
STATEMENT

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Ministry of Education and Child Care

Minister's statement on return to school

VICTORIA – Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care, has issued the following statement as students return to school:

“Our government is committed to ensuring all of B.C.’s K-12 students feel safe, supported and reach their full potential. We are dedicated to building a quality, inclusive education system where every student throughout the province can have the best education experience possible.

“We’ve taken steps to make life more affordable for families and help every child have what they need to participate and succeed in school this year. With the government’s largest investment in school food programs in the province’s history, more students have access to healthy food and snacks at school through Feeding Futures. In the most recent school year, almost 90% of B.C. schools reported having school food programs. To help schools provide support directly to students and families who need it most, we’ve added \$20 million to the Student and Family Affordability Fund, which helps cover the costs of school supplies and class trips, as well as sports and music programs.

“Since 2017, our government has more than doubled funding to school districts for inclusive supports and services to help kids who need additional support meet their full potential in school. We launched two Provincial School Outreach Teams to provide specialist supports to students with disabilities and diverse abilities in communities throughout the province, where access to these services can be limited.

“K-12 literacy screening and learning supports will help all students, especially those with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, get the support they need to achieve their best in their education and beyond.

“Every student in B.C. should have access to safe and modern schools. To meet the needs of B.C.’s growing communities, our government has provided more than \$5 billion over the past seven years to build, upgrade and expand schools that families need.

“To ensure schools remain safe places for learning, we have activated protected zones on and around school grounds for this school year to prevent any disruptive behaviour, such as aggressive protests, from occurring within 20 metres of schools.

“Our new cellphone policy will make sure that students have fewer distractions in the classroom and can concentrate on their learning. While technology plays an important part in our lives, we all know that digital literacy and developing healthy habits with technology play a vital role to keeping our kids healthy and safe.

“We continue to work with education partners to build a strong, sustainable K-12 workforce

that students and families can rely on, now and in the future. With B.C.'s highest enrolment growth in 35 years, more teachers than ever are needed. Targeted initiatives on the recruitment and retention of teachers in high-demand areas, such as rural and remote communities, have boosted hiring efforts. We are building on these initiatives.

"We're also working collaboratively with universities to modernize teacher training through innovative online programs so we can have more teachers in the workforce in the years to come.

"Whether it's through historic school food and affordability programs, building more schools or safe-school programs, we're putting the health, safety and well-being of students and staff at the heart of every decision. We're committed to providing quality public education. This continues to be a top priority for our government.

"I want to extend my gratitude to all our partners across the education sector for your hard work and dedication to ensuring our students have the quality education experiences that they deserve. I wish everyone a safe and productive school year."

Learn More:

Learn more about the Student Family and Affordability Fund:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024ECC0013-000293>

Learn more about Provincial School Outreach Teams:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024ECC0032-000535>

Learn more about improving literacy for students:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024PREM0020-000563>

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