



May 19th, 2020

To BC School District administrators, Directors of Instruction and Boards of Education:

The team at BEdAccess would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the work that you have been doing in your school/District during this pandemic. Your efforts are not going unnoticed.

We initially focused on patience, communication, and mental health for the families we serve during the earlier phase of this pandemic. With Friday's announcement by the Ministry of Education, we can see a path forward through the stages, specific to education. Concerns remain but we are now finding that we need to return to our original advocacy for fair and equitable access to education for students with disabilities and those that are complex learners.

Families are reporting that school districts do not have a transparent process regarding how students are to be accommodated in the new learning environment. Some areas of concern include:

- Access to remote learning supports: students have not been given access to supports that allow them to have the same learning opportunities as other students.

Accommodations for Students with Diverse Needs

School districts and independent school authorities are expected to develop continuity of learning plans for students with disabilities or diverse abilities that prioritize in-school instruction (see section on Supports for Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities) and ensure equity of access to learning. Families who decide to keep their child at home during Stage 3 should continue to have access to remote learning opportunities.

Source:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k12-c19-ipf.pdf>, pg 29-30

- Access to in-school support/care for the children of Essential Service Workers: a number of ESWs who are parents of children with disabilities have reported that schools have told them there is no support/care available for their child despite the fact that they work in a Tier 1 job. Inadequate reasoning has been provided: there is apparently no staff available, the child is over 12, and in some cases no reason has been given. *Care must be provided for children over 12 if their disability means they cannot be left home alone safely.*

Supports for Children of ESWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide instruction to children of ESWs (ages 5-12) during regular school hours at a minimum, based on parent/caregiver need. • Continue to accommodate older children of ESWs if the child has a disability that precludes them from being alone in a home environment. • Begin to transition away from any extended hours of care provided under Stage 4 and notify parents/caregivers that they should begin to explore regular child care options for before and after school care. • If desired, school districts/authorities can partner with a licensed child care provider or become licensed to provide before and after school care.
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Source:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k12-c19-ipf.pdf>, page 7



- Access to in-school support/care for students with disabilities as vulnerable learners: since the schools have closed due to the pandemic, there has been a need for in-school supports for students with disabilities. Despite clarification from the Ministry of Education that it should already be available, many districts have denied - and continue to deny - this accommodation to students, with no indication of the process or policy they are using to make these decisions.



Source:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k12-c19-ipf.pdf>, page 6

I am requesting to see the policies, procedures, and reporting that have been and/or will be put into place to manage these processes. Clear procedures backed by policy and made public through reporting will reduce the likelihood that different schools will address these issues differently.

When there is denial of services and supports, it creates a need for advocacy that is difficult for parents and guardians of students with disabilities to manage during typical times. During the pandemic, the challenges are amplified. We rely on school and District administrations and Boards of Trustees to relieve this burden from families.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out, otherwise I look forward to receiving the details of your policies, procedures, and reporting that are required as part of your overall District plan by May 22nd.

Tracy Humphreys, Chair
BCEdAccess Society

Cc: all BC Public and Independent Boards of Education and respective Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers, Directors
Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Education, Patricia Kovacs, Ministry of Education