Independent Schools in British Columbia

Enrolment in independent schools has increased significantly over the past two decades.¹

Between 2000–01 and 2018–19, the full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolments in BC independent schools increased from 57,463 to 83,644. This is an increase of 45.6%.

Independent schools have a significantly smaller population of students in specialized categories, including students with special needs.

In 2018–19, the only category of students that is larger in independent schools than in public schools is non-resident students. Students in specialized categories in public schools make up a considerably larger part of the overall student population than those in independent schools.
Public funding for independent schools has increased significantly more than student enrolment.²

Between 2000–01 and 2018–19, funding for independent schools increased by 122.8%. This exceeds student enrolment increases by 77.2%, and funding increases for public schools by 106.9%.

The gap in graduation rates between public and independent schools has closed greatly in the past two decades, with graduation rates for some students being higher in public schools.³

In 2000–01, the six-year Dogwood Diploma completion rate was close to 10.6% higher in independent schools than in public schools. By 2017–18, that gap closed to less than 1.5%. In addition, Aboriginal students and students in English Language Learner programs in public schools had higher graduation rates than their independent school counterparts.

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1 Ministry of Education. (2019). BC Schools - Student Enrolment and FTE by Grade.
Statistics Canada. (2019). Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted. Values are rounded to nearest tenth of a percent.
3 Ministry of Education. (2019). BC Schools – Six Year Completion Rate.