewed 20 districts across the province.
- Multi-year funding amounts provided to assist boards with long term planning.

Appendix 2. Supplementary Performance Information

The ministry uses other performance measures to indicate success of strategies supporting improved student achievement and a high quality performance-oriented system.

The measures presented in earlier sections are those that have the most meaning to parents and the wider public audience, and are able to be presented in a relatively simplified statement. The ministry also collects, analyzes and reports data that may require more context in order to be meaningful. Some of these reports are available online at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/exams/standrep/welcome.htm and some data is reported in the ministry's Annual Service Plan Report. Specific data reports may also be requested from the ministry's Information Department. Some additional measures include:

Satisfaction Survey

- Social responsibility, computer usage, School Planning Councils, survey participation rates.

Graduates Transition Survey

- Transitions to work, college, university.

Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements

Performance Results Breakout by Demographics

- Special Needs, Gender, Aboriginal, ESL.

Other System Efficiency Measures

- Turn around times for FSA, surveys, enrolment data.
- Broadband connections, computers in schools.
- Web site visits.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with flexibility in system, clarity of funding formula.
- Life expectancy of school buildings.
- Percentage of ministry managers with performance contracts.

Appendix 3. Summary of Related Planning Processes

Human Resource Management Plan

Our Employee Learning Strategy	
Goal	Objectives and Strategies
1. Proactive Visionary Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Learning Centre in succession planning for ML 6-12. • Develop a workforce planning strategy. • Support staff participation in government's Leadership and Management Development program, "<i>Leading the Way</i>".
2. Performance Focused Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of ministry staff gave completed EPDPs. • Explore 360 evaluations for excluded staff. • Align reward/incentive structure with ministry values. • Provide staff with clear performance expectations and provide feedback in a timely effective and consistent manner.
3. Flexible and Motivating Work Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staff with the tools to effectively manage time and resources. • Develop continuous improvement through coaching, mentoring and ongoing staff development activities.
4. Learning and Innovative Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement collaborative approaches to identify and address business issues. • Develop effective learning plans and provide staff with increased access to personal and professional development and training activities. • Develop and successfully implement innovative business practices and profile these practices across the ministry. • Continue to support <i>Employee Learning Fund</i>.
5. Effective People Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage ministry staff in the implementation of the Ministry Human Resource Plan. • Ensure understanding of the linkage of each job to government and ministry and department service goals and objectives.
6. Progressive Employee/ Employer Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively resolve workplace issues in a non-adversarial manner. • Implement recommendations from the Kamloops report. • Support training opportunities to ministry staff on managing conflict, building effective working relationships and understanding rights and responsibilities.

Information Resource Management Plan

The ministry's current Information Resource Management Plan is focused on improving decision support tools, reducing the burden of data collection on schools and districts, integrating a number of related systems and providing the education system with equitable access to educational content.

Major Projects

1. Information Systems Plan Implementation

The Information Systems Plan (ISP) is the four-year plan approved by Treasury Board to develop new information systems for the ministry's use. The project, started January 2001, has established:

- infrastructure set-up;
- improved access to more information for ministry staff; and
- improved software applications and primary information registries.

Currently under development:

- systems that improve staff productivity by incorporating business rules;
- web-based applications for electronic service delivery; and
- access to student performance information and generation of reports.

The current ISP applies only to ministry systems. Greater effectiveness and efficiencies in meeting *New Era* commitments are possible if ministry applications are integrated with school and school district systems.

2. The Provincial Learning Network

The Provincial Learning Network (PLNet) is the largest geographically dispersed, centrally managed data communications network in North America. PLNet service is provided to all public schools. Currently, it serves over 1,700 schools and related facilities, approximately 135 college campuses, institutes and agencies in about 325 communities. The network provides equitable and secure access to education resources across the province.

Government has begun a process to upgrade Internet service to rural communities as part of government's overall strategy to bridge the digital divide.

3. Common Student Information System

The Ministry of Education investigated and confirmed the feasibility of a common student information system to serve all schools. The solution will address the functional needs of schools, school boards and the ministry. The requirements for the system have been defined and the ministry has obtained proposals from vendors. This year (2003/04 school year), the project team will select a vendor and pilot the system.

Summary of Information Reporting and Monitoring Project

The *New Era* directions of student achievement, choice, flexibility, and accountability require that schools, school boards and the ministry, improve their monitoring systems, which includes data collection, analysis and reporting. Inadequacies in the current monitoring systems' ability to provide information to students, parents, and school administrators in an efficient and timely manner need to be rectified in a cost-effective manner, and this will require inter-district and ministry collaboration.

