



June 1, 2018

Dear School Authority:

Self-directed education is an alternative education philosophy and methodology that capitalizes on the efficiency of learning when it is driven by personal interests and meaningful applications. Education is intrinsically motivated which results in students not necessarily learning educational outcomes based on their age or grade. Instead they follow an individualized program that is based on their unique cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. In many instances, the content the student chooses will not be the same as the provincial school program of studies.

Parents have the authority to choose self-directed education for their children under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.* There is solid evidence to support the effectiveness of a self-directed approach. Schools using this model include Summerhill School in the United Kingdom which has been operating for almost 100 years, and over 260 Sudbury Valley Schools across North America. The Fraser Institute published a report titled *Homeschooling in Canada: The Current Picture 2015*, which included self-directed homeschoolers among its study subjects. The Canadian Coalition for Self-Directed Learning (CCSDL) has many resources on their website which confirm the effectiveness of self-directed education.

Parent of self-directed learners are able to gather evidence of learning even in the absence of written exercises and test papers. The evidence tends to come in the form of natural conversation and affective indicators of learning. Parents witness learners being motivated and engaged by areas that challenge and excite them. Through oral interaction they are able to see when students are make connections between concepts, recalling and integrating knowledge, making informed predictions, asking insightful questions and drawing well-reasoned conclusions. The excitement and satisfaction that comes with growing mastery, and the persistence in the face of challenges, are potent indicators that effective learning is taking place.

Our hope is that this letter explains the rationale by which the student and parent may not possess traditional paper-based grade-level school work to submit as evidence of an education program. Evidence of learning for self-directed students lends itself best to narrative-style reporting.

Sincerely,

Judy Arnall
President, Unschooling Canada Association