

# & means understanding

& → The ampersand has become an important symbol for us at Harris & Company. It embodies the commitment we bring to our practice — a commitment to collaboration, to value and to quality. For our education lawyers, it also represents understanding. Whether working with school boards to develop policy, to interpret teacher and support staff collective agreements, to advise on student educational issues or to act on behalf of boards before courts or tribunals, what makes us different is we understand schools and the school community and the educational context in which public and independent school boards operate.

## OUR COMMITMENT—OUR DIFFERENCE

**We understand.** We understand schools and the school community. We understand the goals they seek to achieve and the challenges they face. We know that to assist our school clients to succeed in providing quality educational opportunities for children, we have to understand the unique character of each school community and the complexity of the issues they face. That's our commitment. And that's why you'll find Harris & Company lawyers travelling to communities throughout British Columbia and other Provinces and Territories, to work with public, private, and First Nations school officials.

We understand education law. We are recognized nationally for our expertise. As part of Western Canada's largest employment and labour law group, we understand the complexity of labour and employment law in the 21st century. But what makes us different is that we understand legal issues involving schools must be approached within the broader context and values of the education system. Whether it is school board governance or student safety, human rights law or special education, labour relations or student rights, our lawyers have the knowledge and experience to work with our clients and find solutions that are right for them. We have the edge in finding those solutions through the research and technological tools available at Harris & Company. These tools support our lawyers by

providing both a historical perspective and cutting-edge information on current issues important to the education community. We are proud of the knowledge and skills we have acquired in over sixty years of practicing education law.

We understand the importance of education. That's why you'll find our lawyers teaching school law in universities, publishing education law articles and books, and being leaders in national education organizations. That's why each year Harris & Company regularly hosts seminars and workshops for our school clients, to keep them up to date on new developments in education law. And that's why Harris & Company offers annual scholarships to students throughout the Province to help them pursue their goals of a higher education.

Most importantly, we understand the importance of our relationships with our clients. Harris & Company lawyers have an established tradition of working within the education community to find creative solutions to complex problems. Our lawyers bring their knowledge, creativity, experience and strategic thinking to provide practical, timely and relevant advice.

That's the Harris & Company difference. And that's why we are the recognized leader in education law.



## EDUCATION LAW OVERVIEW

STUDENTS, PARENTS  
& THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

At Harris & Company, we understand that it's all about students. Bullying, the Internet, students with disabilities and special learning needs, international students, student safety, legal issues relating to curriculum and assessment and accommodating cultural and religious differences — these are just some of the areas on which we provide advice.

TEACHERS  
& SUPPORT STAFF

In an era of limited resources and increased accountability, our lawyers understand the challenging issues that confront school boards in their complex relationships with teacher and support staff unions. No matter what the issue — from workplace safety to human rights, from managing grievances and handling arbitrations to collective bargaining and developing strategy — we find the right solution.

EDUCATIONAL  
ADMINISTRATION

Effective school district leadership requires that educational administrators have access to timely, creative and practical legal advice. It also requires a productive relationship between a school board and its management team. Our lawyers work with school officials, trustees, boards of independent schools and band councils to assist in the routine and challenging administrative issues facing schools and the school community.

BOARDS, GOVERNANCE & WORKING  
WITH GOVERNMENT

School boards recognize the need for effective governance. At Harris & Company, we work with elected and appointed school officials to guide them through the intricate maze of statutes, regulations, policies and common law rules which apply to schools and students. When disputes arise or legal proceedings are commenced, we examine whether there are alternatives to litigation, without compromising the integrity of the school system. Where resolution is not achieved, we vigorously defend the interests of school boards before courts and tribunals.





## STUDENTS, PARENTS & THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

At Harris & Company, we know it's all about students. We never lose sight of that. In a complex world, school administrators need to have the right response to difficult problems affecting students, parents, and the school community, and they need to have it quickly. And the problems are not getting any easier. Bullying, the Internet, students with disabilities and special learning needs, international students, student safety, legal issues relating to curriculum and assessment and accommodating cultural and religious differences — these are just some of the areas on which we provide advice.

→ **SCHOOL POLICIES, STUDENT DISCIPLINE AND STUDENT APPEALS** Nothing is more important than a safe school environment. We work with school boards to design and implement effective policies for school safety and student discipline. Our lawyers know the importance of ensuring effective and fair processes that respect the rights of all students.

→ **PROTECTING STUDENTS** School boards need to manage risk and protect students. Outdoor education programs, field trips, sports programs, school ground supervision and industrial education classes all give rise to potential claims for negligence or breach of duty. We work with our clients to prevent those problems from arising and to find the best solution if they do occur.

→ **WORKING WITH PARENTS** Parents are important stakeholders in the education system. We work with school officials to find fair and practical solutions to parental concerns. Whether the issue is accommodation for children with special needs, religious rights, protecting student privacy, modifying the curriculum or dealing with custody and access issues, our lawyers understand the issues and help to find pedagogically sound solutions.

→ **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS** Both in the public and independent school sector, our lawyers work with school administrators to address the complex issues that arise in offering educational programs and services to foreign students.

## TEACHERS & SUPPORT STAFF

In an era of limited resources and increased accountability, our lawyers work with school boards and their senior staff to manage the issues that arise in the complex relationships with teacher and support staff unions. We make it our commitment to provide sound, practical and principled advice to our education clients before problems arise. From workplace safety to human rights, from managing grievances and handling arbitrations to collective bargaining and developing strategy, and from investigations and discipline to strikes and picketing, we work with school officials in all aspects of the labour-management relationship.

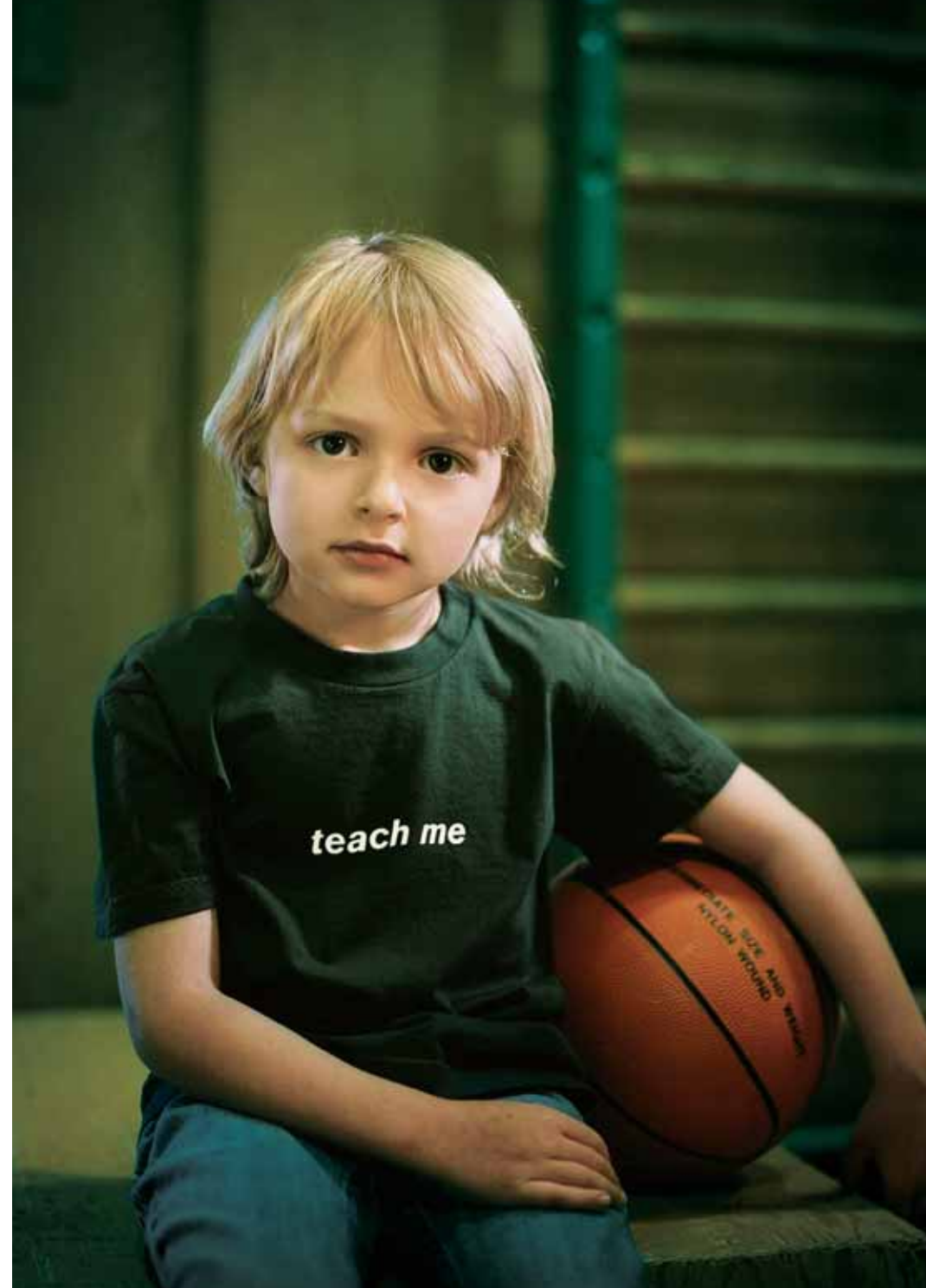
→ **PREVENTATIVE ADVICE** We know that an early solution is often the best solution. That's why every day our lawyers advise school administrators on teacher and support staff issues before problems escalate. Whether it is advising on appropriate discipline, interpreting rights under a collective agreement, or accommodating disabled employees, our proactive approach can reduce cost and conflict.

→ **GRIEVANCE ARBITRATION** The outcome of a union grievance can have a long term impact on public policy and school operations. Whatever the issue arising under a collective agreement, our lawyers bring vigorous and principled representation to the defence of our clients' interests both before grievance arbitrators and in any review before the courts or Labour Relations Board.

→ **INVESTIGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT** School boards must respond appropriately to complaints of misconduct against employees. We work with our clients to design and implement a fair and proper investigation process responsive to the particular circumstances.

→ **LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD** Our lawyers bring a wealth of experience to Labour Relations Board practice. Whether it is responding to strikes and picketing, essential services, certification or scope of bargaining unit issues, our experience is our advantage.

→ **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING** We draw on over sixty years of experience in collective bargaining in the education sector. Acting as spokespersons in negotiations, advising on bargaining strategies, drafting contract language, or participating in dispute resolution, our lawyers bring their expertise to advancing our clients' interests.





## EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Effective school district leadership requires educational administrators to have access to timely, practical and accurate advice. We advise and work closely with senior school district administrators on the legal and policy implications of the decisions they make every day about schools, students and school operations.

School district and school based administrators need to have an effective and positive relationship with the school boards they assist and advise. At Harris & Company, we work closely with school trustees, boards of independent schools and band councils to manage the legal and policy issues that arise in connection with the employment of senior school officials.

→ **SCHOOL ACT AND OTHER LEGISLATION** We routinely advise our clients and provide written opinions on questions arising under the School Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Sector Employers Act, and many other statutes that impact upon schools and the school community.

→ **LITIGATION AND JUDICIAL REVIEW** Our lawyers have represented education clients in every level of court in Canada. When school districts are involved in litigation, or when their decisions are challenged in court, our lawyers are there to defend their interests. From judicial review of school board decisions, to appeals of arbitration awards, to bringing or defending lawsuits, we have the litigation experience and expertise to effectively and successfully represent our education clients.

→ **HUMAN RIGHTS** In an increasingly complex educational environment where individual rights and interests may come into conflict, our lawyers advise and represent school authorities on a full array of human rights issues, such as complaints of discrimination and the duty to accommodate.

→ **EMPLOYMENT LAW** We advise on, negotiate, and draft fair employment contracts and related policies for school officials, and advise on executive compensation and severance arrangements.

## BOARDS, GOVERNANCE & WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

School authorities recognize the need for effective governance. At Harris & Company, we understand that school trustees bring diverse perspectives and experience to the school system but are brought together by their commitment to education. We work with elected and appointed officials to guide them through the intricate maze of statutes, regulations and common law rules which apply to schools. Our lawyers have a proven track record of supporting elected and appointed officials on all aspects of school governance — from assisting school boards develop policy to providing advice on board procedures, trustee elections, and conflicts of interest.

→ **POLICY** Our lawyers help draft policies for effective governance. Whether developing a policy on student discipline, conduct, curriculum, personnel, school operations, conflict of interest, finance or safety, we work with school authorities to advise on and develop policies sensitive to the relevant legal framework and educational context.

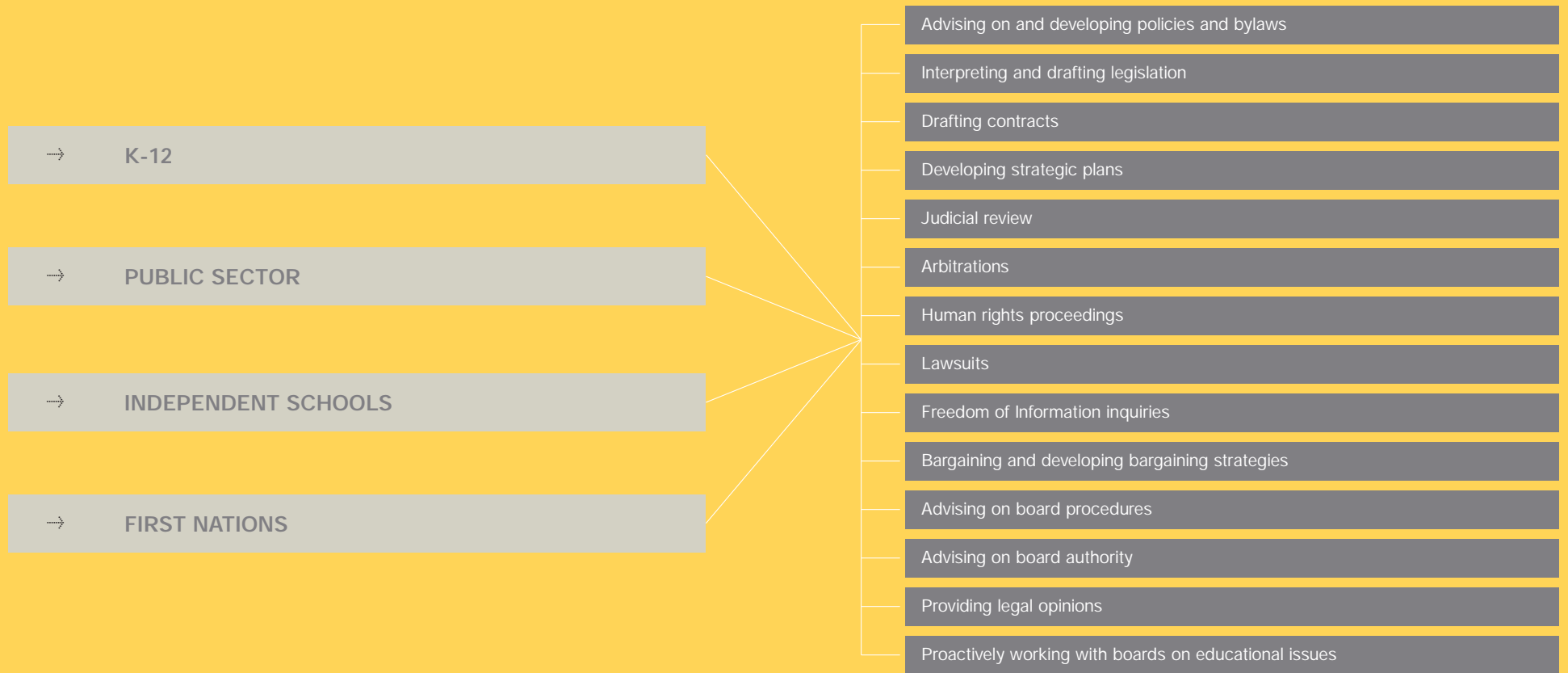
→ **MEETINGS** To operate efficiently and effectively, a school board needs to have clearly articulated procedures. We act as counsel at school board meetings and advise our clients on appropriate rules and procedures, applicable to different types of public and in camera meetings.

→ **LEGISLATION** Understanding the legal authority of school boards is critical. What are their rights, and what are their responsibilities? We work with school authorities to help them understand their legal obligations and the scope of their authority. Our lawyers also have the experience to advise on, interpret and draft education related legislation.

→ **WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT** We understand the roles and responsibilities of school boards and other levels of government. We help our clients work with various levels of government to formulate effective policies for education and to make recommendations for legislative change.



## WHAT HARRIS & COMPANY CAN DO FOR YOU



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