

# NEWS RELEASE

## More than 50% of parents in Canada say new ‘descriptive’ grading terms are difficult to understand

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For Immediate Release

**TORONTO**—The vast majority of parents in Canada easily understand letter grades on report cards but are confused by the new “descriptive” grading recently adopted in British Columbia, finds a new study published today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Parents are clearly confused by this new grading system, which includes vague terms open to interpretation,” said Paige MacPherson, associate director of education policy at the Fraser Institute and author of *B.C.’s Descriptive Grading on Report Cards Has Parents Yearning for the ABCs*.

In September 2023, the B.C. government replaced letter grades—such as A, B, C, D, etc.—on K-9 report cards with a “proficiency scale,” which includes the descriptive terms “emerging” and “extending.”

According to a new poll (conducted by Leger), 93 per cent of parents in Canada said the letter grade “A” is “clear and easy” to understand while 83 per cent said the letter grade “C” is “clear and easy” to understand. (For the sake of brevity, the poll only asked respondents about these two letter grades.)

Conversely, 58 per cent of parents in Canada said the descriptive grade “extending” is “unclear and difficult” to understand and 57 per cent said the descriptive grade “emerging” is “unclear and difficult” to understand.

“While other provinces also use terms in their grading systems, B.C.’s new descriptive grading clearly makes it harder for parents to understand how their children are doing in school,” said Michael Zwaagstra, a senior fellow at the Fraser Institute.

“This should serve as a warning to any province or school board thinking about adopting this type of convoluted descriptive grading,” Zwaagstra said.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Michael Zwaagstra, Senior Fellow, Fraser Institute

*To arrange media interviews or for more information, please contact:*  
Mark Hasiuk, Senior Media Relations Specialist, 604-688-0221 ext. 517,  
[mark.hasiuk@fraserinstitute.org](mailto:mark.hasiuk@fraserinstitute.org)

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