

Rupert schools get mauled by 'think-tank'; [Final Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

The Institute's annual ranking of the province's elementary schools ranks five Prince Rupert schools --Kanata (917), Lax Kxeen (933), Pineridge (933), Conrad Street (959), and Roosevelt Park (1,007) -- in the bottom 10 per cent of its survey of 1,009 schools.

Annunciation, the only [Rupert] independent school, ranked highest at 336. The school has the highest percentage of students that take the FSA tests yearly and also the lowest number of special needs and ESL students in the city.

The FSA results are valuable when used to compare School District 52 with provincial averages, but are not as helpful when used on a school or individual level, said [Brian Kangas]. In the case of a school like Roosevelt, which tied with two other schools for last in B.C., the issue is how far the students have come from where they started.

Full Text (532 words)

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The majority of Prince Rupert's elementary schools are among the poorest academic performers in the province, according to the latest report by the Fraser Institute.

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Nine factors were used to determine the rankings, including average Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) scores in Grade 4 and 7 for reading, writing and numeracy (math).

"The FSA results are the only objective data available that measure the extent to which B.C.'s public and private elementary schools are ensuring that their students have acquired the basic skills they need to further their education," said Peter Cowley, director of school performance studies at the Institute and co- author of the Report Card.

According to the report, the city's best public school continues to be Westview (528). The school outshines all others in the district --including the city's Catholic school -- in the categories of Grade 4 reading, writing and numeracy and Grade 7 numeracy.

"We've got great parents, teachers and kids that are always working forward for continual improvement," said Janet Gordon, Westview principal

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While some of the results may worry parents and teachers, Brian Kangas, superintendent of schools, warns the FSA test are just a "one-shot deal" and don't tell the whole story of student achievement.

"Our teachers are much more interested in the day-to-day business," he said.

The FSA results are valuable when used to compare School District 52 with provincial averages, but are not as helpful when used on a school or individual level, said Kangas. In the case of a school like Roosevelt, which tied with two other schools for last in B.C., the issue is how far the students have come from where they started.

"The most important thing is to look at the individual programs those kids are using," said Kangas, noting some students at that school have been identified as the most vulnerable in the province. "The progress those kids make from the time they enter to Grade 7, that's the important thing.

"We're very proud of the fact that the school completion rates for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are well above the provincial average."

Local teacher's union president Marty Bowles gives the tests even less credibility saying students don't perform on them because they know they don't count for anything, they're culturally biased and take time from teachers that should be used for helping students.

"How many of the results include the EDI results, the (Dr. Clyde) Hertzman data? How does this help our students?" he said.

"We spend a lot of time collecting data and giving it to (the government), but it's ignored."

Representatives from The Fraser Institute will be in Prince Rupert this week on Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. in the CHSS multipurpose room.

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