



November 1, 2017

Hundreds of Special Needs Students Denied a Full Day at School in BC Public Schools

Vancouver, B.C. - The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) strives to foster a culture of acceptance, tolerance of diversity, and inclusion in our public schools and advocates for both systemic changes and individual parent advocacy.

Every student, regardless of their race, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or level of ability has the right to a full, publicly funded education in B.C. Yet, BCCPAC has heard from hundreds of parents across the province whose children with special needs are not receiving the accommodations necessary to be able to equitably access public education and attend school full time.

BCCPAC conducted a survey to see how widespread this problem is across BC public schools. Over 800 parents of special needs children, representing 51 of the 60 school districts across the province, responded to the survey.

Of the 372 parents who reported that their child was regularly scheduled for less than a full day of school in the 2016-17 school year, a shocking 132 students were scheduled for less than a half-day on a regular basis.

Parents of 336 special needs students reported that their children were sent home last year due to staff shortages, with 104 students sent home over 10 times. These shortages occur for a number of reasons including when an EA is absent due to illness, training or planning, and when staff provide coverage for another staff member or classroom.

“The EA (Educational Assistant) shortage in districts will have direct impact on services and supports to our most vulnerable learners – a situation that will most likely worsen this year as flu season approaches”, says Jen Mezei, President of BCCPAC. *“Many parents are incredibly frustrated that special needs services and supports are often cancelled when EAs are absent due to illness. It is shocking and unacceptable that 12% of survey participants reported that their children missed the equivalent of two weeks of school due to staff shortages last year.”*

Additionally, 348 parents reported that their child was sent home after a behavioral incident at school, which many parents find difficult to coordinate with their work schedule. In over 100 cases, the children were sent home more than ten times during the school year.

“Sending kids home should not be the go-to solution for supporting our students when they require behavioral support and intervention”, adds Mezei. *“We must support our special needs students better.”*

-30-

Media Contact

Jennifer Mezei, President, 604-726-3987, jenmezei@bccpac.bc.ca

About BCCPAC

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC), a registered non-profit, represents the parents of 565,000 children attending provincial public schools. Recognized by government and education partners, BCCPAC is the collective voice of parents on educational issues within the public system. Governed by a volunteer board of nine directors elected annually by the membership which consists of District Parent Advisory Councils (DPAC), Parent Advisory Councils (PAC), and parent associate members.