

# Welcome

## Wezareta Perwerdê

مرحباً بكم في مقاطعة كولومبيا البريطانية

## *bienvenue*

---

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S EDUCATION PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 2016

---



Ministry of  
Education

# Welcome to British Columbia

Education is vital to a healthy and successful life in Canada. In British Columbia, all children between the ages of 5 and 16 must go to school. Most children go to public school; some children go to independent (private) schools. Children usually attend the public school closest to their home. After secondary school, students can go on to postsecondary study at colleges, technical schools, and universities.

## British Columbia's Education System

In British Columbia (BC), the school system is made up of public schools and independent (private schools). Public schools are fully funded by the provincial government. Independent schools are only partially funded by government.

Both the provincial government and local boards of education manage the public school system (Kindergarten to Grade 12). The provincial government funds the school system and sets the legislation, regulations, and policies to ensure every school meets provincial standards and every student receives a high-quality education.



For more information about BC's Ministry of Education, visit the website at: [www.gov.bc.ca/bced](http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced)  
For more information about your child's education in BC, contact your local Welcome Centre or school.

## Registration

Your Refugee Assistance Provider (RAP) or local sponsor will be able to help you register your child(ren) for school. The school will be able to provide information about learning assistance, and English Language Learning (ELL) support.

Some public schools also have settlement workers, from the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program, who will help you and your children settle into your new school and community.

## Elementary, Middle and Secondary Schools

Children usually start elementary school in the same year that they turn five years old. The first year of elementary school is called Kindergarten. Kindergarten is offered in both public and independent schools.



For more information about Kindergarten, visit: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning>

Typically, Elementary schools in BC enrol students in Kindergarten (age 5) and Grades 1 to 7 (ages 6-12). Secondary schools in most school districts enrol students in Grades 8 to 12, or in Grades 9 to 12 (ages 13-17). In districts where there are large numbers of students (ages 11-13) enrolled, and where adequate facilities are available, the school district might have students attend a Middle school in Grades 6 to 8. Most students finish Secondary school by age 18. When they graduate from secondary school, they get a graduation certificate. After Secondary school, students go to college, university, other specialized training, or work. Additionally, adult students who have not graduated are eligible to enter the Adult Graduation Program at 18 years of age. These students may take courses leading to the British Columbia Certificate of Graduation or leading to the Adult Graduation Diploma. Adults who have graduated may also take specific courses tuition-free under certain conditions.

## Language Classes for Children

Some students attend English Language Learning (ELL) classes. Most students who need help learning English receive extra help in the regular classroom. Some older students attend both regular classroom programs and ELL classes. Many newcomers want their children to continue learning their native language. In some communities there may be classes offered for elementary school aged students, after school or on Saturdays. You may have to pay fees for these classes. For older students, many secondary schools offer a choice of language classes.



For more information, contact the B.C. Heritage Language Association. Phone 604-298-4526 or visit their website at: [www.bchla.net](http://www.bchla.net)

## Children with Special Needs

Some children need extra help. They may be visually impaired (blind) or hearing impaired (deaf), or have other physical or mental health challenges. Some children may need extra help because they have a learning disability, or have some other special learning support need.

Children with special needs attend regular classes. Programs and services to support your child's special needs will be provided through your child's school.

## French Programs

For those interested in French language programs, there are three kinds of French programs in B.C. public schools. There are those for students who speak French as their first language and French Immersion programs in the public school system. Both of these may begin at age five. There are also French language classes as part of the regular school curriculum which begins at age eight in public schools.

## Independent (private) Schools

Some independent schools offer religious programs, such as in Catholic, Christian, or Muslim schools. Others may have different teaching methods. Most independent schools charge fees. For a list of independent schools, contact the office of the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA).



Phone 604-684-6023 in Metro Vancouver, or visit the FISA website at: [www.fisabc.ca](http://www.fisabc.ca)

The BC Ministry of Education website also provides information about independent schools at: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools)

A list of all schools in British Columbia is available at: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/Home.do>

## Preschool

For children under five years old, there are free learning programs in schools called StrongStart BC. Parents and children attend these programs together. Children learn important skills through play activities, and parents get information about how to help their child learn. Preschool programs can also help young children learn English.



For information, contact your local school or visit:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/learn/strongstart-bc>

## Getting Involved

If you have a child in school, talk often with your child's teachers. Parents are encouraged to go to the parent-teacher meetings typically held twice a year. You can also go to school meetings and volunteer in the school. Your children will sometimes bring home letters and notices from school. Make sure you read them to know what is happening at your child's school. There are also parent groups in schools that come together to help fund local school activities.

### MORE INFORMATION

**For all Newcomers to BC** – helpful information is provided in English and in many international languages.

Please visit the WelcomeBC website at: <http://www.welcomebc.ca/language2.aspx>

# BRITISH COLUMBIA'S EDUCATION PROGRAM

Newcomer Welcome Letter - 2016

