

A large, teal-colored curved graphic element that starts from the top left, curves around the top and right, and then curves back down towards the bottom left, framing the text.

inclusion BC

A PARENT'S HANDBOOK ON

Inclusive Education

A useful guide to British Columbia's education system for
parents, caregivers and community partners.

6th edition
Revised 2024

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All students belong in the classroom

Inclusive education welcomes all students into regular classes with their same-age peers. With support and accommodation, equitable opportunities ensure that every student can learn, contribute, and participate in all aspects of school life.

Land Acknowledgement

Inclusion BC acknowledges that our head office is located in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the QayQayt First Nation, and that our staff and board members live and work in the territories of Indigenous Nations across the province.

We acknowledge the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Urban Indigenous people who live throughout the province. We recognize and support the inherent Indigenous rights and titles throughout the province of British Columbia, the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the British Columbia Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

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Welcome to the Parent's Handbook on Inclusive Education

From Inclusion BC

Inclusion BC is a non-profit provincial organization that advocates for the rights and opportunities of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. We are a federation of members that include people with intellectual disabilities, their families and the organizations that serve them. Advocating for the right to equitable access to education for all children—and the right to be fully and meaningfully included in education—is a significant part of our work.

Inclusion BC created the first Parent's Handbook on Inclusive Education in 1993 to help families learn about their children's rights, understand the educational system in British Columbia, and offer advocacy support. This latest edition offers you the knowledge, information, and resources you need to make sure your child and other children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and support needs have equitable access to their education.

To prepare this 6th edition, we consulted with people from across the province, including parents, teachers, resource teachers, district staff, academic leaders in inclusive education, and community partners involved in a student's team, like social workers, consultants, medical professionals, and therapists.

The purpose of this handbook is to:

- Help you understand and work within the education system to prevent and solve problems.
- Describe approaches for creating a school-wide culture of collaboration and inclusion.
- Identify tools you can use to help you create and maintain a collaborative plan that focuses on quality outcomes, meaningful opportunities, and growth for your child.
- Explain how an entire school community can lead, support, and maintain a culture of collaboration and respect.

How to get the most out of this handbook

This fully digital resource is free to download. You can print or keep a digital copy on your computer. There's a lot of information, so go slow, take your time, and take breaks when you need it. You don't need to read it cover-to-cover in one sitting. And you don't have to advocate alone. Reach out to Inclusion BC anytime for direct advocacy support. Find our contact information at the end of this introduction. Explore

the chapters in order, or use the main table of contents to head to the chapter you need. Each chapter also has a table of contents so you can focus your search for specific information. If you're using a device, click on anything in the table of contents to jump directly to that chapter or section. We've also provided page numbers in all the table of contents for printed copies. We've included as many links as

possible so more information is available and easily accessible if and when you need it. There are also places where we offer you more information, tell you where we found certain information, or direct you to related chapters in the handbook that you might find helpful.

Words we choose make a difference

Words have the power to change how we think, how we treat others, and how we shape the world. Our understanding of inclusion has evolved, as has the language we use to describe it.

The words we used decades ago are now unacceptable and ableist. For example, "special needs" no longer reflects our current understanding of inclusion and diversity. The need for education is not "special." It's a basic need that we have a duty to accommodate and it's human rights law. Classrooms are full of children with diverse learning needs. Some require specific accommodations and additional support to access their right to an education. Unfortunately, some official government policy documents still use the term "special needs." In this handbook,

we use this outdated term only when talking about those documents or other literature that uses it.

We also know many students who need additional support in the classroom haven't been diagnosed with a disability or don't identify as having a disability. We try to be as accurate as we can by using the term "disability and additional support needs" in this handbook. This term includes students who may not have a disability but require additional support to benefit from and access a quality education. Gifted students and their parents/caregivers are also included in this term and can benefit from this handbook. A student might need additional supports throughout their school years, or they may need them on and off or

temporarily.

This language also reflects the rights of all students to access an education and receive the supports they need to do so. There are many different titles for people caring for and legally responsible for children. We also use the term "parent/caregiver" in this handbook to include all kinds of guardians.



Click to watch a short video on inclusive language.

Not reading on a digital device? No problem. Type bit.ly/InclusionBCHandbookVideo1 into your search bar.

Helpful definitions and reusable source sheets

If you see words in **bold like this**, there is a definition of that word(s) in the "Dictionary" companion section at the end of this handbook. Handy checklists and helpful tip sheets are also listed at the end of this handbook. Feel free to print off these companion sheets and bring them to meetings, or use them to help you write emails (and figure out who you should write emails to).

Need help?

Inclusion BC advocates for a world where everyone belongs, and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have choice and control over the supports and services they need to flourish. All children must have equitable access to education and the right to be fully and meaningfully included in all parts of school life.

If you have a question about anything in this handbook or need help advocating for inclusivity and services on behalf of your child, please contact our advocacy line.

Inclusion BC is a free advocacy service

- Tools
- Information
- Advice
- Virtual support during important meetings

 **1-844-488-4321**

 **advocacy@inclusionbc.org**

 **[Community Inclusion Advocacy Program](#)**



Free Google Translate

1

Download the handbook to your device

2

Go to <https://translate.google.ca>

3

Upload the handbook file to Google Translate

Paid translation services

 DIVERSEcity
<https://www.dcrs.ca/our-services/interpretation-and-translation-services>

 MOSAIC
<https://www.mosaicbc.org>

 S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
<https://successbc.ca>

 Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia
<https://stibc.org>

The history, definition and benefits of inclusive education

WHAT'S INSIDE

This chapter asks and answers questions a lot of parents have about inclusive education in general.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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What is inclusive education?

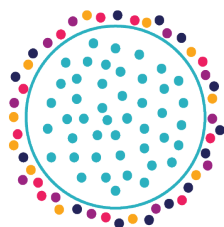
Inclusive education means all students attend and are welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes.

All children are supported to learn, contribute, and participate in all aspects of school life. Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs, and activities so that all students learn and participate together. True inclusion happens when a whole school embraces diversity. This creates an environment where everyone belongs and is seen as a valuable community member. Inclusion means being a part of the school community, both in and out of class, having friends and feeling welcome. It's a bridge to the future we want for our children.

Inclusive education is the cornerstone of our work at Inclusion BC. We work towards inclusion by:

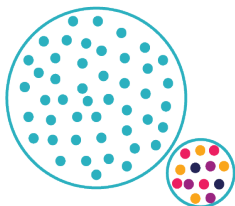
- Bringing public awareness to the benefits of inclusion and diversity in schools.
- Providing one-to-one advocacy for parents/caregivers trying to figure out the school system.
- Working at a systems level to advocate for effective policy change and financial investment in supports for students and teachers.
- Providing training and education opportunities for educators and parents, families and caregivers.

Different people, schools, and systems are at different stages of inclusion. Striving to get to teaching to diversity should be the common goal for everyone.



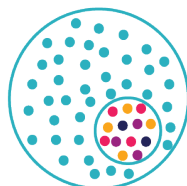
EXCLUSION

Denying education to all children with disabilities



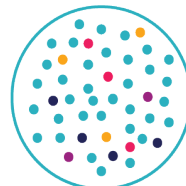
SEGREGATION

Educating children with disabilities in separate schools.



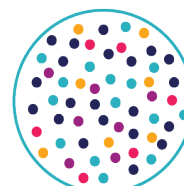
INTEGRATION

Placing all children in the same space, but educating children with disabilities differently.



INCLUSION

Equitable access to education and all aspects of school life for children with support needs.



TEACHING TO DIVERSITY

Embraces inclusion, recognizes and values each student's unique identity.

– SHELLEY MOORE, CANADIAN RESEARCHER, STORYTELLER, AND EDUCATOR ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



Helpful resource links to get you started

From www.InclusionBC.org

- [Guiding principles](#)
- [Community Inclusion Advocacy Program](#)
- [Inclusive education film series](#)
- [Inclusive education resources](#)
- [Inclusion BC blog](#)
- [Virtual learning series \(archived videos\)](#)
- [Implementing inclusive education](#)
- [Annual conference and learning events](#)

From Inclusion Canada

- [What is Inclusive Education?](#)

From the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Inclusive Education Services](#)
- [Inclusive Education Resources](#)

From the Institute for Public Education

- [Charter for Public Education](#)

What is the history of inclusive education?

Inclusion BC was founded in 1955, and education was one of the central issues from the start. At the time, children with intellectual and developmental disabilities were excluded from public education.

In fact, medical and education experts told many families to send their children to one of British Columbia's large residential institutions for people with disabilities, like the Woodlands School. Children often spent decades, and sometimes their whole lives, **institutionalized** and living apart from

family, friends and community. Parents of children with disabilities from across the province had a different vision for their children. They knew their children could learn, and the best place for them was their community with their family, friends, and neighbours. These parents organized non-profit associations in their communities and offered educational classes for their children in church basements.



1950 to 1969

This was a decade of rapid changes to improve education for children with disabilities. The local associations created by pioneer parents ultimately grew into the current Inclusion BC Federation, a province-wide network of non-profit organizations.

1955

The British Columbia government passed legislation to help fund schools for students with disabilities operated by local associations. Funding for the programs was at the same rate as funding for public education – in 1956, \$25.36 per month per child. The University of British Columbia became the first Canadian university to appoint a Professor of Special Education to train teachers of children with disabilities.

The Public Schools Act was revised to let school boards take over operating classes for “moderately handicapped children.” In the following years, further changes to the BC School Act allowed these students to learn in separate classrooms within regular schools.

1970 to 1999

In these decades, people are learning more about the untapped potential of people with disabilities. Public calls to close large institutions gained momentum.

Government services focused on giving supports to children, youth and families in their local communities. This included a big push to develop supports in public schools for students with disabilities.

1989

A new Ministerial Order was added to the School Act. Called the [Special Needs Students Order](#), it provided a legal basis for including students with disabilities in regular classrooms. The ministry [Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Inclusive Education](#) was released in 1995. This manual updated the framework for inclusive education practice in British Columbia.

2000 to 2019

The 2000s was a decade of budget shortfalls in the education system and an ongoing labour dispute between the BC Teachers Federation and the provincial Ministry of Education and Child Care. The BC Teachers Federation is the labour union representing all public school teachers in the province. Several bills were passed in the legislature that impacted inclusive education in public schools.

2002

Bills 27 and 28 removed class size and composition from teacher bargaining. This means teachers no longer had control or input over the number of students they could have in a single class, how classes were combined, or how many children with “special needs” were in a class.

2006

Bill 33 limited class size for Grades 4 to 12 to 30 students. It also limited class composition to a maximum of three students with an individualized education plan per class. The Bill fed into the harmful narrative that students with disabilities and additional support needs were a “problem” in the public education system.



A provincial bill is the first step to making a new law.
A public bill applies to the whole province.

- 2010** Canada agreed to the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).
- 2012** The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that students are entitled to the accommodations they need to learn. This decision, known as the Moore decision, was a turning point in inclusive education across Canada.
- 2016** The Supreme Court of Canada restored teachers' right to negotiate class size and composition.
- 2018** Canada adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Optional Protocol, which included Article 24 addressing the right to inclusive education specifically.

2020 to now **The network of advocates and champions for inclusive education is growing bigger and stronger.**

Over the years, advocacy on behalf of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and additional support needs has evolved from the right to an education to the right to a quality, inclusive education on an equal basis as others. Innovative research and progressive approaches in education are building awareness that inclusive education is a right of students with disabilities. Though challenges remain, opportunities for students with disabilities and additional support needs continue to expand.



Helpful resources

From www.InclusionBC.org

- [Administrative review of Woodlands School](#)
- [The story of a civil rights movement](#)
- [Our history](#)

From Inclusive Education Canada

- [Some thoughts on the Moore decision](#)

From the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- [General Comment No. 4 on Article 24: The Right to Inclusive Education](#)

Who benefits from inclusive education?

More than 40 years of research into inclusive education have shown that inclusive classrooms and schools can support improvements in teaching practices that benefit all students.

Inclusive learning environments have significant short- and long-term benefits for students with and without disabilities. For example, inclusive classrooms and schools can help all students develop stronger skills in reading and mathematics. Research shows that included students are less likely to have behavioural problems and are more likely to complete secondary school than those

Inclusive education leads to:

- **Better social connections**
- **More community involvement**
- **More earning potential as adults**

who weren't in an inclusive education setting. As an extension, data shows adult students with disabilities are more likely to enroll in post-secondary education, be employed or live independently if they experienced inclusive education in their primary and secondary years.



"Inclusion is important because we need diversity. We need each other. We need communities of varying ability, culture, experience, knowledge and language. It is critical and not just for students with special needs. It is critical for every one of us."

— SHELLEY MOORE, CANADIAN RESEARCHER, STORYTELLER, AND EDUCATOR ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



Helpful resources

From the Alana Institute

- [Summary of the evidence: A systematic review of 280 studies from 25 countries](#)

From All Means All

- [Inclusive education: What does the research mean?](#)

From the European Agency For Special Needs and Inclusive Education

- [Evidence of the link between inclusive education and social inclusion](#)

Is British Columbia's new curriculum good for inclusion?



Competency-based learning means

- **Personalized learning**
- **Classroom flexibility**
- **Big Ideas that go beyond memorizing facts**
- **Adaptive teaching approaches**

The short answer is yes! But there's still lots of work to be done. Most students in British Columbia are now educated in regular classes in their neighbourhood schools. But, not all school districts in British Columbia interpret student rights and inclusive education the same way. Parents/caregivers still face enormous challenges in seeking educational opportunities for their children. Even though laws support inclusion in schools, many students with disabilities and additional support needs continue to be under-supported or excluded.

Most teachers support inclusion, but some need more resources and professional development opportunities to implement it in large classrooms. This is a significant driver of exclusion. Without the resources that teachers need, schools are denying children their right to access public education. Over the years, many families have turned to private (or sometimes publicly funded) segregated options when they haven't been able to secure the supports their child needs in their neighbourhood school. Our system fails if it doesn't support all children learning and growing in inclusive, equitable, public-funded schools. British Columbia's new kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum was in place in all schools by the 2019/2020 school year. This new curriculum

is a potential game-changer with a new, modernized way of teaching to diversity. It's grounded in self-regulation and lifelong learning, offering options for all children to engage in learning. The new curriculum shifted from traditional standardized learning and moved toward competency-based learning. In traditional education, students advance at an educator's pace. In personalized, competency-based learning, students get customized supports in and out of school to get what they need when needed. Competency drives each student's progress, explains Leyton Schnellert, an assistant professor in the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education. There is more focus on developing deep learning over time instead of how much content is covered, he says. This creates an opportunity to build more pathways for more learners, so every student can be engaged with and learn about the big idea together.



"Higher achievement is not 'I got it!' It's 'What's next?'"

— LEYTON SCHNELLERT,
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
UNIVERSITY OF COLUMBIA IN
THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

What is a rights-based approach to inclusive education?

Inclusion BC uses a human rights-based approach to advocate for and promote education for all. It's rooted in respect for international human rights law, with the goal of every child having access to a quality education without discrimination and based on equal opportunity.

The BC School Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child all protect the right to an inclusive education. A lot of focus has been on helping children get into school, but what happens once they're there, and the quality of their education needs more attention.

The human rights-based approach includes:

- ⚡ Participation and inclusion: Everyone is entitled to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect the enjoyment of their rights.
- ⚡ Accountability and transparency: Duty-bearers are held accountable for failing to fulfill their obligations towards rights-holders. There should be effective remedies in place when human rights breaches occur.
- ⚡ Non-discrimination and equality: All people are entitled to their rights without discrimination. All types of discrimination should be prohibited, prevented and eliminated.
- ⚡ Empowerment: Everyone is entitled to claim and exercise their rights. People and communities must understand their rights and participate in developing policies affecting their lives.
- ⚡ Legality: Approaches should be in line with the legal rights set out in domestic and international laws.



Find education laws, charters and conventions in [Chapter 9](#)

My Right To Learn

By Robert Prouty

I do not have to earn
The right to learn.
It's mine.
And if because
Of faulty laws
And errors of design,
And far too many places where
Still far too many people do not care –
If because of all these things, and more,
For me, the classroom door,
With someone who can teach,
Is still beyond my reach,
Still out of sight,
Those wrongs do not remove my right.

So here I am. I too
Am one of you
And by God's grace,
And yours,
I'll find my place.

We haven't met.
You do not know me yet
And so You don't yet know
That there is much that I can give you in return
The future is my name
And all I claim
Is this: my right to learn

— A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED
APPROACH TO EDUCATION
FOR ALL, PUBLISHED BY THE
UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

What is diversity, intersectionality and cultural safety in school?

Diversity, intersectionality and cultural safety are words you might hear often, but what do they mean, especially in the context of schools and education? Let's break it down.

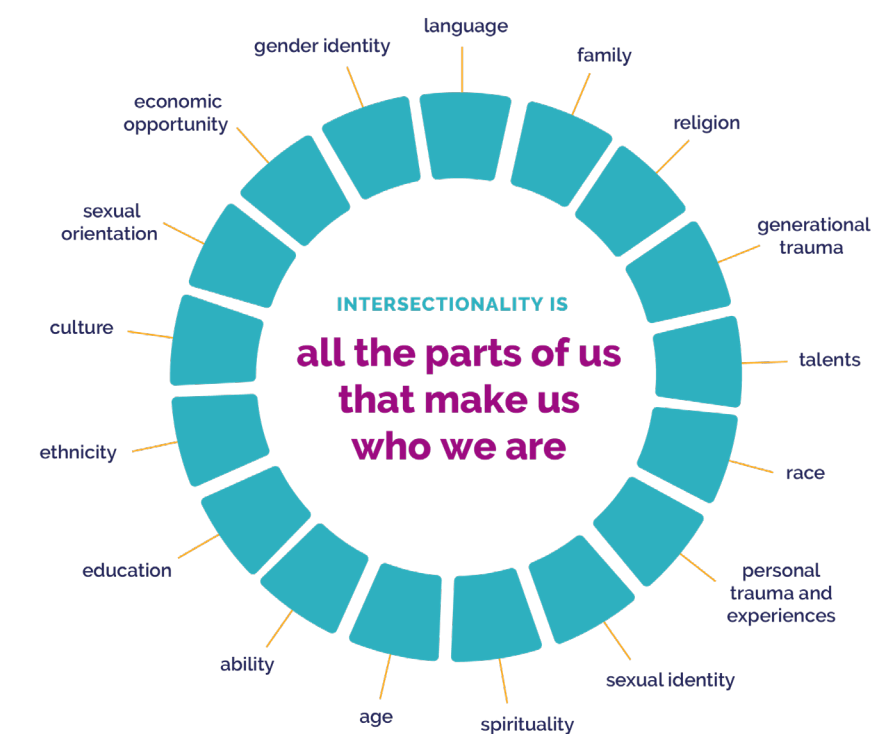
Diversity

Diversity in schools happens when students with different abilities, life experiences, personalities, cultural backgrounds, identities, and viewpoints come together in the same space to learn and play. A diverse school means children can learn to empathize, understand, appreciate, and respect each other for their unique qualities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality recognizes that we are all complex beings. We are the sum of many parts: ability, health, race, class, gender, culture, language ability, gender identity, and more. All of these parts of us inform the way we see and experience the world.

These parts can also drive discrimination and oppression or make people vulnerable and "othered." Those different forms of inequality or disadvantage can build on each other and create obstacles that often aren't understood within conventional ways of thinking, explains Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate, leading scholar of critical race theory and professor at the University of



California Los Angeles School of Law and Columbia Law School. Looking at inclusive education through an intersectional lens helps schools see the factors that lead to exclusion and discriminatory processes and understand how systems keep people oppressed. For an education system to meet the needs of all learners, it's essential to recognize the intersections between characteristics such as disability, health, race, class, gender, language ability, and

gender identity. "Our systems, our classrooms, our societies are embedded with structures of privilege, power, and bias that we're often unaware of. When we think about the potential of intersectionality, we can start to learn from and with each other in ways that move us away from dominant or single ways of knowing and being," says Leyton Schnellert, assistant professor at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education. "Instead, we can move towards

welcoming different perspectives, different ideas, through open ended practices, but also empowering kids to identify privilege and power and generate solutions to how we can work more equitably," he says.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety in schools means teachers are aware that some students could have emotional reactions to learning about topics that have affected their own lives, their families' lives, or their cultural community. Students can also have emotional reactions to hearing and learning about the adversity, unfair treatment, and challenges that others have faced. In a culturally safe classroom, teachers create their lessons with this understanding, plan ways to help students debrief what they've just learned, and ensure that resources are available to support them during and after the lesson. Cultural safety applies to all students and topics that connect to their identities, experiences and emotions. It also applies to the whole school community, including assemblies, events, and school-wide activities.



Helpful resource links

From the University of Victoria

- [Challenging Racist British Columbia](#)

From the British Columbia Teachers Federation

- [Raising awareness: Social Justice, equity, and inclusion](#)

From the University of British Columbia

- [Intersectionality: What it is and why it matters](#)

Up next

How to help your child make friends, boost their self-esteem, and help them make their choices and set their own goals.

Building friendships, self-esteem and independence

WHAT'S INSIDE

This chapter asks and answers questions a lot of parents have about inclusive education in general.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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Friendships, relationships and inclusion

A friendship with another child is one of the most significant things that can happen in a child's life. It's often one of the most important goals that a parent or caregiver has for their child.

Neighbourhood schools are places where children develop a sense of belonging. They learn they are connected and matter to the community, and they create meaningful friendships with other children. Developing friendships is an essential part of inclusion and belonging. But making friends isn't an intuitive ability. It's a skill everyone needs to learn and practice, disability or not. Students without disabilities also need support and guidance on being inclusive and accepting of diversity. Young children are often naturally inclusive, and supporting an inclusive mindset becomes even more important as students get older.

When we nurture positive social interactions and peer acceptance, all children improve social skills and self-esteem, transition and communication skills, and language and cognitive development. Children and young people without disabilities have reported that being with those who have disabilities improves their self-confidence, increases their social awareness and acceptance of others, reduces their fear of human differences, and helps them develop personal principles and friendships. Social skills and friendship-building are often part of your child's educational support plan. This

plan is called an individualized education plan, covered in [Chapter 5](#) of this handbook. For now, just know that these plans can include strategies to help your child build friendships.

School relationships

Everyone in the school community contributes to building a culture of collaboration, which means there is mutual trust and respect that supports every student's ability to succeed. Strong relationships make it possible for parents/caregivers and educators to work constructively together so you can meet your child's unique needs and provide them with a quality education.

Inclusive education isn't just one person's job. While schools and governments have a legal obligation to recognize the rights of all children to quality education, this can only be achieved with the active support and engagement of the entire school community. Strong relationships are essential to an inclusive school and the key to effective advocacy. In [Chapter 7](#) of this handbook, we explore how the school system is structured in more detail so you can feel confident building strong relationships with key partners on behalf of your child.



Helpful resources

From Foundry

- [Friends](#)

From PEERS Social Skills Program

- [Social Skills Program](#)

How to support friendships

Educators and parents/caregivers can offer unique support to help children with disabilities and additional support needs to connect with other children and make friends. But, educators and parents/caregivers play different roles in a child's life. The ways they can support are different, too. Here are some ideas to start with:

Use a friendship mindset

Parents and caregivers

- Think about the quantity and quality of your students' social interaction opportunities.
- Pay attention to how students are interacting.
- Consider the social implications of your academic decisions.
- Strive to support students with disabilities in doing all the things their classmates do during the school day.
- Believe the student can not only develop a friendship, but would make a wonderful friend!

Educators

- Be brave! Try not to overthink the chance for rejection because play dates are a powerful strategy for making friends and a great opportunity for other students to know your child and their interests better.
- Be a detective. Notice opportunities for shared activities alongside peers in and outside school.
- Nurture your own social connections in the school community, even if it means being more social than you would normally choose.

Create more social opportunities

Parents and caregivers

- Maximize inclusion.
- Write social goals into the individualized education plan.
- Build bridges.
- Decrease the time the student spends around adults; increase time with other students.

Educators

- Promote a positive image for your child through their presentation and social skills and, when older, their use of social media.
- Help them share interesting things that people may not necessarily know.
- Hang out with other families (like Friday afternoon plays at the park, swimming lessons, etc) so people get to know you and your child.
- Host birthday parties and other celebrations, such as end-of-term celebrations.

Make social opportunities more meaningful

Parents and caregivers

- Highlight students' similarities.
- Communicate student strengths.
- Interpret student behaviours.
- Teach students how to interact.
- Prepare students for social interactions.

Educators

- Ask teachers who your child likes, and regularly invite children to your home or on outings.
- Share helpful information informally: "Stacey loves to play hopscotch. It helps her to jump if a friend holds her hand."
- Consider developing a support circle that meets at or out of school.

Sources: [Friendships and belonging fact sheets](#) from Community Resource Unit and ["Making friends: with and without disabilities in school"](#) from The Arc



Building self-esteem and independence

You've probably heard of the term **self-determination**. It simply means being able to make your own choices and set your own goals.

Every student has the right to set goals, make plans, and make mistakes. They also have the right to reflect on their learning and recognize their growth and agency. This includes students with disabilities and additional support needs. Parents and caregivers, educators, and everyone in the school community need to support students in discovering their independence and fostering their self-determination like the rest of their peers. This is how everyone becomes and is seen as a contributor and important member of our society.

Self-determination and building independence are part of British Columbia's new curriculum and core competencies. The core competencies help students set personal goals so they can learn to see themselves as capable of achieving things.












Click to watch a short film on supporting self-determination in our schools produced by Inclusion BC and the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship. (4 minutes)

Not reading on a digital device?

Type www.bit.ly/SelfDeterminationInBCSchools into your search bar.

All students need to:

-  Know who they are as a person and a learner
-  Know their strengths and interests
-  Know their stretches and needs
-  Be included in goal-setting
-  Know and choose what supports and strategies they need to meet a goal
-  Know when they have met a goal
-  Know how to adjust a goal if needed
-  Be able to show they have met a goal
-  Know what a next step in learning could be

— SHELLEY MOORE, 2021

Up next

How the school system works, including roles and responsibilities, and you and your child's education rights.

Chapter 3

How the school system works

WHAT'S INSIDE

This chapter explains how the school system works and all the roles and responsibilities of people working within the school system. You'll also learn about your rights as a parent.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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- Your role as a parent/caregiver 24
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The value of building school relationships

The people we introduce in this chapter—and the roles they play—are valuable partners in your child's education journey. Strong relationships and a culture of collaboration can stop small issues from snowballing into big ones and make resolving challenges more productive and manageable. When you invest time in building relationships and educating others, you create opportunities for your child and the children who follow. Think of the educational team as a solar system where the student is the sun, and their educational team members are planets of support around them.

Your child's role on their educational team

The student—your child—is at the centre of the educational team. The team is the people who come together to support the student as they make and meet goals. Students should be involved in the planning and decision-making of their own education as much as possible. Planning looks different for each student and can even change over time as they get older.

Later in this chapter, we go over different kinds of education teams. For now, just know that as the closest person to your child, you'll be involved in decisions and planning that affect your child's education. You can also get involved with the wider school and district communities through your child's school parent advisory council (PAC) or the district parent advisory council (DPAC).



Click here to learn about the purpose and role of parent advisory councils.

Not on a digital device? Type <https://bit.ly/ParentAdvisoryCouncilsBC> into your search bar.

Your role as a parent/caregiver

Building positive relationships and creating a team that works together to plan for your child's education will make your journey to an inclusive future possible.

Your child has a right to be in a regular classroom at their neighbourhood school. Your child should also get the support they need to succeed and feel like they belong in that classroom and the school community.

Your role as a parent/caregiver is an essential part of making inclusive education work. Formal education may not start until your child enters kindergarten, but you've guided your child's learning from the beginning. You probably already have records of tests, reports, and correspondence to share, but you also have a lot of special insight into your child, like:

- What do they love?
- What do people love about them?
- What are their hopes and dreams?
- How do they best learn?
- What makes learning difficult for them?
- What are the best ways to support them?

You and your child will meet many new people during their education. Communicating the same information to different people is exhausting! We recommend turning your insights into a personal profile you can share at any time with members of your school team.

Make an "About Me" profile!

[MyBooklet BC](#) by the Family Support Institute of BC is a free online tool with helpful templates that you can use to create a beautiful and personalized information booklet for your child. If a whole booklet feels too much to take on right now, a one-page summary is just as helpful! It could look something like:



Click here to explore free, fillable "getting to know me" one-page templates



I'm Louis (Lastname)
Get to know me!

Things people love about me

- I'm great at giving hugs
- I'm very good at numbers
- I'm very good at puzzles
- I'm interested in how things work
- My smile
- My laugh

Things I love

- Being outside
- Puzzles
- Messy play
- Bubbles
- Animals
- Chocolate cake
- Counting

My hopes and wishes

- To be happy
- To be healthy
- To enjoy kindergarten
- To be independent
- To reach my potential
- To make friends and have relationships

The best ways to support me

- I need visuals to help me understand
- I need time to process information
- Language and instructions need to be short and clear
- Words are still hard for me. Please pay attention to my body language
- Eating is hard for me. I may need extra time and food put directly in my hand.

Your child's student rights and responsibilities

RIGHTS

Under the BC School Act, all students have the right to:

- Learn in a safe and welcoming environment.
- Have their needs identified in a timely manner.
- Have their needs comprehensively assessed.
- Get an appropriate educational program to respond to identified strengths and needs.
- When possible, contribute to planning for their educational programs, especially transition planning.
- Give an evaluation of the services they get, when possible.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Rights come with responsibilities for students, too! Students in British Columbia are responsible for following their school rules and code of conduct – a type of social contract that everyone agrees to for the good and safety of the school and all the people who go there.

Students are also expected to follow school board rules and policies.

Your rights as a parent/caregiver

You play a vital role in your child's education. Your partnership with school staff, support teams, and the whole school community helps create a welcoming culture of inclusion. Legally, you have rights as a parent/caregiver of a child with a disability or additional support needs. The rights are defined and protected by the BC School Act.





As a parent or caregiver, you have the authority to be actively involved with your child's school experience.

This means being informed about any educational decision that could affect your child, having your concerns heard and responded to, and observing your child in their classroom.

YOU HAVE THE LEGAL RIGHT TO:

- Be consulted about your child's placement.
- Be involved in planning, developing, and implementing your child's education program.
- Be informed of your child's attendance, behaviour, and progress in school.
- Consult with the teacher, principal, vice-principal, or director of instruction about your child's educational program.
- Get annual reports about the effectiveness of educational programs in the school district.
- Access and read all records about your child kept by the school board.
- Register your child in an educational program through a school district, independent school, home school, or regional correspondence program.
- Appeal the decision of a school board employee if it significantly affects your child's education, health, or safety within a reasonable time from the date the parent or student was informed of the decision.

EXPECTATIONS AS A PARENT

-  You can expect your school to have trained teachers and appropriate support for your child. If the school team believes an assessment is needed, they should consult with you to explain the assessment and why they're doing it. Once the assessment is done, they should tell you about the results.
-  You can expect access to and work with local school staff like teachers, education assistants, and principals, all the way up to school board administrators and trustees, if and when needed. You can also appeal a school district employee's decision if you feel it affects your child's education, health, or safety.
-  You can expect to get progress reports that you can understand, and expect that any of your concerns will be treated as confidential between you, your child, and the dedicated school team.
-  You can also expect meaningful consultation with the school about your child.

Protected education rights

International agreements, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Supreme Court rulings guarantee both parent/caregiver and student rights.

Find more information on policies and legislation in [Chapter 9: Education Laws and Policy](#).

What is meaningful consultation?

Meaningful consultation means you—the parent/caregiver—feels listened to and that the school team has considered your own experience, knowledge and ideas. You'll know all the options, what decisions were made, and why. Meaningful consultation isn't being told about a decision already made. It's not "experts" making decisions behind closed doors or without outside input. It's also not

about trying to sway someone into something. If everyone has a chance to participate in the process, meaningful consultation doesn't ask or need everyone to agree on the decisions being made.



Helpful resource links

From British Columbia Council of Administrators of Inclusive Support in Education (BCCAISE)

- [Support meaningful consultation with parents](#)

Embracing a team approach

Your child may have already been working with a team of professionals before they start school. They may have a speech therapist or occupational therapist, for example. These community partners have gotten to know your child and your family, and they'll likely play an important role in their education and life. Teams will succeed most when parent/caregivers are included as collaborative partners. Opening yourself up to a team mindset will help your child and yourself – you don't need to do everything on your own.

Three different types of teams and what they do

In the following sections, we'll go over the three kinds of teams you may become a part of as a parent/caregiver: The school-based team, the educational team and the **individualized education plan (IEP)** team.

The educational team

Your child's **educational team** is all the people who work together to help them succeed in and outside of school. This might include therapists, medical professionals, counsellors, social workers, Indigenous, Aboriginal and Métis workers, consultants, and so on.

When your child starts school, the educational team will work with existing support professionals to build support strategies for your child. These team members will involve you in meaningful consultation about your child.



Learn all about the kinds of professionals that partner with families and schools as part of the educational team in [Chapter 8](#).



[Click to read the Ministry of Education and Child Care's Inclusive Education Services: Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.](#)

The school-based team

The **school-based team** is usually made up of the school principal, a learning assistance or resource teacher, the classroom teacher, and a counsellor. This team usually meets internally, without parents or caregivers present. But in some cases, the school-based team also includes parents or caregivers and the student. This team finds classroom strategies to support your child, provides referrals, and makes resource decisions.

If the school-based team needs more support to meet your child's needs or resolve an issue, they can reach out to school district resource staff, community services, regional authorities, or other ministries. Since this team can be large, one person is appointed as the case manager.

Different school districts across British Columbia have different definitions of a school-based team, depending on the language in their collective agreement. But there are provincial guidelines that outline what school-based teams need to do, like:

- Find and use teaching and management strategies to support specific students and the classroom teacher.
- Coordinate support resources for students with support needs in the school.
- Identify the need for additional services.
- Provide referrals to access other school, district, community, or regional services.
- Initiate or help planning and delivery of services across provincial ministries.
- The classroom teacher usually refers a student to the school-based team. You should be informed if your child has been referred to this team.



Some questions you can ask:

- Who are the members of this team?
- What are their roles?
- What kinds of support does each member provide?
- How will I be involved in the school-based team process?
- How often does this team meet?
- How will I be informed of planning meetings?

The individualized education plan team

This team has a more specialized role and is usually smaller than a school-based or educational team. The team's job is to map out your child's individualized education plan, implement it, and report on your child's growth areas, strengths and stretches.



Find everything you need to know about individualized education plans (IEPs) in [Chapter 5](#).



The school's legal roles and responsibilities



The BC School Act defines these roles and responsibilities, and schools are legally required to fulfill them.

This section defines the legal roles and responsibilities of the people involved in making sure your child can access their education and achieve their goals. School roles and responsibilities might look slightly different from school to school and district to district. But there are some familiar titles and roles that we'll cover here. Use this as a starting point to become more familiar with the unique structure of your school. As you read the following roles and responsibilities, you'll notice sections explaining how each contributes to inclusion. These might not be legal requirements, but we know they are essential to creating inclusive school communities!

The school principal (or school-based administrator)

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The principal is the leader of the school. They are often among the first people you meet when registering your child for school. If your school is larger, you might have a vice-principal who shares responsibilities with the principal. If your school is relatively small, you might have a school-based administrator who has the same responsibilities as a principal but may only be at the school in person part-time.

To keep things simple, we'll use the title "principal" to represent the role in general. The principal oversees the educational programs for all students. The principal communicates with school district staff and manages general student conduct and **classroom placement**—who your child's teacher is and who else is in their class.

They must make sure that classroom teachers receive the information they need to work with students with special needs assigned to their classrooms. They are part of a student's school-based team, responsible for recognizing that student's support needs and advocating for those supports.

Principals also help develop, implement, and review your child's individualized education plan.

PRINCIPALS AND INCLUSION

The principal is also usually the key player in making the school inclusive. If the principal doesn't know about or support inclusion, it might be harder to get support for your child when needed. Not all principals have expertise in this area, but you can share your knowledge to help them learn more.

Under the BC School Act, principals are responsible for:

- Overseeing educational programs for all students.
- Assigning staff.
- Student placement.
- Making sure teachers get the information they need to work with students with disabilities and additional support needs.
- Making sure the school is organized to provide needed resources and support onsite.
- Making sure staff are supported through release time, problem-solving, etc.
- Building a staff who understand and practice inclusivity. Support them through program and staff development.
- Recognizing all students benefit from inclusion, and support the school's responsibility for the education of all students.

Inclusion is also about creating safe spaces and time for teachers so they can support in the best ways possible. This means making sure teachers receive the information they need to work with students with disabilities and additional support needs and making sure staff are supported through release time, problem-solving, and having the right resources and support on-site.

A principal's leadership role for inclusion means:

- Picking staff who embrace inclusion.
- Recognizing the need for program and staff development.
- Supporting the school's responsibility for the education of all students.
- Recognizing all students benefit from inclusion.
- Recognizing the support needs of students and advocating for them.

The classroom teacher

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In elementary school, the classroom teacher is usually the next person you get to know at your child's school. In high school, your child will have several different classroom teachers, and you'll get to know each of them, too.

Classroom teachers are responsible for each student's progress. They plan and teach the day's lessons and help foster friendship, kindness, and inclusivity among their students in a safe learning space. They adapt their teaching style, classroom activities and curriculum-based lessons so every student can succeed. The classroom teacher also works behind the scenes as part of your wider educational team and the internal school-based team. They put individualized education plans (IEPs) into action, work with other support staff and outside professionals, and supervise and coordinate with education assistants in the classroom. We'll cover what education assistants do coming up in the next section.

Teachers should be offered training on supervising, scheduling, and organizing activities involving education assistants. Teachers should also have access to education training on including children with disabilities and additional support needs. The principal or school district is usually responsible for making sure teachers have these training opportunities. The Teacher Regulation Branch regulates teachers. The commissioner for teacher regulation reviews complaints from the public and reports from teachers, schools and school districts about teacher conduct or competence. The commissioner can't ask a teacher to apologize, fire a teacher, or change the teacher in your child's classroom.

The commissioner for teacher regulation can:

- Investigate.
- Close a complaint by taking no further action.
- Offer a consent resolution agreement. A consent resolution is when the commissioner and the teacher agree on appropriate consequences. The agreement process is voluntary.
- Order a hearing and appoint a hearing panel if the teacher declines the offer for a consent resolution agreement. This hearing is open to the public.







Click to learn more about the commissioner's role.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS AND INCLUSION

Classroom teachers are essential in setting the tone for inclusion in the classroom. Teachers have to create a feeling of belonging, regardless of ability. They also need to recognize when they don't know what to do and ask for appropriate support.

As a parent/caregiver, you can help! Inclusion BC and the [Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship \(CIIC\)](http://www.inclusionbc.ca) created four short films that offer key information and possible pathways to success for students, families, and schools. Each film is less than five minutes long. Click on each link to go right to the video to share. If you aren't on a digital device, type www.bit.ly/inclusiveeducationfilmseries into your search bar. You'll find all the videos on that page.

-  **Film 1: Exercising self-determination in our schools**
-  **Film 2: Getting ready to work in our schools**
-  **Film 3: Reframing challenging behaviour in our schools**
-  **Film 4: Indigeneity and disability in our schools**



Six Inclusion Strategies from Shelley Moore

Inclusive education researcher and expert Shelley Moore says inclusive education isn't more work – it's different work!

Explore her strategies for inclusion and share them with your child's classroom teacher.

Click here or type www.bit.ly/SixInclusionStrategies into your search bar.

Education assistants (EAs)

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We'll use the general term “**education assistant**” in this section. Education assistants play a crucial role in the education system. They support all students but mainly support children with disabilities or additional support needs during the school day. Your child may or may not need support from an educational assistant.

Education assistants work with teachers as part of the classroom team. They're usually assigned to work in a specific classroom and may work primarily with one or several children. They're under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher or principal. Education assistants do several important things to support students in classrooms and their wider school community.

Under the job description defined by Work BC, education assistants:

- Work under the supervision of teachers or other child-care professionals.
- Work with individual students and small groups.
- Reinforce students' learning using lessons and methods developed with the classroom teacher.



Let's get some acronyms out of the way because educational assistants could be called any one of these at your school:

- SEA: Special Educational Assistant
- CEA: Certified Educational Assistant
- ABA EA: Applied Behaviour Analysis Educational Assistant
- SSW: Student Support Workers
- STA: School Teacher Assistant (term used in the BC School Act)

- Help students with assignments.
- Help build students' social skills, emotional skills and self-esteem.
- Offer encouragement to help students fit into the classroom and the school community.
- Assist with children's personal care.
- Observe students and share their observations with the classroom teacher.
- Assist students with special needs using sign language, braille, and other supports.
- Supervise students on field trips and during activities in school gyms, labs, libraries, and resource centres.
- They may help teachers operate audio-visual and electronic equipment.
- They may also monitor students during recess and lunch hour.
- They may help in the school library or office or perform other duties assigned by the school principal.



Inclusion BC is part of the Education Assistant Standards of Practice working group, which advocates for establishing provincially mandated standards of practice for education assistants in British Columbia.

Right now, there are no standards of practice for education assistants in British Columbia, which is long overdue. Established standards will contribute to a high quality of education and protect all children. As a vital teaching team member, education assistants need better working conditions and consistent training before being hired.

EDUCATION ASSISTANTS AND INCLUSION

Education assistants must believe everyone belongs for a classroom and school to feel truly inclusive. While there is no provincial standard for education assistant training, they should be well-trained in several areas, including behaviour management and supporting students in developing social and communication skills. Parents often report that the education assistant's commitment and skills are crucial to their child's inclusion.

Questions you can ask your school principal about educational assistant support

- ☞ What qualifications does the education assistant have to support my child?
- ☞ How will the education assistant be supported in developing specific skills to work with my child?
- ☞ What is the education assistant's philosophy and experience?
- ☞ What is the hiring process for education assistants?
- ☞ How are education assistants assigned to students/classrooms?
- ☞ Will union seniority affect the placement of the education assistant?
- ☞ What happens when the education assistant gets sick?
- ☞ How will an appropriate substitute be arranged?

Resource teachers (also called learning assistance teachers)

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Some schools have specialized teaching staff that provide valuable support to the classroom teacher. They are different from education assistants because they are trained and certified as classroom teachers but aren't usually responsible for a classroom of students. They're often referred to as "non-enrolling teachers."

The most common specialized teachers are **learning assistance teachers** or **resource teachers**. Resource teachers often have a master's degree or postgraduate diploma in inclusive education and a Teaching Certificate.

They may have distinct roles or vary as they share the workload in the school. Depending on the school's needs, they may be assigned to a school full-time or part-time. Support teachers and resource teachers usually have specialized training or experience that enables them to provide teacher and student support. For example, an **English language learner (ELL)** specialist is a resource teacher who works with students whose first language isn't English or whose family's first language isn't English and who need language support to access their education.

EDUCATION ASSISTANTS AND INCLUSION

Support teachers are essential in including children with disabilities and additional support needs. They can provide suggestions on how to work with any child who needs assistance and work directly with students. They can also access district-level support services and help organize support services within the school.

As part of the school-based team, they promote an inclusive philosophy in all classes and connect school staff to school districts or other professional support services and programs.



Resource and learning assistance teachers can:

- Suggest strategies to support student learning.
- Support students with disabilities, and additional support needs in a particular area of their education.
- Adapt curriculum and intervention for physical or behavioural needs.
- Coordinate the wider education team.
- Help classroom teachers.
- Coordinate the individualized education plan.
- Help a student transition to a new classroom or school.

Other professional partners

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers and school staff work as a collaborative team with other professionals. These may include psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, child care workers, nurses, behavioural consultants, doctors, and social workers.

You'll learn more about these professionals and what they do in [Chapter 8](#). For now, just know that these professionals often work with school staff to ensure your child can access their education. Sometimes, your educational team will include district-based support people, like an integration support coordinator or other teachers who help students across several schools.

Provincial outreach programs can also provide support to your child's school team. These specialized programs and services from the Ministry of Education and Child Care support equitable and accessible education for all students in British Columbia. These professionals are brought in to support your child based on their individualized education plan and might work as members of your child's individualized education plan team.

It's important to know that there should be an assigned coordinator whenever several other professionals are part of your educational team. This coordinator ensures everyone on the team works together to provide classroom support. This person is sometimes called a case manager, but it could be the principal, the resource teacher, the learning assistance teacher, or the classroom teacher.

The principal can tell you who coordinates your child's educational program. You'll want to develop a relationship with that person. It's your right to be part of the team that discusses your child's educational program and any changes to your child's support services.



Questions you can ask your case manager or coordinator:

- When and how often can we meet?
- What is the best way to communicate?
- How will you let me know about planning meetings?
- How will I be involved?
- Will my child be out of the regular class for any period? If yes, why?

The school board

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A school board is made of elected school trustees. You vote for school trustees during municipal elections. The school board oversees how public education is delivered in the school district. It makes major policy decisions for the district and sets the financial budget. A school board is also sometimes called a board of school trustees.

School boards in British Columbia have considerable autonomy to plan and carry out local programs and are expected to respond to their district's needs. School boards must be well-informed and committed to quality education so all students can respond effectively.

They should ensure that inclusive education programs and services are delivered to students in their school district and that schools know what supports and services are available. School boards should also have policies and procedures consistent with Ministry of Education and Child Care policy.

These policies and procedures must:

- Identify, assess, and plan for students with disabilities and additional support needs.
- Track and report on individualized education plans.
- Provide a straightforward appeal process for parents/caregivers.
- Evaluate and report on the progress of students with disabilities and additional support needs.
- Evaluate special education programs and services.

The superintendent of schools is the school district's chief administrator and is responsible to the school board (also called the board of school trustees). An assistant superintendent is usually assigned to a particular district function, such as instruction, personnel, business, or inclusive education.

An inclusive education contact will be responsible for inclusive education and support services in your child's district. Depending on your district's size and structure, it may be a school principal, the director of instruction, the director of inclusive education, the director of learning services, a district principal, or the superintendent.

THE SCHOOL BOARD AND INCLUSION

School boards make major policy and budget decisions for school districts, including those that affect inclusive education. These decisions can affect the educational options available to children with disabilities and additional support needs. They can also impact how children are placed in the district's schools or the supports they receive.

The [Students with Disabilities or Diverse Abilities Order \(MO 150/89\)](#) is an order from the provincial Ministry of Education and Child Care that directs school boards to consult with parents about decisions about where their children are placed in schools. Ideally, placement choices should be available that meet the needs of all students. But it's sometimes hard for a school district to provide exactly what is needed. Limited resources and funding often create challenges for educators working with students with disabilities and additional support needs.

A cooperative, problem-solving approach between parents and school staff is usually most effective in making sure appropriate opportunities are available to your child. Sometimes, parents and caregivers get involved at the school board level if they're not satisfied with the decisions made by their trustees.



Click here to find the inclusive education contact for your school district or go www.bcschoolcontacts.gov.bc.ca/contacts



Find more about effective communication and advocacy within the school system in [Chapter 7](#).

The Ministry of Education and Child Care

SCHOOL ACT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The [Ministry of Education and Child Care](#) sets provincial policies that follow the BC School Act. The goal is to make sure that all students can become valued citizens and contribute to a healthy, democratic society that works together in its diversity.

The Ministry establishes guidelines and expectations for school districts via policies that have to be publicly available. School districts control how they carry out those policies according to the needs and characteristics of their district. The Ministry of Education and Child Care follows specific processes for assigning funds to school districts so that they can fulfill their responsibilities.

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE AND INCLUSION

The Ministry of Education and Child Care makes policies on inclusive education that all school districts must follow. Its vision is “to provide inclusive and responsive learning environments that recognize the value of diversity and provide equity of access, opportunity, and outcome for all students, including students with disabilities and diverse abilities.”

The Ministry of Education and Child Care directly funds Provincial Outreach Programs. These programs support school districts, independent school authorities, and First Nations schools to address students' needs. They are operated through the administrative oversight of a host school district.



Find ministerial orders, policies, programs, resources, and guidelines on inclusive education online.

[Click here](#) to go to the ministry's inclusive education resources page or go to www.bc.gov.ca and type “inclusive education resources” into the search bar.

Indigenous Education

The Ministry of Education and Child Care has set Indigenous Education policies and legislation to support Indigenous students and teach all students about Indigenous culture, language, and history. The Ministry of Education and Child Care also aims to help teachers bring Indigenous knowledge into daily teaching. Most school districts in British Columbia have Indigenous

programs and services to support Indigenous students. People working in these programs could be liaison staff, support teachers, Resident Elders, or education consultants. Most districts also have [enhanced agreements](#) to improve the educational achievement of Indigenous students. These agreements are a collaborative partnership between the school district, local

Indigenous communities, and the ministry. Their goal is to meet the educational needs of Indigenous learners. The agreements vary among different schools to reflect the unique needs of students.

Indigenous liaison worker or Aboriginal liaison worker

The **Indigenous or Aboriginal liaison worker** provides help and support to Indigenous students. In many cases, this person works under the direction of the [district principal of Indigenous education](#). The liaison worker builds a connection between home and school for Indigenous students. They might also provide academic assistance and tutoring from a culturally based perspective.

Indigenous support worker or Aboriginal support worker

An **Indigenous or Aboriginal support worker** gives culturally appropriate support to Indigenous families and children in British Columbia. Many school districts have an Indigenous support worker on staff. This person usually works with students and teachers to support the success of Indigenous students and helps the school provide First Nations learning for all students.



Helpful resources on Indigenous Education

From the Government of British Columbia

- [Indigenous Education](#)
- [Kindergarten to grade 12 funding for Indigenous education](#)

Or go to www.bc.gov.ca and type “Indigenous education” into the search bar.

Up next

Learn about all the different kinds of assessments schools use to identify student support needs.

Types of student assessments and support plans

WHAT'S INSIDE

This chapter gives you an overview of British Columbia's new curriculum and the assessments schools use to determine what support your child might need.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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The new curriculum

British Columbia's kindergarten-grade 12 curriculum was redesigned in the 2010s after an in-depth review. Getting familiar with the structure and content of this curriculum is helpful as you support your child through their educational journey. The updated curriculum is centred around three parts:

- 1 Literacy and numeracy foundations: Reading and writing, number and financial literacy, visual literacy, and digital literacy.
- 2 Essential learning: What students are expected to know, be able to do, and understand at each grade.
- 3 **Core competencies:** Thinking, communication, and personal and social skills. These core competencies are directly related to educating and preparing students for lifelong learning.



Literacy is:

Our ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a way that allows us to communicate effectively and make sense of the world.

All the core competencies are relevant to your child's individualized education plan (IEP). The curriculum follows the Know-Do-Understand model of learning:

Content: What students are expected to know.

Curricular competencies: What students are expected to do.

The **curricular competencies** are subject-specific and connected to the core competencies.

Big Ideas: What students are expected to understand.

Big Ideas make it possible for students with disabilities and additional support needs to start at the same place as their peers.



Helpful resources

From the B.C. government

- [Explore the new curriculum](#)

From Shelley Moore

- [Core competency overview](#)

Indigenous Education

Indigenous Education is about improving success and supports for Indigenous students and recognizing and building awareness around Indigenous culture, language and history for all students. Many districts have agreements that reflect what they've learned from local nations to help determine what's needed to help Indigenous learners succeed. While specific names and positions might be different from one school district to another, several roles and programs exist to support Indigenous Education. People in these roles could include liaison staff, a support teacher, a Resident Elder, or an education consultant. They may also include an **Indigenous liaison worker** or **Indigenous support worker**, who may also be called an Aboriginal support worker.

Assessing and identifying learning needs

Identifying a student's learning needs early is important so you and the educational team can get the right strategies and supports in place. If you've already had your child's learning needs assessed, sharing that information with the school when you register your child or during a transition meeting is helpful. If you don't know your child's learning needs yet, it's okay. Their teacher can refer you and your child to the school-based team, who can then start the assessment and identification process.

The word "assessment" might sound a bit intimidating, but what assessments can tell you about your child's learning needs is important for getting the right supports. These assessments help you and the educational team understand how your child learns and functions best and pinpoint areas of need. All of that information becomes the foundation of your child's education planning.

Who assesses my child?

Assessments can be performed by school district professionals, including psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, or other specialists. These assessments are free, and there are usually waitlists. You can also pay for a private professional to do assessments. **Formal assessment** and identification should lead to better learning opportunities for your child. Some assessments provide a diagnosis, allowing the school district to get supplementary funding under special education from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. The ministry uses letter **designations** to categorize support needs. But, it's important to know that a diagnosis is not a prerequisite to receiving support.

As a parent, you might have concerns about how well your child knows the person doing the assessment. Unfamiliar situations and people can be overwhelming: You might wonder how well your child will do if the assessor is a stranger. You may also be concerned about when and where an assessment will happen. These factors may influence the results. Some parents/caregivers don't want their children assessed under less-than-ideal circumstances. Some parents/caregivers choose to have assessments done privately and share results as they see fit.

When is my child assessed?

School personnel should always consult with you about the assessments they feel your child needs and when they will conduct them. Some assessments need written consent from parents/caregivers. Other **informal assessments** don't require parent/caregiver permission, but you can ask to be notified of all assessments in the beginning. Sometimes, only you will know if your child has had a bad night or a medication change that could impact assessment results. It's in your child's best interests that you are informed of any assessments to be performed.

We all know children grow and change! Assessments might need to be updated at various times throughout your child's elementary, middle and high school years. Often, children need updated

assessments as they plan to transition out of high school. Find more helpful on big transitions in [Chapter 6](#).

What happens after the assessment?

After an assessment, you should get a summarized report of the results. This report will be shared with others, including the school-based team and, if it's appropriate, the student. According to the BC School Act, parents/caregivers must be informed about how the report will be shared with others working with their child. Ask to speak with the assessor if you need more information or help interpreting the results of your child's assessment.



Helpful resources

From the Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Kindergarten to Grade 12 Inclusive Education Funding](#)
- [Special Education Services: Category checklist](#)



Questions to ask about assessments:

- What do you hope to find out from this assessment?
- Why is this assessment being done?
- Is previous information about my child's learning style/needs available?
- How is the assessment done?
- How long will it take to receive the results?
- How soon will you send me a copy of the assessment results?
- Will I be asked to give approval for its distribution? (The answer should be 'yes')
- Can I speak to the assessor so that I can understand the results?



Types of assessments

Assessments are either informal or formal. **Informal assessments** include observations, file reviews, and interviews. **Formal assessments** include achievement measures, adaptive functioning, and other standardized assessments, like **psychoeducational assessments**. You'll probably hear or read people on your educational team using acronyms instead of the assessment's full name. We've provided those acronyms here for you. But if someone uses an acronym and you can't remember what it means, always ask!



Individualized education plans are covered in [Chapter 5](#).

Each school district offers different assessments at different stages. It is important to learn what assessments are done in your school district and when. If you think your child needs any of the following assessments, you can meet with your child's teacher, school counsellor, or principal to see what options are available.

First, we'll go over the different types of formal assessments. Then, we'll review different kinds of support plans, including the annual instruction plan for English language learning (also known as ELL).

Functional behaviour assessment (FBA)

The **functional behaviour assessment** looks at a student's behaviour in their classroom and school community. The purpose is to identify things that cause them to become dysregulated. Dysregulation is when you have trouble controlling your emotions. You might do things impulsively or have an angry outburst when you're dysregulated. Anyone of any age can get dysregulated!

The results of this assessment inform the development of a positive behaviour support plan. We'll go over what this plan is later in this section. If you think your child would benefit from a functional behaviour assessment, contact the district inclusive education contact in your area. Some districts have behavioural specialists on staff or may know who to bring in, like reaching out to the [provincial outreach programs](#).

Psychoeducational assessment (psych-ed)

You might hear your educational team call this assessment a psych-ed. A **psychoeducational assessment** is a formal assessment that identifies a student's learning strengths and needs. It includes



Helpful resources

From British Columbia Association of School Psychologists

- [Best practice guidelines for the assessment, diagnosis and identification of students with learning disabilities](#)

From the Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Inclusive Education Services Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#)

From Burnaby School Psychologists

- [What is a "psych-ed" assessment?](#)

recommendations for planning supports and accommodations to help students do their best. Children can be tested from as young as four years old. Different school districts test at different ages. There is no cost for assessments done through the school district. You can also have a private assessment done at any time. Registered psychologists provide private assessments and set their own prices. The costs can range from \$2,400 to \$3,500. Some insurance plans cover some of the costs under psychology services. There is usually a waitlist for both public (school district) and private options.

The school district needs signed consent from parents/caregivers to administer this assessment. This consent form includes permission for the results to be shared with relevant school staff. The BC Association of School Psychologists lists all of the categories that must be included in the psychoeducational assessment report.

Complex developmental behavioural conditions assessment (CDBC)

This assessment is meant to identify complex developmental behavioural conditions. When children or youth have significant difficulties in multiple areas, this assessment can provide insight that other assessments may not have addressed.

Children who could qualify for this assessment are children who may have an intellectual developmental disorder, children who have had prenatal substance exposure, such as alcohol, that has significantly impacted their development, or children with a genetic disorder where there are additional development concerns.

This assessment might also be appropriate for children with complex needs and behaviours requiring specialty assessments beyond what other community health services can provide. Your child can get an assessment at [Sunny Hill Health Centre at BC Children's Hospital](#). You need a referral from your doctor for this assessment.

Autism spectrum disorder assessment

A pediatrician, psychiatrist, or registered psychologist completes the **autism spectrum disorder** assessment. During the assessment, the specialist will interact with your child and watch how they complete structured play-based and thinking-skills tests. The specialist will also ask you questions about your child's behaviour and development.

The British Columbia government's website has a section on autism spectrum disorder, which includes more detailed information about how to prepare for the assessment and what to expect. It also has information on accessing funding and building a support team.

The [BC Autism Assessment Network](#) provides free assessments for children up to age 19. Wait times vary, but as of 2022, the average wait time is up to 20 months. Assessments can be done privately by a qualified professional for a fee.



How autism is diagnosed

Click here to read more from the Ministry of Health (Children and Youth With Support Needs).

Sensory processing disorder assessment

The purpose of the **sensory processing disorder** assessment is to understand how a child's behaviour is affected by their ability to process—or take in and understand—the environment around them. By understanding how a child is impacted by their environment, school staff can make adjustments to minimize those triggers and support their learning.

Talk to a doctor or an occupational therapist about doing this assessment. You can also ask your school district if they have an occupational therapist on staff who can give the assessment.



Learn more about sensory processing disorder at [HealthLink BC](#)

Not on a digital device? Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca and type “sensory processing disorder” into the search bar.

Other tests and assessments

Sometimes, a teacher may refer a student to the school nurse for vision or hearing screening. The teacher may also talk with you about referring your child to a physician for a medical examination.



Types of support plans

After an assessment, the educational team could create one or more support plans to help your child and make sure they get the support they need in the classroom and the school in general. You don't always need an assessment to have an individualized education plan, but in most cases, students have had some sort of assessment or referral for one. Usually, an individualized education plan will be created and implemented alongside other plans.

SOME PLANS THE TEAM MIGHT CONSIDER:

- an individualized education plan
- a student learning plan
- an annual instruction plan
- a positive behavioural support plan
- a care plan
- a student safety plan

You don't always need an assessment to have an individualized education plan, but in most cases, students have had some sort of assessment or referral for one. Almost always, an individualized education plan will be placed in addition to other plans.

Annual instructional plan (AIP) for English language learners

English language learner (ELL) support services help students succeed and be included in school and society. This is according to the English Language Learning Policy Guidelines. These learners will have an **annual instructional plan (AIP)**, which sets out language and literacy goals and identifies strategies to meet these goals.

An English language learning specialist works with the classroom teacher and the student to achieve their annual instructional plan goals. These specialists can consult with other professionals, such as counsellors, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, qualified interpreters, and classroom education assistants. Meeting the learner's needs is a shared responsibility of the classroom teacher, the school community, school districts, and families.



Individualized education plans (IEPs) and student learning plans (SLPs) are covered in [Chapter 5](#).

That's also where you'll learn more about all the other kinds of plans that might be put in place to support your child in school.



What is an annual instruction plan?



Read the English Language Learning Policy Guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Positive behaviour support plan (PBS)

A **positive behaviour support plan** looks at the situations and circumstances that cause a child to become dysregulated, and finds strategies that address the root causes of challenging behaviour.

A key consideration is to look at behaviour as a form of communication and recognize that students can only meet behavioural expectations if they know what the expectations are and have the skills to meet them. That's why it's important to focus on understanding what is going on for the student from their perspective and supporting them in developing the skills they need.

“Kids do well if they can.”

— DR. ROSS GREEN, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

A positive behaviour support plan should be based on learning from a child's functional behavioural assessment and other sources like classroom observations. But before we go any further, let's define what “intervention” means here. An intervention means taking an action or using a strategy to teach a student skills and other ways of communicating their needs. An intervention shouldn't be a punishment for “acting out.” There are positive ways to address behaviour; an intervention should never include secluding or restraining students.

Seclusion is when a child is put alone in a room or area and isn't free to leave or believes they aren't free to leave.

Restraint is when a child's movement is restricted so they can't move their upper body, arms, legs, or head freely.



Every British Columbia school district must have policies in place to prevent using seclusion and restraint in schools.

These policies must be based on the Ministry of Education and Child Care's provincial guidelines on physical restraint and seclusion in schools.

The guidelines say:

- Behaviour interventions for students must promote the rights of all students to be treated with dignity.
- Behaviour interventions for all students must emphasize prevention and positive behaviour supports.
- Every effort must be made to use preventative actions so there is no need for physical restraint or seclusion.
- Positive educational and behaviour interventions and mental health supports must be regularly provided for all students who need them, and they must be provided in a safe and least restrictive environment.
- Behaviour interventions must address the underlying cause of potentially harmful behaviour.



Click to watch the short video: “Kids do well if they can” from Dr. Ross Greene.



Helpful resources on positive behaviour support plans

From Dr. Ross Greene

- [Collaborative and Proactive Solutions](#)

From the Centre on Positive Behaviour Interventions and Support Plans

- [Why Implement positive behaviour support plans?](#)

From the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Provincial guidelines on restraint and seclusion in school settings](#)

Care plans

Students who receive Nursing Support Services (NSS) in schools need a care plan ([Chapter 8](#)) has all the details on Nursing Support Services). With these plans, nurses train school staff and education assistants to provide necessary medical care onsite during the regular school day. Care plans are collected at the end of each school year so they can be reviewed, updated, and sent back to schools for the following September.

Student safety plans

A **student safety plan** outlines steps and strategies to prevent and manage unsafe behaviours at school. These plans include specific strategies for school staff to use when and if challenging behaviour occurs and to help stop students from becoming completely dysregulated. This plan should be developed with the school-based team, parents, and other professionals who consult with the home team.

While a student safety plan is about helping a student who is feeling dysregulated, a WorkSafeBC employee safety plan is for school staff. It's usually implemented after an incident occurs. It guides school staff on strategies they can use when a student becomes dysregulated to protect themselves, the student, and others. It's really about making sure a healthy and safe workplace is maintained. This plan is an internal school document and isn't shared with parents.

Up next

In Chapter 5, you'll find everything you need to know about individualized education plans and student learning plans from kindergarten to grade 12, including student support plans, adaptations and modifications to the curriculum, and graduation requirements.

Individualized education plans, student learning plans and student support plans

WHAT'S INSIDE

This chapter is about learning plans, including individualized education plans (IEPs), student learning plans (SLPs) and student support plans. What are they? How are they created? How can you prepare for meetings? And how do schools put these plans into action? We'll answer all those questions here and discuss how your child's progress is evaluated and reported. Finally, we'll go over how these plans relate to graduation in your child's later years.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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The individualized education plan (IEP)

If your child has additional support needs at school, they will almost certainly have an individualized education plan. Most people don't say its full name and simply use "IEP." This plan is a document that describes a child's goals, supports, strategies, **adaptations**—or supplemental goals—and **modifications**—or replacement goals. It also describes support services to be provided and measures for tracking achievement.

Each student's individualized education plan will be different, reflecting their personal learning needs. Some students need small adaptations or supplemental goals and minimum levels of support to meet the expected learning outcomes for their grade level or courses. Other students need more significant modifications or replacement goals in their education programs. In this case, some or all of their learning outcomes might differ from the grade-level curriculum.

Some students might have both adaptations and modifications in their individualized education plans. Individualized education plans may be brief or detailed as appropriate and designed to enable learners to reach their potential. Developing and carrying out an appropriate individualized education plan is critical for supporting your child's learning and long-term success. It's also the foundation for reporting. It's critical to participate in the development

of your child's individualized education plan, from kindergarten up to high school graduation. Your role in planning, making the plan work, and ensuring that quality educational opportunities are available to your child will lead to the future you want for your child and your family.

Schools are required to have individualized education plans for "students with special needs" under the BC School Act and mandated by a **Ministerial Order**—more specifically, MO 638/95 ("MO" stands for "Ministerial Order"). This order directs school boards to make sure an individualized education plan is in place for the student as soon as practical after their needs are identified.

The order also says the individualized education plan must be reviewed at least once during the school year and revised or cancelled as needed. It also requires schools to consult with parents and students when the plan is prepared.

Consulting with you, the parent/caregiver

The school's duty to consult with parents and caregivers as they prepare individualized education plans is an important statutory right. But this doesn't require parents/caregivers and school staff to reach an agreement.

It's important to focus on adaptations or supplemental goals first, only using modifications or replacement goals when absolutely necessary.

An adaptation is when the teacher or educational assistant adjusts how they teach, the materials they use, or the assignment to help a student succeed in their grade-level curriculum.

A modification is when the grade-level curriculum is changed to meet what a student is expected to know, do, and understand.

School district staff can make decisions after they've consulted with parents/caregivers. How much consultation or parent collaboration depends on the needs of the student.

We went over meaningful consultation in [Chapter 3](#), but here's a refresher on what it looks like for you, the parent/caregiver:

- You are consulted before any decisions are made regarding a referral for an assessment or placement of your child within the school system.
- You should be involved in developing the individualized education plan or any plan relating to your child.
- You and the school district have to provide helpful information and make whatever accommodations are needed to carry out an educational program in your child's best interests.

You don't have the final say over your child's placement or the individualized education plan. Meaningful consultation doesn't mean there has to be agreement, but it does mean the school district has the right to decide after meaningful consultation; that said, an educational program or placement has the best chance of success if both the school and parents/caregivers agree.



If you feel that your child's individualized education plan was developed without meaningful consultation, you can appeal. We discuss that process in [Chapter 7](#).



No signatures are required!

Individualized education plans are legal documents. The ministry requires and regulates them. However, they aren't enforceable in court as legal contracts, and parents aren't required to sign them. Instead, they are a working document that guides support for a child in school.



Resource from the British Columbia Council of Administrators of Inclusive Support in Education (BCCAISE)

- [Supporting meaningful consultation with parents](#)

Resources from the Supreme Court of British Columbia Ruling

- [Hewko v. BC \(Education\), 2012 SCC 61, \[2012\] 3 S.C.R. 360](#)

Legal language can be hard to understand. We've included snippets of some of the language these documents use when discussing parent/caregiver consultation. The following links take you to the spot in each document where consultation is talked about.

If you have any questions or need help figuring out any legal language in these links, [reach out to Inclusion BC](#). We're here to help!

“Where a board is required to provide an IEP for a student under this order, the board... must offer a parent of the student, and where appropriate, the student the opportunity to be consulted about the preparation of an IEP.”

**— INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN ORDER (M638/95)
FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE**

“Development and delivery of inclusive education programs and services at the local level should involve meaningful consultation with the parents or guardians of students with special needs since they know their children and can contribute in substantial ways to the design of appropriate programs and services for them.”

**— INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES: A MANUAL OF POLICIES,
PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND CHILD CARE**

“A parent of a student of school age attending a school is entitled (a) to be informed, in accordance with the orders of the minister, of the student's attendance, behaviour and progress in school” (7(1)) and “a parent of a student of school age attending a school may, and at the request of a teacher or principal, vice principal or director of instruction must, consult with the teacher, principal, vice principal, or director of instruction with respect to the student's educational program” 7(2).

— SECTION 7 (1) AND (2) FROM THE BC SCHOOL ACT



The individualized education plan meeting

Knowing what happens at each step of the individualized education plan process is helpful. Every fall, you'll be invited to meet with the new classroom teacher and your child's individualized education plan team. If appropriate, your child will also be included in this meeting. These meetings usually happen in October after the new classroom teacher gets to know your child better.

After this meeting, the school team will create an individualized education plan. This plan is implemented throughout the school year and reviewed at the end of the year. These plans are flexible, and they can be adjusted at any time! The planning team changes or refines the goals in the plan as your child's needs change.

Who's at the table at meetings?



The student

Younger students can share what they like, what they're good at in school, plus one area that stretches them. As they get older, they can talk about good and bad past strategies, and help with future planning and personal goals.



Parents/caregivers

Parents and caregivers can share information about their child's life history, level of functioning at home and in the community, medical and social-emotional history, and success and pitfalls of previous strategies.



The classroom teacher

The classroom teacher knows the content of each subject area they teach, and can share the academic expectations for that grade or subject. They can also help establish objectives related to curriculum content standards.



The resource teacher

Resource teachers are specifically trained to help students with learning challenges. They can give suggestions on how to work with the student, and can access district-level support services. They can also organize support services at the school.



The principal

This could be the principal or the vice principal. They help develop, implement, and review individualized education plans. They are responsible for assigning support staff in the school, and can advocate for other supports at a district-level.



Other professionals

These are speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists, other therapists, nurses, counsellors, and psychologists. They often have a long-standing relationship with the student and their family, and have seen their growth and struggles over the years.

Before the meeting

The first step is gathering and sharing any information about your child that can help the team develop a supportive plan. This might include assessments that have already been done, as well as reports from various professionals.

You might also be asked to fill out forms about your child's interests, likes, dislikes, strengths, and stretches. Even if they don't ask for this information, it's always helpful to share it! An About Me sheet or myBooklet BC comes in handy here!



Click here to find a template for an About Me sheet or booklet.

As you prepare for this meeting, keep in mind that this isn't the time for making critical decisions. Instead, the team uses the individualized education plan meeting to identify goals and objectives for student learning and explore strategies to support your child's achievement of those goals. This is your chance to help school staff know and understand your child. Think about your child's strengths and needs from all sides: social, educational, physical, and emotional.

Think about what you want your child to learn and the kinds of goals you want to set. You can explore the B.C. curriculum by grade and subject at www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum to help you frame curriculum-based goals. Include samples of your child's work – art, writing

samples, or anything that helps communicate more about who they are and where they are at.

If the team is new to your family and child, or you're planning a critical transition, you could include photos or videos of your child's home life. Doing this can help demonstrate your child's skills, interests, or method of communication.

Consider making a list of things you want to discuss at the meeting and share it with the team before the meeting. You could email it or share it with one of the team members a few days before the meeting to make sure you get to talk about these things. Before the meeting, you can also ask what format your child's school uses for the individualized education plan. This helps you prepare for and contribute during the meeting, and evaluate the plan the school team has drafted after the meeting.

Coordinating other student plans with the individualized education plan

Your child may have or need other student plans related to health, safety, or behavioural issues. These could include an individualized care plan through Nursing Support Services (NSS), a positive behaviour support plan, or a student safety plan. Your team should coordinate these plans with the individualized education plan.

During the meeting

Introduce yourself, and ask others to introduce themselves and their roles so you know who is who. Be an active listener, open to new ideas, and always ask questions if you don't understand something. It's also important to be accurate and factual about your child because everyone in the room is there to find the best ways to support them in school. Someone on the school team will be taking notes. You can take notes, too. You can also ask for a copy of their notes to make sure they accurately reflect the conversation from your perspective.



Learn more about how to communicate and advocate effectively at these kinds of meetings in [Chapter 7](#).



Tips you might find helpful during the meeting:

- Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements.
- Don't agree on a decision or sign anything if you aren't comfortable with it.
- Remember that you have the right to think about requests before making a decision. School staff also have this right.
- Summarize the discussion and review the decisions made.
- Identify the following steps and identify who's responsible for carrying them out.
- Plan some downtime after these meetings. These meetings can be emotional; self-care is as important as child care and advocacy.
- Finally, before you leave, confirm when you will get a copy of the completed plan from the school and ask how you should send any comments, questions, or edits. An individualized education plan must be completed around the end of November.



After the meeting

After the individualized education plan meeting, the case manager will create the official individualized education plan. You can review it and add comments and suggestions. Remember that an individualized education plan is most successful when the team starts with your child's strengths, not only their needs or stretches. So, as you review your child's individualized education plan goals, you might wonder, "How do I evaluate these goals to make sure they truly capture my child and all of their strengths and stretches in a meaningful way?" Great question. Individualized education plans typically measure "learning" and "success" with a strategy that uses an acronym S.M.A.R.T. This strategy says goals should be:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timely**

But, as advocate and researcher Shelley Moore points out, this strategy doesn't consider the different kinds of ways students can show their learning. Her updated **S.M.A.R.T goals** strategy offers a different framework you can use to evaluate your child's plan:

- **Strength-based**
- **Meaningful**
- **Authentic**
- **Responsive**
- **Triangulated**

The most up-to-date version of the individualized education plan will usually come with your child's progress reports. The school must have all the required support in place and make sure that everybody involved understands and supports the plan before it's put into action. You'll want to ask how to communicate with the school team once the plan is in place. For example, what is the best way to communicate with the teacher? When should you contact the case manager? Be clear on preferred methods of communication, roles, responsibilities and expectations of everyone involved. If you're not sure, ask the case manager.

The plan should be designed to be flexible and responsive to your child. This kind of ongoing assessment helps the school team figure out what strategies are working and which aren't, and how to change approaches to better support your child. Sometimes, the plan means the school team will reach out to other school staff, community agencies, or the Ministry of Education and Child Care.



[Click here to watch Shelley Moore's short video all about SMART goals to help guide your plan evaluation.](#)



[Click here to find a detailed, printable checklist to help you review the complete individualized education plan.](#)

Follow-up reviews

Your child's individualized education plan includes a review process. The ministry requires individualized education plans to be reviewed at least once a year, but it's sometimes possible for a student's team to meet more often. Like the plan itself, the frequency of reviews depends on

your child's needs. Work with your child's school team to develop a suitable plan for review meetings. Once an individualized education plan is established, the annual review may be less extensive than the first development meeting. The review meeting is also a good time to document what

worked well, what didn't and what everyone on the team learned about your child. This is helpful knowledge to pass on to the next teaching team. It can also help identify the need for different strategies, approaches or supports or decide whether to reach out to other professionals.

Planning for big transitions

Suppose your child is transitioning from primary to intermediate, elementary school to high school, or graduating from high school. In that case, the individualized education plan review may take longer than a typical one. This is to make sure your child is set with the right team and supports in the next exciting phase of their education!

For reviews that include **transition planning**, make sure to ask about:

- Is extra support needed to make the transition as positive and supportive as possible?
- What are the deadlines for getting support services, especially if extra transition supports are needed?



You'll learn much more about big transitions and how to prepare for them in the [next chapter of this handbook](#).



Helpful resources

From the Family Support Institute of BC

- [The transitions timeline](#)

From BC Centre for Ability

- [Transitioning to high school](#)



Reporting on student progress

All students in British Columbia receive progress report cards at the same time. Parents must receive a minimum of five progress reports throughout the school year. Three of those reports will be formal written reports, including a report at the end of the year that summarizes the whole year. The other two can be more informal, like phone calls, student-led conferences, parent-teacher conferences, journals, or emails.

Whether formal or informal, the reporting should be timely and responsive throughout the school year and follow each district's policies and procedures.

When the Ministry of Education and Child Care updated British Columbia's curriculum, they also changed how student progress is communicated in reports. Progress for students from kindergarten to grade 9 is now assessed using a **performance scale**. Every student can fit in the performance scale. The reports also have descriptions of each student's progress relating to the learning goals of the curriculum or their individualized education plan.

Understanding the Performance Scale

- Emerging:** Your child is beginning to understand something in an area of learning. They're still learning but may need more support to move ahead. Emerging doesn't mean your child is unsuccessful in this area.
- Developing:** Your child understands some things in an area of learning but still has other areas to work on. It doesn't mean your child is unsuccessful in this area.
- Proficient:** Your child fully understands the required learning. But it doesn't mean their learning stops.
- Extending:** Your child shows a deeper understanding and can apply their learning in new and different ways. Extending is not the goal for all students in every area of learning.

— SHIFTS IN STUDENT REPORTING,
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Grade 10 to 12 students are graded using letter grades, percentages, and written report comments. Regardless of whether a student has an adapted or modified program, reporting has to reflect their progress in developing their potential. Students with adaptations—or supplemental—goals are evaluated in the same way as any other student. Students with modified programs or replacement goals are evaluated on their unique progress, and reporting communicates their progress in achieving the goals of their individualized education plan. The local school team should decide the most appropriate

way to report progress for students with modified—or replacement—goals. The report refers to the goals and objectives of the individualized education plan and reflects the student's progress toward those goals. Modified programs and high school graduation are discussed in more detail a little later this chapter.

Competency-based individualized education plans (CB-IEP)



“Presuming competence is simply believing and trusting that all students can learn and all students can get something out of any and all placements – even Physics 12.”

— SHELLEY MOORE, PH.D, CANADIAN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR, STORYTELLER, AND RESEARCHER

Many school districts across British Columbia have started using a **competency-based individualized education plan**. It's intended to work better with the updated curriculum.

At first, the traditional individualized education plan was designed for students with disabilities and additional support needs learning in non-inclusive settings. They learned in separate classrooms with other students with individualized education plans. At the time, these students had different educational goals and didn't necessarily follow the standard curriculum.

The competency-based individualized education plan is designed for today's inclusive classrooms. It fits right into the redesigned curriculum, giving every student an entry point to the standard curriculum, whatever their ability. Understanding the basics of the redesigned curriculum will help you understand competency-based individualized education plans. The competency-based

individualized education plan presumes competence. It starts with the understanding that all students can learn, regardless of how they communicate or access knowledge. It recognizes that ability and learning can take many forms and look unique to every student. Student agency is at the heart of the redesigned curriculum and competency-based individualized education plans. Up until recently, students were left out of their own individualized education plan process, with little or no ownership over their learning.

The competency-based individualized education plan puts the student's voice at the centre. This doesn't mean parents can or should be excluded from the process! A parent's right to consult is still crucial. Not all school districts are using competency-based individualized education plans consistently—yet! Inclusion BC and other advocates have asked the Ministry of Education and Child Care to update its Inclusive Education Policy Manual to

reflect the competency-based individualized education plan. An updated policy document will help ensure consistency across the province and provide educators and parents/caregivers with the information they need to implement the new plan successfully. Ask your school team if the district is using the competency-based individualized education plan or when they plan to start using it.



Head back to [Chapter 4](#) to refresh your memory on the new curriculum!

The student learning plan (SLP) or student support plan (SSP)

Students have to have a ministry designation for an individualized education plan. Students who don't have a designation but do have additional support needs can have a **student learning plan (SLP)**. Some districts call this a **student support plan (SSP)**. This plan usually has the same purpose as an individualized education plan, but it's not governed by the School Act the same way as an individualized education plan. Still, most of the information in the chapter applies to a student learning plan. All students are entitled to the support they need to access an education. While schools may not receive supplemental funding for a student who doesn't have a designation or diagnosis, districts are required to support all learners. The [Ministry of Education and Child Care's policy on kindergarten](#)

[to grade 12 funding](#) says: "The Basic Allocation provided for all students includes funds to support students with other disabilities or diverse abilities, including students with mild intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, moderate behaviour support or mental illness, and students who are gifted. The Basic Allocation also includes funds to support boards of education in providing learning assistance, speech-language pathology services and physiotherapy services, hospital homebound services, and assessment services."



[Click here](#) to see the lettering system the ministry uses to allocate basic and supplementary funding.



Helpful resources

From Inclusion Outreach

- [Free course module on competency-based individualized education plans](#)

From Surrey school district

- [Individualized education plans and student support plans](#)

From the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)

- [Individualized education plans: A guide for parents \(available in several languages\)](#)

From the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [A guide to adaptations and modifications](#)



Adaptations and modifications

Adaptations are teaching and assessment strategies that accommodate a student's needs so that the student can achieve the learning outcomes of the grade-level curriculum. **Modifications** are individualized outcomes and goals that are different from the curriculum.

Adaptations

Adaptations, sometimes called **accommodations**, are developed and put in place when a student's learning outcomes are expected to exceed— or be the same as— what's expected in their grade-level curriculum. They may simply need some extra tools or adaptations. A whole range of adaptations can help create meaningful learning opportunities and evaluate student progress, such as:

- using audio tapes, electronic texts, or a peer helper to help with assigned readings.
- using software for written assignments, like word prediction, spell checker, or an idea generator.
- alternatives to written assignments to show knowledge and understanding.
- advance organizers or graphic organizers to help with following classroom presentations.
- more time to complete assignments or tests.
- support to develop and practice study skills; for example, in a learning assistance block.
- using text-to-speech or speech-to-text tools.
- preteaching key vocabulary or concepts; being shown materials multiple times.
- working on provincial learning outcomes from a lower grade level.

The **competency-based individualized education plan** has two types of "supports for success." One type is "universal," meaning they are available to any student anytime. The other type is called "essential," which means they are needed for a student to access their education, and are identified through testing. You might wonder if teachers assess and report on your child differently if they use essential adaptations. The answer is: No, they don't! They use the same performance scale to reflect learning for kindergarten to grade 9 and letter grades and percentages in grades 10 to 12. The individualized education plan notes any adaptations that apply to evaluation procedures, but



[Click to find examples of universal and essential supports for access from Shelley Moore.](#)



“The decision to use modifications should be based on the same principle as adaptations—that all students must have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs.”

— GUIDE TO ADAPTATIONS
AND MODIFICATIONS,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND CHILD CARE

official transcripts don't identify those adaptations. Students whose individualized education plan includes adaptations will usually be eligible for a **Dogwood Diploma**. This diploma requires 80 credits and passing the provincial graduation assessments, which most people call “provincial exams.”

When the time comes for the **provincial graduation assessments**, students who need supports will go through an approval process called adjudication to have those supports available during the assessments. These supports would be the same supports the student has had in the classroom setting and are documented in the individualized education plan.

Modifications

Modifications mean setting goals that are different from the provincial curriculum. The redesigned curriculum's Big Ideas allow for access points for a wide range of learners, and every effort should be made to support students in accessing the learning goals of the curriculum before deciding to use modifications. Students with modified or replacement goals in their individualized education plans who complete their educational programs receive a school completion certificate called the **Evergreen Certificate** instead of a Dogwood Diploma. School districts report to the Ministry of Education and Child Care on students' achievements with modified programs as they do with all students, and transcripts are issued. The school board must make a recommendation to the minister of education to award a student an Evergreen Certificate.

According to the Ministry of Education and Child Care, any formal decisions on whether a program or part of a program, including modifications, shouldn't be made before grade 10. Students who receive an Evergreen Certificate haven't graduated in the traditional and technical sense of the word, so you don't want to make this decision too early in their educational journey. This major decision should include your consent as a parent/caregiver.

Students who graduate with an Evergreen Certificate can also study to receive an Adult Dogwood Diploma after they turn 18. These courses are free for British Columbia residents through various post-secondary schools or school district continuing education centres. An Adult Dogwood is equivalent to a regular grade 12 diploma. Employers, trade schools, technical schools, colleges, universities, and any other kind of post-secondary institution accept it. While there are no prerequisites for an Adult Dogwood Diploma, certain grade 10 courses prepare students for the required grade 11 and 12 courses.

Academic skills or life skills? Both.

There's a stubborn myth that children who need modifications to the curriculum should focus on life skills, not academics. Though life skills are important, they shouldn't form the basis of an entire educational program. Research shows people with disabilities and additional support needs who have more education also have better life outcomes. Life skills are also learned throughout life in various places, but school will provide the best opportunity to develop academic skills.

When students have modified or replacement goals in their individualized education plans, teachers need to set high yet attainable goals. Modified programs should include academic skills to the greatest extent while keeping those goals achievable so learners can succeed.

Goals of a modified program might be:

- Academic skills
- Independent living skills
- Participation in community activities
- Personal safety and health,
- Relationship skills that include sexuality and sexual development, which can reduce vulnerability to mistreatment
- Self-management and decision-making
- Career planning and work experience

Grade 13?

The **BC School Act** says a student remains "school age" until the school year in which they reach the age of 19 years. So, if your child turns 19 on July 1 or later, they can enroll in school the following September. Many students with disabilities and additional support needs choose to stay for what is often referred to as the "over-age year" or grade 13. While it's tempting to consider this an extra year, it's not. It's simply one more year in which any student remains eligible to attend school in British Columbia.

Many students with disabilities and additional support needs use the final year of education to focus on community and transition planning. A student must be offered a full-time educational program with an individualized education plan where applicable during the year they turn 19. Students with an individualized education plan, need adaptations or supplemental supports, and are going for a **Dogwood Diploma** may be eligible to remain in school until they're 21. The Ministry of Education and Child Care continues to provide funding to the school board for students with

disabilities and additional support needs at the same level as it has in all previous educational years while they are still school-age. If they continue in school after turning 19, the school board can access the adult funding option.



Explore our [companion piece on Grade 13](#) included in the back of this handbook.



Helpful resources

From the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Graduation: Procedures handbook](#)
- [Adjudication: Supports for graduation assessments](#)
- [Guidelines: Provincial assessment adjudication](#)

High school graduation and inclusivity

Leaving school and entering adult life is an exciting, celebrated event! Participating in all aspects of graduation is an important part of marking the achievements of students with disabilities and additional support needs who complete high school. All students should be included in formal ceremonies, proms, and related events and activities. This is the essence of inclusion. All students should also be recognized and rewarded for their learning achievements. This recognition should arise from the wider community's acknowledgment of the importance of inclusion.

Ideas to make your child's graduation events more inclusive!

- Have a conversation about potential barriers and what an inclusive event would look like for everyone participating.
- Consider the full spectrum of abilities: physical, mobility, sensory, intellectual, neurodiversity, and mental health.
- Include any accommodations needed in the event budget.
- A support person may accompany some people. Event hosts are responsible for accommodating the additional supports required for participation.
- Some people may need extra space for scooters and wheelchairs, a private space for personal care or a quiet space to relieve sensory overload. Consider this need for space in your location planning.
- Remove all barriers to full participation, including common barriers like costs, access and transportation.
- Consider additional safety or logistical needs to make sure everyone is safe and comfortable.
- Design communications materials to reach your entire audience and be accessible for all. Consider planning discussions, invitations, event promotion, on-site directions, and performance or event messaging.
- Be flexible, balancing diverse needs and opposing interests.

Up next

More on big transitions! Going into kindergarten, moving from grade 3 to 4, heading to high school, and leaving high school are all huge milestones to celebrate and prepare for.

Planning for big transitions

WHAT'S INSIDE

It's natural to have the question "What's next?" running on a loop inside your brain. This chapter will help you feel prepared for the big transitions you and your child will experience as they move through their education journey.









Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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Planning for big transitions

Your child will experience many transitions throughout their education:

-  home to preschool, daycare or kindergarten
-  preschool or daycare to kindergarten
-  grade three to grade four
-  elementary school to middle or high school
-  high school to post-secondary education or adult life
-  from school to school (after moving house, for example)

Transitions can be hard. We probably don't need to tell you this! Some of these big transitions also happen at the same time as other big changes your child might be going through – like puberty and teenagehood. Planning for big transition periods can help make the bumps in the road a little less jolting for your child. It can also help relieve some of your stress and tension as you help your child figure their way through.



[Click here](#) to see a transition timeline from the Family Support Institute of BC that can help you plan by age, from birth to 25 years old.

Transition planning is an important part of the educational process. It allows parents and caregivers to connect their hopes and dreams to daily actions. It makes an inclusive community life possible for your child, one step at a time. Planning can also involve forming a team to work together toward big-picture goals. Remember that planning is an ongoing process. You'll adjust the plan to address new needs as you identify them. As goals are achieved, you'll need to set new ones! Your plan will also probably change over the years as your child gets older and contributes in different ways.

What is person-centred planning?

Person-centred planning is all about your child, recognizing their unique gifts, and responding to all parts of their life. A team-based support system holds your child at its centre, surrounded by close family, friends, neighbours, extended family, other care community members, and professional support teams, like your education team. A person-centred planning process also strengthens relationships among the caring community members that came together.

Person-centred planning tools: PATH, MAPS and Circles of Support

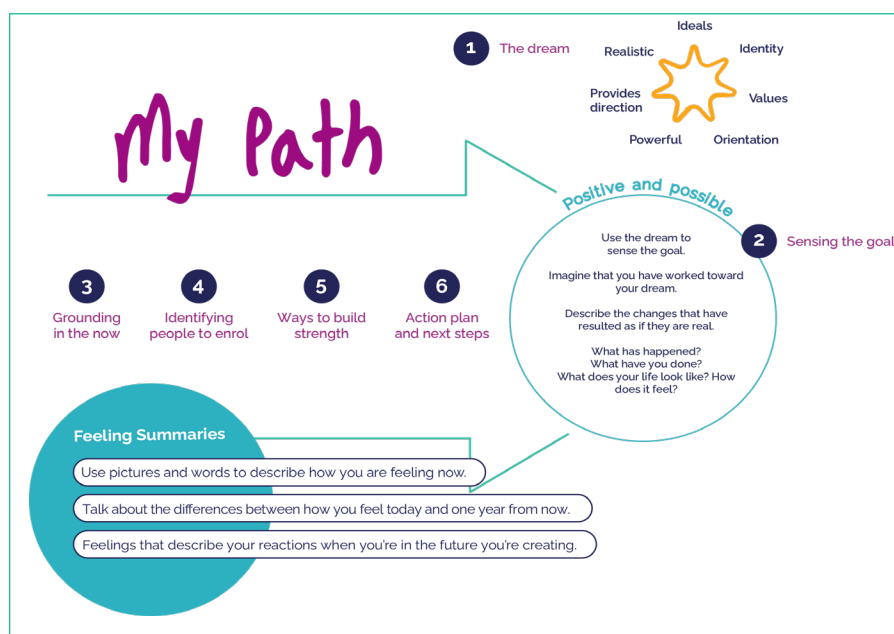
PATH and **MAPS** are two planning tools that start with a caring team centred around your child. The team learns about your child's vision for themselves and what they want and creates support and steps to help them realize that vision. This includes identifying people or organizations that can help with support. MAPS and PATH can be used throughout a person's life, from early school years to adulthood.

PATH: Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

PATH is a creative planning process that brings people, schools, families, groups, and businesses together to address a common issue or difficult problem, or plan for a stage or moment in life.

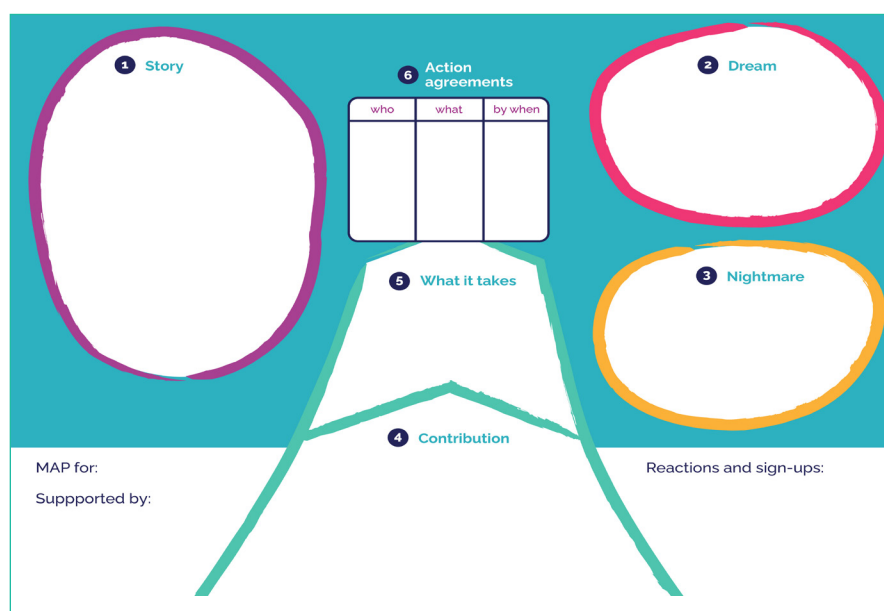


[Click to watch a short video on PATH.](#)



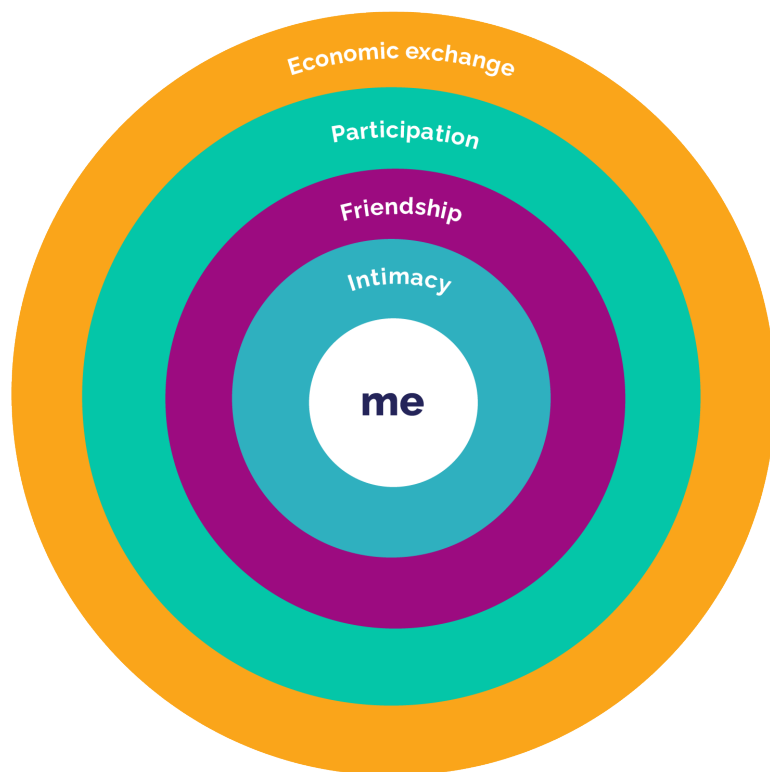
MAPS: Making Action Plans

This strategy is used when you, your child, and your child's team feel like you all need to take a moment to stop and figure out your child's gifts and dreams. It's often used in schools to help students appreciate classroom diversity.



What I notice by filling
in my circles today

Actions I want to take:



Circles of Support

Circles of Support is another tool often used to identify who is in a person's life and what role they have. It's a good way to see which circles are plentiful, and which feel emptier and need action to build up.

How to get started with MAPS or PATH

- Ask your [district inclusive education staff](#) if anyone provides this service in the district.
- Get in touch with the [Family Support Institute of BC](#) for PATHS and PATH facilitator training.
- Reach out to [Inclusion Outreach](#). They provide accessible PATHs for eligible students at no cost to you.



Transitioning into kindergarten

Planning for the transition into kindergarten helps make sure the right supports are in place when your child starts in September. This first transition can be tough and also rewarding! Know that your child has the right to attend school full-time and that supports should be in place as soon as possible to make that happen.

Now that kindergarten is a full-day program, many school districts have a formal gradual entry process for all children entering kindergarten. However, this process may be slightly different for children who have been identified as having a disability or additional support needs. Contact the school principal or district inclusive education lead to determine what

gradual entry will look like for your child. Some parents choose to delay kindergarten by one year. The BC School Act says a “parent may defer the enrolment of his or her child until the first school day of the next school year.” Schools often strongly encourage parents to enroll their child alongside their same-age peers, but it depends on you and your child. Another option is a preschool over-age year. This is when your child is in the school system but attending preschool for an extra year before they begin kindergarten.



Chapter 4 Chapter 4 covers different kinds of assessments.



Chapter 5 Chapter 5 covers more on individualized education plans (IEPs) in detail.

Who is involved in the transition planning for kindergarten?

You might already have a team of professionals supporting your child. It's a good idea to involve them in planning for the transition to kindergarten and include them in the individualized education plan process.

Some of these professionals provide assessments that can help your child get the support they need. These assessments can inform the transition planning and provide strategies to support your child. The Ministry of Education and Child Care recommends you contact the inclusive education staff in the district where your child will attend school. The more

time you have, the better, so reach out early. The title of the person responsible for inclusive education varies between school districts. You'll want to schedule a formal meeting with the school principal to discuss your child's needs six to eight months before they enter school. At these initial meetings, you can ask about the school's resources for including and supporting your child. Schools should be ready to welcome students with disabilities and support needs, so ask them to explain how they will prepare to welcome your child. If your child attends preschool or daycare, sometimes the centre can help with the transition by

joining the meeting. They can give valuable information about how your child is supported in preschool or daycare. In addition to formal meetings, meeting with school personnel informally can help you build school relationships.

Questions you might ask the school principal or district inclusive education contact:

- How can I help make sure my child's school entry goes smoothly?
- Do you have the documentation about my child that you need?
- Do I need to sign a release form so you can get information from other professionals?
- Are there any documents I can provide or any forms I should fill out to help you understand my child's needs?
- Is there staff with knowledge or experience related to my child's needs?
- How will staff be prepared for my child's school entry?
- When will a classroom teacher be assigned?
- When will an education assistant be assigned if my child needs one?
- When can I meet the teacher and education assistant?
- Can we set up a classroom visit and school tour before September?
- Is the school physically accessible? Is the necessary equipment available?



Helpful resources on starting kindergarten

From the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Support the transition to kindergarten](#)
- [Children with disabilities or diverse abilities: Starting school](#)
- [Ready, Set, Learn](#)

Social Story Sample

- [Starting Kindergarten](#)

From the Family Support Institute of BC

- [MyBooklet](#)
- [The transitions timeline](#)

Transitioning from grade 3 to grade 4

The transition to grade four can be hard for students and families. It usually marks a shift from the primary to the intermediate grades, and children grow in many different ways over these two years. The strategies that worked in the early grades might not work either, and you may need to revisit assessments. For many, it's a time of reflection, change, and adjustments. Around this time, learning difficulties can also become apparent. The school may refer your child for an assessment and suggest an individualized education plan or a student learning plan to ensure they have the support they need. Academic expectations and student workloads can also increase around this time.



Remember: Your child has the right to access the curriculum alongside their peers, with the right accommodations and supports available to make this happen.

Transitioning out of elementary school into middle school

The transition out of elementary school is a big one. Middle school is usually for children in grades 7 to 9, but not all school districts have middle schools, and some school districts could have different grades for middle schools. Even though students are still quite young, they are generally expected to do more on their own and less as a class group. It can be difficult for many students. Plus, the school is often bigger and has many new faces.

But there is also potential for positive change! Sometimes, middle schools offer more learning opportunities and resources. To help your child prepare for middle school, you could make a picture book or social story of the inside and outside of middle school and read it over the summer. You can also email the school a couple of weeks before school starts. Schools are open to staff and administration two weeks before school officially starts. Ask if you and your child can walk through the school before the start date.



Check in with your child's case manager sometime in grade 6 to determine if any updated assessments are needed before transitioning into high school.



[Click here to get a parent handbook on the Transition to Middle School from School District 43.](#)

Questions you can ask about transitions during those early planning meetings:

- What are the main differences between elementary and middle school?
- What will the first week look like?
- What resources will be available to help with the transition (e.g., accessing lockers, getting from class to class)?
- What resources will continue after the transition?



Transitioning into high school

If your district doesn't have a middle school, your child will go to high school after grade 7. The move to high school is another big one, and some students and families struggle with this change. Transition planning should identify strategies and tools to support a smoother transition.

The transition to high school should involve multiple visits to the new school before their first year starts in September. Students who are comfortable in the new school and feel like they know where they're going are more likely to settle in faster and with less stress. Each school district has its own schedule and way of supporting the transition to high school. The guide from the BC Centre for Ability on transitioning to high school is a great overview of what to expect, how to plan, and more.

Different high schools support students with disabilities and additional support needs differently. Some schools have separate programs and classes, while others are fully inclusive. And some have a hybrid of both. Find out in advance what model is used in your school district. As you plan for high school, you're probably already thinking about life after high school. Suppose you and your child envision a life where employment and post-secondary education are an option. In that case, you might want to include work experience or career development in your course planning.



Helpful resources on high school transition planning

From the BC Centre for Ability

- [Transitioning to high school guide](#)

From the Family Support Institute of BC

- [The transitions timeline](#)

From Chapter 5 of this handbook

- [Adaptations and Modifications](#)
- [Academic or Life Skills? Both.](#)

Transitioning from high school to adult life

Leaving high school and embarking on adult life is a major life accomplishment and event! It's important to set you and your child up for success. Start planning for this transition in grade 9 or 10, setting new goals in the individualized education plan to prepare your child for upcoming life changes. Your child's individualized education plan in high school should include:

- Planning for further learning opportunities in post-secondary or other programs.
- Developing employment objectives.
- Considering assessments that might be needed to transition into adult services.
- Helping connect your child to adult community living supports and opportunities through [Community Living BC](#), if appropriate.

At this planning stage, you might need to include other community professionals. A child and youth with support needs (CYSN) social worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or a facilitator from **Community Living BC** could be important new transition team members. Create the best possible future options by building a transition planning team that focuses on your child and includes family and friends, school personnel, community professionals, and service coordinators if your child needs them.

Including assessments in transition planning

As you plan for life after high school, think about any assessments that need to be completed or updated. According to the [tasks timeline for transition planning](#), you and your child should ask about needing or updating assessments around age 14 or 15 and have them completed at age 16.

Assessments are required to verify access to Community Living BC services, provincial Persons with Disability (PWD) benefits, and some post-secondary student aid for students with disabilities. Though they are not required to access services, some assessments can help set up supports after high school. For example, an updated functional behaviour assessment will help create a positive behaviour support plan to build supports after high school.

In British Columbia, students remain eligible for educational programs through the school year that they turn 19. During this year, they must be provided with a full-time educational program. Students with an individualized education plan with **adaptations** and pursuing a Dogwood Diploma may be eligible to remain in school until they're 21. For a refresher on Grade 13 or the "over-age" year, head back to [Chapter 5](#) of this handbook.

Inclusive post-secondary

Post-secondary education is so much more than university education these days. It includes community colleges, polytechnics, institutes,

universities, trade schools, and more. Post-secondary education is becoming much more available for students with disabilities and additional support needs. Inclusive post-secondary initiatives are challenging negative assumptions to make sure students with disabilities and additional support needs have equitable access to post-secondary education, and enjoy the same benefits that any student would have.



[Education Planner BC](#) helps you explore options and understand the process of going to post-secondary school. All of British Columbia's post-secondary schools have a disability or accessibility services department that works with students to meet their needs best and support them in achieving their goals. The supports and strategies documented in your child's individualized education plan will help start a conversation at a post-secondary school.



[STEPS Forward](#) is British Columbia's initiative for inclusive post-secondary education that provides inclusion support for students with developmental disabilities to access post-secondary education. They have partnerships with nine major universities across the province.



[All Citizens Pathway from Kwantlen Polytechnic University](#) is one of the first for-credit, fully inclusive post-secondary programs to include students with intellectual, developmental, and/or learning disabilities on par with their peers. This program uses the principles of universal design for learning, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.



[Click to watch a short video on getting ready to work in our schools.](#)



Helpful resources on transitioning out of high school into adult life

From Inclusion BC

- [Transition planning booklet](#)

From the Family Support Institute of BC

- [The transitions timeline](#)

From the Government of British Columbia

- [Transition planning for youth and young adults](#)

From Education Planner BC

- [High school grads' post-secondary education planning](#)

From Community Living BC

- [Preparing to access Community Living BC supports](#)

From the Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness

- [Transition planning for students with deafblindness – secondary to adulthood](#)

Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD) program

A navigator through the **Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD)** program can help you plan the transition out of high school. This program brings support from across government ministries together to help youth with disabilities plan for a full life after high school. Navigators in the program work with youth and their families to build plans based on personal goals, hopes, and aspirations for the future. They can help in many

ways, for example, by helping you find information or do team-based planning. Navigators are located in communities across British Columbia and can help you access local and provincial resources.



[Click here for more information on the Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities \(STADD\) program.](#)

Up next

Learn how to advocate for your child in the school system effectively. We'll help you figure out who to talk to and where to go when you've exhausted all options at the local school level. Plus, you'll get tips on communicating effectively for better outcomes and experiences.

How to advocate effectively in the school system

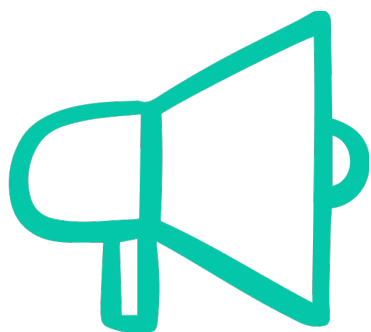
WHAT'S INSIDE

Find out who to talk to at every level of the school system, with information on how to resolve issues and tips on communicating effectively for better outcomes.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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Advocacy: Changing what is into what should be.

What is advocacy?

When you speak up to make sure your child's rights are met, you advocate on their behalf. Learning and refining your advocacy skills helps you access the supports and services your child needs. It means speaking out on issues that concern you and taking an active role in your child's life and education.

Advocacy is also a balancing act, not a fight. It's an ongoing process to find win-win outcomes in difficult situations. Working together and using a child-centred approach means you and your child can achieve positive outcomes. Effective and respectful communication skills and being well-informed, well-prepared, assertive, and clear will all help you be the best advocate you can be for your child and their education.

If it gets overwhelming and you feel you need help, several groups and organizations are here to help, including Inclusion BC! We can help you with advocacy support and connect you with local services and supports for your child and you. Remember to care for yourself in this process.

You and your child are not alone.

As a parent, you're an equal partner in your child's education. Your knowledge and experience with your child are as important as any professional expert. Working together, you and these professionals are the keys to making your child's educational plan successful. This chapter outlines building and maintaining good working relationships with school staff.

Becoming part of your school community

Being present at the school will give you a chance to get to know the staff, and opportunities for them to get to know you. Your contributions of time and caring can give teachers the boost they need to take on new challenges! Outside of planned student support meetings, there are many opportunities to contribute to the

school and your child's classroom. You could go to **parent advisory council (PAC)** meetings, join the executive team, offer to help with a school event or go on field trips with your child's class. But being physically at the school isn't the only way to create good relationships! If you can't volunteer at the school, make yourself known to key people and students. You can:

- Phone, or ask to be phoned with concerns, and write notes.
- Discuss with the teacher other ways to get feedback, such as a communication book to use between home and school.
- Let school personnel know you're approachable and available to consult about your child.
- Take opportunities or create opportunities to share your hopes and dreams for your child and family. Doing so can help others understand how they can contribute to that future.

Five tips for effective advocacy

You have first-hand knowledge about your child; other people know them differently and will complement your knowledge. You know what your child needs to succeed, so you're their most important advocate. You can also have many allies to support you. Below is an outline of some of the most effective advocacy skills.

1. Become a documentor

Organizing information, resources, meeting notes, and plans will take you a long way in your advocacy efforts! You can use paper notebooks, organizational online tools, voice memos, binders, or a combination of everything to keep yourself organized.

- Start a folder or binder to organize all your documents. It can be on paper or electronically.
- Gather all relevant information about your child (such as their needs, strengths, attributes, etc.) and use it as the basis for any of your requests.
- Keep copies of all correspondence, including emails you send, and emails and reports you receive.
- Keep a journal or log of phone calls about your child. This can be a dedicated notebook or electronic notes.

2. Learn the system

Know your rights and your child's educational rights. Be familiar with the school and school district's laws, rules, policies, structure, and processes. Look for them on your district's website or ask for them from the principal or district staff. These are public documents and should be easy to get. Every school district has its own structure and names for the roles (teacher, resource teacher, principal, district principal, and so on). When you are not sure, you can always ask for clarification.

Roles and responsibilities of people working the school system are covered [Chapter 3](#).

3. Seek clarity, and be clear

Being clear on what you want before you start is an important principle of advocacy. If you're not 100 per cent sure about what you want, brainstorm your ideas and goals. Including your child in these kinds of conversations is always a great idea. When you're communicating with school staff, always make sure you're clear on what's being said or decided, and avoid making assumptions. This will help you identify a problem. If you see a problem come up, look for a solution and ways to remove barriers to that solution. You can also enlist staff at the school to help you problem-solve. Set your priorities and know your bottom line.

4. Identify key decision-makers

Know who's making the decisions that affect services. Depending on the problem and solution you've identified, you might need to advocate to different people. Knowing roles and responsibilities helps you understand who can best resolve a problem. Knowing the protocol and the system's structure helps you figure out who to approach first. Take things one step at a time, with the right person, before taking it to the next step and person. For example, when your child isn't getting a service because there's a lack of funding, you may have to advocate at several levels. You may have to approach the district school board or the Ministry of Education and Child Care to advocate for systemic reform. Some organizations, like Inclusion BC, advocate for these changes at a systems level. Connect with us about joining a campaign, or let us know your story so we can influence decision-makers.

5. Put it in writing

It's a good idea to put all your requests in writing. Keep your communication clear and concise, and ask yourself these questions before hitting 'send':

- Why am I writing?
- What are my specific concerns?
- What are my questions?
- What would I like the person to do about this situation?
- What kind of response do I want: a letter, meeting, phone call, something else?
- When do I want that response?

Writing effective emails

Effective advocacy emails follow the same principles as effective business emails. It's a valuable skill but can be tough to achieve when strong emotions are involved. Inclusion BC advocates have found [Dr. Marshall Rosenberg's tips on nonviolent communication \(NVC\)](#) helpful. The name nonviolent communication might throw you off a bit, but it's simply an approach to productive and respectful communication that opens more paths to a good resolution.

“Underlying all human actions are needs that people are seeking to meet,” says Dr. Rosenberg. “Understanding and acknowledging these needs can create a shared basis for connection, cooperation, and more globally – peace.”

So, what does this mean in practice? It means you can express how you feel. You can't fully know what another person is thinking or their intentions, but you know yourself and how something makes you feel. When you separate what you observe from your judgements on the situation, you're better able to resolve the issue.



Four parts of effective communication

Dr. Rosenberg's approach features a formula you can use to write more effective emails or letters that communicate the problem, how you're feeling and what you want. His formula breaks your thoughts up into four parts:

First, state your observation

What are the facts of the situation? For example, "My child was not allowed to participate in a classroom activity."

Then, state your feelings

Choose a couple of words that can help you express your feelings. Examples of feelings might be scared, confused, curious, frustrated, or excited.

After that, state your needs

Identify what you need to help you build up your request. Examples of needs are clarity, empathy, hope, trust, or collaboration.

Finally, state your request

Make your specific ask. It could be a meeting, an assessment, an increase in support hours, a review of the individualized education plan, or something else. You often get better results when you connect your request with what you would like to happen. For example, you could request a support plan for a child to stay engaged and learn in the classroom, adult and peer support to feel safer on the playground, or a meeting to review the progress of the individualized education plan goals and adjust strategies.

Dear Principal Phillips:

On Friday, Casey did not have their regular education assistant, and the teacher was away sick. **Casey became dysregulated quickly, and the school team couldn't help them get regulated.** In fact, what the school team did triggered them more. Casey doesn't do well when people speak to them using what they consider baby talk or soft talk. Casey came home upset, and it took so much time for them to feel safe again and calm down.

Right now, I **am very frustrated and distressed** about what happened and that people who know Casey well are not there to support them. They could have been injured badly. **Our whole family needs** clarity, hope and consistency.

Can my husband, Casey's behaviour interventionist, and I meet with the school team to develop a better plan for supporting Casey? Can more people at the school be trained to work with Casey so Casey feels safe with more people?

Preparing for and taking part in meetings

Meetings take place to plan your child's educational program, discuss a transition to a new class or school, or resolve an issue. They can be called by parents, school staff, district staff, or other professionals involved in your child's education. Whatever the purpose, meetings can sometimes be confusing or intimidating.

Feeling prepared and being clear on why a meeting is being held can help you feel more comfortable and confident during the meeting. We've put together a checklist of things you can do before, during, and after meetings. [Find that checklist in the back of this handbook.](#)

Using the school structure to resolve issues

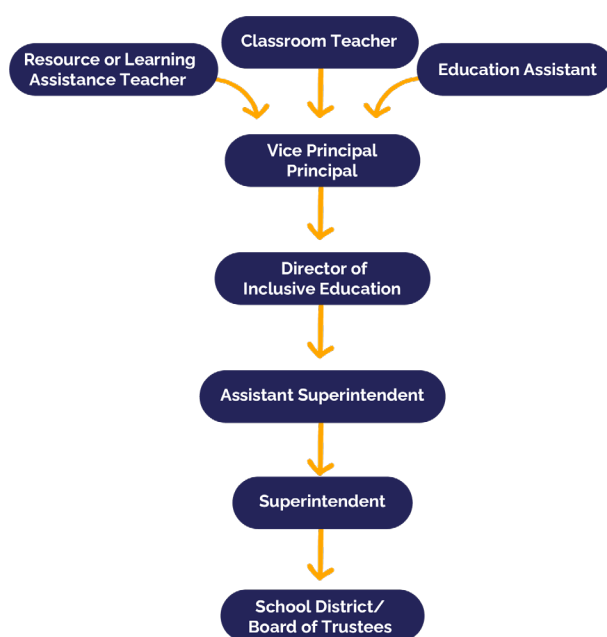
Resolving an issue can require lots of organization, time, effort, and patience. Many parents of children with additional support needs have experienced frustration with the system. Those who work within the system might be as frustrated with it as you are! It helps to separate your frustration with the system from those working in it.

Your local school is part of the larger school district structure. To get the best results, know the levels of authority and work with the school and district structures. When an issue arises, start from the bottom and work your way up until the issue is resolved. It's also important to plan your strategies to fit the circumstances.

Establishing good communication with your child's school can often prevent problems or keep them from snowballing into bigger ones. Most problems happen at the classroom or school level and should be resolved at that level. Your child's classroom teacher is almost always the first person you should communicate with. Write out your concerns and discuss them with the classroom teacher to find a solution. If the school has problem-solving resources, use them. Keep in mind that people within the system often support your advocacy goals. Educators and administrators also want

what's best for students. Some school districts even offer advocacy support. When authority for decisions isn't in the teacher's hands, ask the principal to help identify who to contact to resolve the issue. This section outlines the appropriate steps for resolving issues at different levels of the structure. Move through each level before going on to the next one. If a problem isn't being resolved in a timely manner, consult with school staff and your supporters about how to make faster progress. It can be easier to find a permanent solution if you approach higher levels of authority after first trying to find solutions at lower

Typical structure of a school district



levels. Exhaust all possibilities of each step or level before going to the next level. At any time in this process, you can get advice and/or support from Inclusion BC, the Family Support Institute of BC, or a local organization that supports families, like an association for community living in your area.

Five steps to resolution: Who to meet with, and when

First, meet with the teacher

Set up a meeting with the classroom teacher. Explain your reasons for calling the meeting, listen carefully, be open to ideas, take notes, and summarize. Use the people in the meeting's experience and knowledge and invite everyone to work as a team to support your child's learning.

If you feel you aren't making progress, let the teacher know that. Set up a second meeting. Offer to invite the principal or ask the teacher to suggest someone who can help, like a resource teacher, learning assistance teacher, or counsellor. If the teacher has a concern or shares your concern, they can ask the school-based team for help.

Second, meet with the principal

Consider bringing a support person with you when you meet with the principal. A support person can be a friend, family member, or person you trust who can be there for you as a supporter, note taker, a witness – or all three! At the meeting, tell the principal your concerns. List the steps you've already taken, and state what you want to happen.

As always, take notes of the discussion and record the actions that are agreed upon. After the meeting, send a letter to confirm what you believe was agreed to and keep a copy. If you still don't feel like the issue is resolved how you'd like it to be, the principal can refer you to the next person in the structure. They may suggest involving the school-based team before seeking help from school district staff. But, once the school's resources are exhausted, you'll be referred to, or you can reach out to someone at the school district office. At this point, it's especially important to keep good records. Follow

up after meetings with written correspondence and indicate you expect a written response. Let them know your next steps, and provide a timeline for a response. Always follow up by phone or email to ensure your communication was received and offer to resend it if necessary. You might also want to send copies of your communication to the people you'll be meeting with next so they're aware of the situation. Sending copies to your supporters and advocates is also a good idea. Use this strategy as you proceed with your efforts to resolve the issue.

Third, meet with the director of inclusive education

The next person in the chain of command may be the director of inclusive education. The director of inclusive education may also be called the director of instruction, director of learning services, director of student support services, district principal, or district vice-principal. Meeting with district staff often involves larger meetings with unfamiliar people. Follow the same procedure as you would for other meetings, and think about bringing in other support people to strengthen your case. These support people may include therapists, childcare workers, or advocates.

Then, meet with the superintendent or assistant superintendent

The next person in the chain of command may be the director of inclusive education. The director of inclusive education may also be called the director of instruction, director of learning services, director of student support services, district principal, or district vice-principal. Meeting with district staff often involves larger meetings with unfamiliar people. Follow the same procedure as you would for other meetings, and think about bringing in other support people to strengthen your case. These support people may include therapists, childcare workers, or advocates.

Finally, request a school district appeal

Requesting a school district appeal is called a section 11 appeal. Section 11 of the School Act requires each school district to have an appeal

process that allows a parent or student to appeal a decision—or non-decision—of a school board employee. Under section 11, parents can challenge a school board employee's decision when it "significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student." The school board is required to establish an appeal process, and the appeal must be brought within a reasonable time from the date that the parent or student was informed of the decision. The school board is also required to give a decision on the appeal within 45 days.

An appeal allows you to present your concerns about a decision. However, there are time limits for starting an appeal, so it's important to act quickly and check your school district's appeal policy. Get the policy from your school board office or search their website. The policy should include information about how to request an appeal, any timelines that must be followed, and how the appeal will proceed. School district appeals can be important for resolving an issue that may affect many others. Appeal

decisions are formally recorded to identify issues affecting other students throughout the province.

An appeal is the final opportunity to seek a favourable decision before going outside the school system. You should exhaust all other options with local school and district staff before proceeding with a district appeal, but it's there if you need it. At an appeal hearing, school staff may present their point of view about a decision. The board can ask you and any other presenters questions. The school board will make its decision in a closed meeting. You'll receive the school board's final decision in writing.

Parents sometimes ask if they need a lawyer for an appeal. You don't need one, but you can have one. The school board may have legal representation at an appeal hearing. Check with your school board for information about local procedures and ask if they'll have legal representation at the appeal hearing.



Resources from Inclusion BC

- [Effective approaches to resolving school issues for your child](#)

Resources from Autism Community Training

- [The essentials of advocacy: A parent's guide](#)

Resources from the Family Support Institute of BC

- [Toolkit resources: Education](#)

Resources from BCEdAccess

- [Advocacy and conflict resolution for students with disabilities in education: A rights-based primer](#)

Resources from the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Student disputes and appeals](#)



Resolving issues beyond the school district

Suppose you can't resolve your issue through a school district appeal. In that case, there is another level of appeal within the education system: An appeal to a superintendent of appeal under section 11(1) of the School Act.

The school board must have made a decision or a reconsideration decision (according to section 11(5)) before pursuing such an appeal. This appeal is a new hearing. Both you and the school board can bring evidence not presented to the school board's appeal process. A superintendent of appeal can decide to suspend the school board's decision pending the appeal.

Appealing a decision of a board of education

Parents and students can appeal a board of education's decision to a superintendent of appeal at the Ministry of Education and Child Care level. Under the Appeals Regulation, these circumstances are grounds for appeal:

- Being expelled from an educational program
- Being suspended from an educational program
- Being suspended from an educational program when no other educational program is made available
- Distributed learning is required as part of a disciplinary matter
- A decision not to provide a student with an individualized education plan (IEP)
- Consultation about the placement of a student with support needs and the provision of an individualized education plan
- Bullying behaviours, including intimidation, harassment or threats of violence by a student against another student
- Exclusion due to a medical condition that endangers others

It's important to read the information on disputes and appeals provided by the Ministry of Education and Child Care [on their website](#). Follow all the posted instructions, complete all the necessary forms, and follow the outlined timelines.

If you want to go ahead with an appeal to a superintendent of appeal, you'll need to provide the following two documents to the registrar:

1. A completed [notice of appeal form](#)
2. A copy of the board of education's decision in the section 11 appeal. This is the school board's decision on your appeal.

The superintendent of appeal will review your notice of appeal and make a decision. The superintendent of appeal could make any of the following decisions:

- Dismiss all or part of the appeal; for example, dismiss if the matter is out of the superintendent of appeal's jurisdiction.
- Refer the matter for mediation. Mediation is when an unbiased and neutral third party informally helps disputing sides reach their own mutually acceptable settlement of the issues in dispute.
- Refer the matter for adjudication. Adjudication is a kind of dispute resolution in which the parties to the dispute submit evidence and make arguments to a neutral third party, who has the power to deliver a binding decision, generally based on objective standards. Under the School Act, an adjudicator may confirm, vary or revoke the decision under appeal, refer the matter back to the board for reconsideration, with or without directions, or dismiss all or part of the appeal.

The superintendent of appeal can also temporarily suspend a board of education's decision while it's under appeal until the appeal process is finished. Share what outcome you would like to see if your appeal is referred to mediation or adjudication when you fill out the notice of appeal form. Under the School Act, the superintendent of appeal's decision is final and binding. Still, there are other avenues to

explore outside the school system if the problem remains unresolved. These avenues are outlined in the following sections.



Helpful resources on appealing a board of education decision

From the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Student disputes and appeals](#)
- [BC School Act](#)

Contact a politician or senior ministry staff

When issues aren't resolved at the local level or through regular channels, it may be helpful to write to your member of the legislative assembly (MLA), the director of inclusive education with the inclusive education branch at the Ministry of Education and Child Care, or even the Minister of Education and Child Care.

These officials can be found at www.gov.bc.ca. Keep copies of your letters for your file and make copies for anyone you think should have one. Politicians are likely to contact the local school district about your complaint. When you take the political route, seeking support from other parents or support groups can be helpful. Political advocacy can be a slow method for getting results and is most effective with issues that impact many people who speak with a collective voice.

Take your story to the media

Sometimes, people turn to the media to bring attention to their issues in the hope that the attention will help bring about a resolution. When all other options have been exhausted, media attention can put added pressure on politicians and decision-makers to resolve an issue. However, there are risks involved with seeking media attention.

Be prepared for your child's disability to become a topic of public discussion. Once your story is in the media, you won't have control over how it is reported or how the public responds, including on social media and news outlet comment boards. Media attention may not necessarily result in positive action to resolve the issue and could anger or irritate those who could help.

Consider media coverage only as a last resort when other avenues have failed, and seek the help of a trained and experienced advocate before going to the media. When you're angry and frustrated with a system that seems unjust or uncaring, it might be tempting to turn to the media early on. However, there are usually bigger benefits to working hard to solve issues close to home.

Request a review by the BC ombudsperson

The ombudsperson is a provincial advocate responsible for making sure public agencies act fairly. The ombudsperson investigates complaints about unfair administrative decisions or actions by a public agency and can try to settle complaints through consultation.

In most cases, you have to complete the school board appeal process before the ombudsperson's office can open a file on your case. The ombudsperson can't make a binding decision, but they can recommend ways for public agencies to resolve unfairness. The ombudsperson is persuasive but has no legislative ability to enforce any of their recommendations. The ombudsperson can impartially and independently review decisions and procedures within the school system.



Click to visit
www.bcombudsperson.ca for more on what an ombudsperson can do for you and how to work with them.

Legal remedies

If the problem can't be resolved, you may consider seeking a legal remedy through an administrative tribunal or the courts. It's a good idea to seek help from a trained legal advocate or lawyer at these levels. Below are some strategies you may consider (the following sections were written in consultation with a lawyer).

File a Human Rights Complaint

If a school board makes a decision that you believe discriminates against a child on the basis of physical or mental disability, you can file a complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal. The time limit to file a complaint is one year from the date of a single act of discrimination. If the discrimination is repetitive or ongoing, the complaint must be filed within six months of the last act of discrimination. In some cases, the timeline of a school board appeal may be longer than the time limit for a human rights complaint. For this reason, it may be a good idea to file both at the same time.

The Human Rights Tribunal screens, accepts, mediates, and judges human rights complaints. A case manager will let you know whether or not you have grounds for a complaint under the British Columbia Human Rights Code. This screening may take a couple of months. If your case is accepted, a **mediator** will try to resolve the case. If mediation is successful, there's no need to proceed to a hearing. If a complaint proceeds to a hearing, you may want a lawyer. When a complaint goes to a hearing, a tribunal member or panel makes a decision and gives reasons for it in writing. This process can take a long time to complete.

Proving your human rights case

The British Columbia legislature created the Human Rights Code to make society more equal and remove barriers that have excluded disadvantaged groups. People with disabilities are one of the groups protected under this legislation. The Human Rights Code also focuses on certain areas of activity to prevent discrimination. One of the



Helpful resources on human rights complaints

From the British Columbia BC Human Rights Tribunal

- [Human Rights Complaint Process](#)

From the BC Human Rights Clinic

- [Who's Who in B.C.'s Human Rights Landscape?](#)

Like legal aid for human rights cases. There is no charge for their services.

From the the Disability Alliance BC

- [Disability Law Clinic](#)
Free legal advice about human rights and discrimination for people with disabilities.

protected areas is “services customarily available to the public” under section 8 of the code. The courts have ruled that education is a public service under this section.

There are two key steps to proving your human rights case:

1. You must prove what is called *prima facie* discrimination. This means you, as the complainant, must show that:
 - The student has—or was perceived to have—a disability.
 - Something negative happened: the student received adverse treatment.
 - The student’s disability was a factor in the adverse treatment.
2. Once the student has proved the above three requirements, the education provider can still claim it’s not discriminating because it can show it’s justified in its actions. To do this, the provider must show it accommodated the student up to the point of undue hardship. Undue hardship factors will be different in every case but can include things like undue cost or safety. The courts have cautioned that the government shouldn’t put too low a cost on accommodating people with disabilities. If the education provider can prove it would suffer undue hardship in accommodating the student, the complaint will be dismissed.

If the complaint succeeds, the tribunal can, under section 37 of the Human Rights Code, make some systemic and individual orders to fix the discrimination. The tribunal can order compensation for losses related to the discrimination and injury to dignity.



Human Rights Win for Inclusive Education: The Moore Case

In *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)*, [2012] 3 S.C.R. 360, nine justices of the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that “severe learning disabled” students are entitled to equal opportunity to access public education as students without learning disabilities. The case centred on Jeffrey Moore, an elementary school student with a severe learning disability who required educational accommodations to learn to read. He was referred to Diagnostic Center 1, a successful program that provided specialized literacy instruction geared toward “severe learning disabled” students.

However, just as Jeffrey was about to enter Diagnostic Center 1, the district administration abruptly closed it and dismantled several other supports for “severely learning disabled” students. The district argued that it had no other choice due to finances. But while the district dismantled these programs, it maintained several popular non-core programs, including a band and strings program and a nature school.

The court ruled the school district had discriminated against Jeffrey by failing to accommodate him to the point of undue hardship. They said that “special education

is not a dispensable ‘luxury’, but a necessary ‘ramp’ to ensure equal access to educational services.” Education providers must show that they have explored all reasonable options, short of undue hardship, before cutting necessary accommodations.

The court rejected the school district’s cost argument because they could not show that they had done so here. The court awarded damages to reimburse the Moores for tuition costs incurred to educate Jeffrey at private school and damages to compensate for Jeffrey’s injury to dignity.

File a Charter Challenge

Like human rights legislation, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects against discrimination based on disability (we'll call it simply "the charter" from this point on).

Section 15 (1) of the charter says every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefits of the law without discrimination, particularly without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

While you can use the charter to pursue equality rights, a charter challenge is a more complex and less accessible option than the human rights system. The case can only proceed through the court system, and you have to pay filing fees to begin the claim. You also risk paying court costs if you don't succeed.

The arguments and process are difficult. The defences differ from human rights legislation, and it would be easier to proceed with a lawyer. Not many cases involving disability rights have succeeded before the court.

That said, there have been some successes, and the principles that came out of these cases are useful for reminding school providers about their obligations. Three of these cases are *Eaton v. Brant County Board of Education* (1997), *Eldridge v. British Columbia* (1997), and *Moore v. British Columbia* (2012). These cases have clear implications for school boards in terms of recognizing the needs of students with disabilities and providing reasonable accommodation for those needs.

The challenge now is to ensure that school boards actually incorporate the requirements of section 15(1) and the mandate of the Moore case in their day-to-day operations. School boards and senior administrators should review, on a regular basis, whether they are fulfilling these duties.

Since financial limitations are a factor in determining "reasonable accommodation," a good time for parents and parent organizations to ask school boards to review their success in accommodating students is during the budgeting process.

Eaton v. Brant County Board of Education (1997) 1 SCR 241

In *Eaton v. Brant County Board of Education*, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Emily Eaton was not a victim of discrimination when she was placed in a segregated classroom. The court declined to require schools to integrate students in all circumstances. Instead, the court recognized the harm caused by exclusionary policies and repeatedly emphasized the advantage of **integration**. However, the court also said that school boards have a duty to recognize the individual and actual needs of students with disabilities and make reasonable accommodations for those needs based on what is in the student's best interest.

Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General), (1997) 3 SCR 624

In *Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the equality rights of deaf patients seeking medical services were violated when they were not provided interpreters. The Court found that effective communication is necessary for delivering medical services and that failing to provide interpretive services to deaf persons in hospitals was discriminatory. The court also ruled that governments have a duty to ensure that members of disadvantaged groups benefit equally from services offered to the general public.

Moore v. British Columbia (Education) (2012) 3 S.C.R. 360

Moore v. British Columbia (Education) was not a charter case but relied on the reasoning in *Eldridge* to rule that severely learning disabled students are entitled to equal opportunity to access public education as students without learning disabilities. The court ruled unanimously that students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodation (to the point of undue hardship) to ensure equal access to educational services. The Moore case provides an important framework for ensuring accommodation and support for students with disabilities in the classroom. Students with disabilities have an equal right to access the benefits of general education as all other students.

Request a judicial review

If you believe that a school district appeal decision is unfair or that the school board didn't meet the requirements of administrative fairness, you may be able to seek a judicial review by the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

You should consult with a lawyer if you want to file a judicial review. The judicial review court doesn't act as an appeal court or conduct a new hearing with new evidence. The court can only decide whether the school district or Ministry of Education and Child Care made serious legal errors. The court can look at the school district's decision and the process by which it was made. A judicial review may succeed only under certain conditions.

The court may overturn a decision when the following errors can be shown:

- There is a clearly unreasonable finding of fact.
- There is a denial of procedural fairness.
- The appeal board made a decision in bad faith, exercised its discretion for improper purposes, based its decision on irrelevant factors, or failed to consider statutory requirements.

If you succeed with a judicial review, the solution generally ordered by the court will be for the school authority to reconsider its decision under proper legal principles. The ruling from a judicial review is legally binding. If you lose, there is a risk of facing additional court costs. If you win, you may be entitled to an award of costs.

File a Civil Lawsuit

In some cases, you can file a civil lawsuit to realize a right under the School Act, which involves suing the school board or school district in the British Columbia Supreme Court. For example, in *Hewko v. British Columbia*, 2006 BCSC 1638, parents of a student with autism had partial success in a civil claim based on breach of statutory duty. Under the School Act, the school district is required to consult with parents regarding the student's educational program. In this case, the school district failed to do so. The court ordered the school district to consult with the parents in drafting the education plan. The

court ruled that reasonable accommodation was part of the duty to consult and that the parents' representation on the student's program must be seriously considered and, wherever possible, integrated into the proposed action plan. Civil suits can be complex proceedings, and it is best to seek the advice of a lawyer about whether a civil claim is a viable option in your particular situation.



Resolving issues in independent schools

Independent schools are not private schools but are overseen by a board of governors or trustees. They are created and certified according to [British Columbia's Independent School Act](#) and must follow its rules, regulations, and orders.

The government gives independent schools partial grants, and they have charitable status, which means donations can be eligible for tax receipts. Independent schools can have a very different structure. Make sure to ask what the levels of their structure are so you can direct your advocacy efforts to the right people at the right time. This handbook's advocacy

suggestions apply to public and independent schools, except for the school district appeal.

All independent schools should have a multi-step appeal process and should consider an external ombudsperson as a final step in their appeals process. The British Columbia Ombudsperson doesn't deal with concerns related to independent schools. If you have covered all the steps in the appeals process of an independent school and feel your concerns haven't been resolved, you can go up to the inspector of independent schools at the Ministry of Education and Child Care.



Helpful resources on independent schools

On appeal processes

- [Procedural fairness best practice guidelines for independent schools](#)

For guidance on school-specific policies independent schools should develop including special education (disabilities/diverse abilities) policy

- [Independent school information for administrators](#)



Get support when you need it!

Advocating on behalf of your child and following all the procedures inside defined structures can be intimidating. However, there are groups and organizations to support you, so you don't have to do this work alone. Several organizations offer formal and informal family and advocacy support.

Connecting with other parents/caregivers through informal online or community groups can also be helpful and an important reminder that you're not alone. As always, open or private forums online aren't substitutes for professional advice.

The value of taking a break

Take care of yourself and know when to press pause. Sometimes, taking a small—or long—break from actively advocating is sometimes the best next step. This pause can give you time to put things in perspective. It can help renew your energy to take the next steps and build the partnerships that will give your child access to the education they deserve. Reach out and talk about it with people you trust, and ask for help when you feel stuck, overwhelmed, exhausted, frustrated – all the feelings.



Help starts here!
Organizational support to explore

Inclusion BC
www.inclusionbc.org

Family Support Institute of BC
• www.familysupportbc.com

BCEdAccess Society
• www.bcedaccess.com

Autism BC
• www.autismbc.ca

Disability Alliance BC
• www.disabilityalliancebc.org

- This site may be especially helpful as your child transitions out of high school. This organization helps people apply for disability benefits, file taxes, claim tax credits and start a registered disability savings plan.

Find a complete list of organizations and Inclusion BC federation members in your area at www.inclusionbc.org/our-story/our-federation

Get community group support

BCEdAccess private parent/guardian forum
• www.facebook.com/groups/BCEdAccess

BC Parents of Complex Kids
• www.facebook.com/BCComplexKids

Up next

Learn more about the professional support services that could become valuable parts of your child's education team.

Support services professionals who partner with schools for inclusive education

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Get an overview of the different kinds of specialized programs, professionals and support service people who may be part of your child's inclusive education team.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

If there is a partner you can't find in this chapter and you think we should add them, please send an email to advocacy@inclusionbc.org.

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It takes a village to raise a child

You might already have a network of professionals you and your child love and trust. As you move through the school system, this network will grow or adapt as your child's needs change. No matter what, this network brings together all the resources, strategies, and supports your child needs to access their education and succeed in school. In [Chapter 3](#) of this handbook, we covered who will likely be part of your school-based education team. In this chapter, we'll introduce you to community partners and support service providers who work within the school system or partner with the school system to support students with disabilities and additional support needs.

Mapping out your child's team

You might have a couple or several partners mentioned in this chapter who are involved in supporting your child. A larger team can feel overwhelming and confusing at times. It's helpful to put all your team members onto a map, which can be useful as a visual for you and the other members of your network and teams. It can help everyone understand how to coordinate best the efforts, actions, and plans you will create together.



“Therapists have always played an important role in my child's education team. Long before my son entered school, I developed trusted relationships with my therapists. They became a lifeline to me, teaching me valuable strategies to support my son's learning.

When there has been disagreement or barriers to inclusion, they have supported me to advocate for effective solutions.”

— BRITISH COLUMBIA PARENT

School-age therapies

Speech and language specialists

Speech and language pathologists, often called SLPs, help with communication delays or disorders that might interfere with a child's academic progress or social-emotional adjustment. Some children access this support before they start school, and others will see the speech and language pathologist for the first time through the school.

Speech therapy usually begins in the early grades, before grade 5. Some speech and language pathologists are more involved than others, depending on a child's need and the amount of support available within the district. Speech and language pathologists often attend individualized education plan meetings and work closely with the classroom teacher to support students. When parents can't get the speech and language therapy service their child needs through the school, or when the hours provided by the district aren't enough, some parents choose to pay privately.



[Click here to learn more about what speech and language pathologists do.](#)

Occupational therapists (OTs)

You might see occupational therapists referred to as an OT. They assess a student's school environment and recommend a plan that includes strategies and accommodations to help school staff support students. Sometimes, the occupational therapist watches the student in class, and other times, their suggested strategies are based on feedback from school staff. Occupational therapists can work with children who have physical disabilities and need support with feeding and mobility. They can also help you and school staff understand a child's sensory and self-regulation needs and suggest strategies and tools for the classroom.



[Click here to learn more about what occupational therapists do.](#)

Physiotherapists (PTs)

Physiotherapists are also known as PTs. They help students physically take part in school activities throughout their school day. School-based physiotherapy is different from medical physiotherapy that you access through a clinic. Where medical physiotherapy focuses on therapeutic treatment of the child's physical limitations, school-based physical therapy is meant to ensure the child has physical access to their education. A physiotherapist may recommend adaptive seating or educate the staff on ways to make physical activity more inclusive.



[Click here to learn more about what physiotherapists do.](#)

Health services and supports

Several health services, programs, and supports can help your child access their education. Here are a few common ones.

Family doctors and pediatricians

Doctors are important partners with parents and schools. They can pinpoint the need for additional supports, share relevant information with schools, meet with individualized education plan teams, use school information to inform a diagnosis or treatment and help improve how schools can support your child. Many pediatricians require a referral. You can get a referral from your family doctor or walk-in clinic.

Nursing Support Services (NSS)

Nursing support services (NSS) help children and youth with medical complexities lead active, healthy lives. This provincial program is overseen by BC Children's Hospital and has regional coordinators in each of the province's health authorities. Through this program, families can access support from nurses who come into the home to provide respite care. When a child enters school, nurses can help develop an individualized care plan, which helps school staff provide diabetes care, seizure care, and tube feeds.

Sometimes, a child needs complex health care procedures during the school day, and school staff can't always provide these through a care plan. In these cases, nurses could be required to provide direct care in the school. Nurses can also help families apply and qualify for the provincial At Home Program. The regional coordinators are usually the direct contact for families and support them in various ways, such as understanding the system, making equipment and supplies requests, and coordinating care.

While families may qualify for a certain number of hours through nursing support services, it's not always available for various reasons. In some cases, this might need some advocacy support. You can always reach out to our community inclusion advocacy program for support.



[Click here to learn more about Nursing Support Services \(NSS\).](#)



[Click here to learn more about the At Home Program.](#)

Indigenous patient liaison programs

Through the program, patient navigators work with health care staff to help patients with health care and discharge planning, hospital stay information, completing forms, referrals to community services, and generally figuring out how to access supports inside the health care system. Each provincial health authority has a variety of these programs, sometimes within specific programs or hospitals. For example, the Northern Health Authority program offers in-hospital and community support to help Indigenous people and their families access culturally safe healthcare services.



[Click here to learn more about Aboriginal patient liaison programs.](#)

First Nations Health Authority

The First Nations Health Authority plans, designs, manages, and funds the delivery of First Nations health programs across British Columbia. It offers maternal, child, and family health information and resources.



[Click here to learn more about First Nations Health Authority's programs and service.](#)



Supports and services: Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)

The Ministry of Children and Family Development oversees the following supports and services:

Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) workers

For many families, a **Children and Youth Support Needs worker** is among the first support services professionals they meet. You'll meet this person through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Whether helping with note-taking in school meetings or brainstorming what programs can complement learning outside the school, this person is an important community partner and resource.

In 2023 and 2024, the provincial government held community engagement sessions in communities across British Columbia. These sessions will inform their review of the services framework for children and youth with disabilities and support needs. We expect there will be significant changes. In the meantime, the content in this chapter is based on the current structure of services and eligibility criteria.

A Children and Youth Support Needs worker can help you:

- Determine eligibility for Ministry of Children and Family Development supports and services.
- Provide information and referral support.
- Work with care teams across multiple agencies and organizations.
- Plan for transitions.

The Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) program offered by the Ministry of Children and Family Development is available for all children ages 0-18 years who are residents of British Columbia and

meet certain criteria. As of January 2024, programs and services offered for children and youth with support needs are organized by specific needs in these categories:

- [Autism spectrum disorder](#)
- [Complex health needs](#) (including brain injury, medical benefits, respite care and at-home specialized services, nursing, specialized developmental assessment, and rehabilitation)
- [Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder](#)
- [Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind, and partially-sighted](#)
- [Intellectual disabilities](#)

We'll go over some of these categories and related programs later in this chapter. For now, we'll finish introducing you to professionals who partner with schools to support children with disabilities or support needs.



[Click to learn more about assessing and supporting a child's development, including early childhood intervention programs.](#)

Early childhood intervention programs

These supports and services are available in the early years when parents notice their children are not meeting some of the developmental milestones and might need some assessment and early intervention. These services happen before a child enters the school system and can play an important role when planning the transition to kindergarten. Most often, the people working with your child at their child care centre participate in a transition meeting with your child's new school team.



[Click here to read provincial guidelines for the early intervention therapy program.](#)

Early intervention programs include:

- The Early Intervention Therapy Program
- The Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program
- The Supported Child Development Program
- The Aboriginal Infant Development Program
- The Infant Development Program

Autism spectrum disorder

All children diagnosed with **autism spectrum disorder** have access to autism funding. Your child's team will play a key role in supporting your child's transition to kindergarten and throughout their educational years. They can offer recommendations for your child's individualized education plan or strategies that can be helpful in the classroom.

Get information how to get an assessment, access autism funding, and build your support team:



[A Parent's Handbook: Your Guide to Autism Programs](#) from the Ministry of Children and Family Development



[Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders \(POPARD\)](#) from the Ministry of Education and Child Care

Complex health needs

Individual and group supports are available to help families with children with unique and complex health care needs. Some are provided through the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and others are provided through the Ministry of Health. Some programs include:

- The At Home Program (for medical benefits, respite care, and specialized services)
- Nursing services through the Nursing Support Services program
- Specialized developmental assessments and rehabilitation through the Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children

If your child gets services and supports through any of these programs, the specialists there will also play a role during your child's educational years. Their supports could be critical to making sure your child has equitable access to their education. Some are included in developing your child's care plan for school.

The At Home Program

The At Home Program supports children and teens with a severe disability or complex health care needs. This program provides funds for respite, medical supplies, and services for children who show dependency in four aspects of daily living: feeding, dressing, toileting, and washing.

Children need to go through an assessment to qualify for this program. Once a child enters school, funding through the At Home Program's school-aged extended therapies program can help supplement the school-aged therapy provided through the district. Many parents and caregivers have reported difficulty accessing this program.

If you believe you've been unfairly denied access, contact your local At Home Program regional contact. If this doesn't work, contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development's client relations branch (1-877-387-7027) to ask about a complaint resolution process. You are always welcome to contact Inclusion BC for advocacy support.



Resources on complex health needs

From the Ministry of Children and Family Development

- [At Home Program guide](#)

From the Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Inclusion outreach](#)

From the BC Centre for Ability

- [Community Brain Injury Program](#)

From BC Children's Hospital

- [Nursing Support Services](#)
- [Sunny Hill Health Centre](#)

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder key worker

Children who have confirmed or suspected fetal alcohol spectrum disorder can access a key worker through the key worker and parent support program. This key worker can help:

- Find ways parents, family members, caregivers, and service providers can adapt to the child's environment.
- Give emotional and practical support to families.
- Provide education and information tailored specifically to a family's needs.
- Refer families and parents to resources like training, support groups, or mentoring programs.



Click to watch a short video about the provincial outreach program for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind and partially-sighted

The province's deaf and hard of hearing services offer support for families with deaf and hard of hearing children, youth and young adults planning for their future, and dorm students attending B.C. School for the Deaf. They can also help build connections to community partners, family networks, family navigation and professional consultation, and Indigenous deaf collaborations.

Through collaborative consultation, the Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH) also supports educational teams in addressing the unique communication and learning styles of deaf and hard of hearing students. This outreach program helps these learners with language development, literacy, numeracy, cognitive development, self-advocacy and self-confidence.

Students get frequent visits from a travelling teacher (often called an itinerant teacher) who specializes in supporting children who are deaf or hard of hearing and collaborating with their school teams. If your child needs these supports and hasn't received them, reach out to your teacher and principal.

Families of young blind or partially-sighted children (birth to school-age) are connected with these organizations for available services:

- [Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, B.C. chapter](#)
- [Children's Low Vision Project of British Columbia](#)
- [Blind Beginnings](#)
- [Canadian Deafblind Association, B.C. chapter](#)

When children are school-age, families are connected with the one of the provincial outreach programs from the Ministry of Education and Child Care:

- [Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired](#)
- [Accessible Resource Centre – BC](#)
- [Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(POPDHH\)](#)



Click here to find more information on Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (PDHHS).

Intellectual disabilities

An intellectual disability is diagnosed based on a person's intellectual functioning and adaptive functioning, according to the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5 Criteria). Adaptive functioning looks at how well a person handles everyday demands and how independent they are compared to others of a similar age and background. The Ministry of Children and Family Development offers respite services and other types of support services like access to a child and youth care worker, behaviour supports, parenting skills training and support groups, counselling, household management services, and life skills activities or programs for children and youth and their families.



[Click here to learn more about intellectual disabilities.](#)

Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH)

The Ministry of Children and Family Development's child and youth mental health services provide community-based mental health services for children, youth, and their families. Teams across the province can help with assessments and treatment for children, youth, and their families at no cost. The ministry also has teams who work specifically with Indigenous children and youth. A child and youth mental health professional may be a psychologist, psychiatrist, or mental health clinician. These professionals are often in a child's life for a specific period before the file is closed. Many parents and caregivers have reported difficulty accessing the program, with children being denied based on specific diagnoses. Waitlist times vary across health regions but can be long.



[Click here to learn more about community-based mental health services for children, youth, and their families through Child and Youth Mental Health.](#)



Other supports, services and professionals

Here are a few more different kinds of professionals who may be a part of your child's team as they grow, learn and develop.

Behaviour consultants or analysts

If a child needs behaviour services as part of their individualized education plan, a behaviour consultant or analyst will design and manage an intervention program or a positive behaviour support plan. These specialists are responsible for assessing and evaluating students and developing a plan with teachers, caregivers, parents, and family members. These strategies help everyone support the child by first understanding their behaviour. Some families have a private team that includes a behavioural consultant or analyst who works with their child outside of school.

The more collaboration between home and school teams, the more consistency there is for the child to support their growth. The analyst or consultant is often quite involved in a student's daily life. They attend individualized education plan meetings and help train teachers and support staff to work with students.

Applied behaviour analysis therapists, support workers or consultants

That title is a mouthful, but you'll usually see this person identified as an ABA. They use [applied behaviour analysis](#) as a form of treatment for children, most often children with autism. Some school districts have an applied behavioural analysis therapist on staff who uses the method to help the classroom teacher support children with autism. An example is the Surrey school district.



[Click here](#) to learn about Surrey's district behaviour specialist role.

Child care centre, Supported Child Development program or Aboriginal Supported Child Development program

Child care workers or consultants from the Supported Child Development Program or the Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program can be valued school team members, providing insight gained from years of knowing and supporting your child. If your child has attended before- or after-school care, the care provider can work with the school to build goals and create a seamless transition to and from school.



[Click here to learn more about the Supported Child Development Program.](#)



[Click here to learn more about the Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program.](#)

Family support workers

The title of the position varies, but it is often called a family support worker. Many organizations that provide community living services have family support programs to help families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and additional support needs. Staff in these programs can help you navigate systems, access information and services, and plan for the future. Support is flexible and customized, depending on the needs of the family. The service is free; families can usually access these services without a referral.



[Find a community organization near you.](#)

[Click here or go to \[www.inclusionbc.org/our-story/our-federation\]\(http://www.inclusionbc.org/our-story/our-federation\)](#)

Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD)

Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities has navigators who support youth with developmental disabilities and their families with transition planning to adult services. Navigators support the youth in identifying their goals and needs, developing a plan, and connecting them with government and community supports. They can unite people to create a team and coordinate supports and services. Unfortunately, navigators aren't available in all parts of the province. Your child-almost-adult can refer themselves, or be referred by:



[Click here to understand the referral process and see if there are navigators in your area.](#)

- A school teacher
- A facilitator from Community Living BC
- A worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- A worker from a delegated Aboriginal agency
- A health clinic worker

Peer-to-peer support networks

Connecting with other families with similar experiences can be extremely valuable. There are plenty of formal and informal groups that offer free peer-to-peer support for families supporting a loved one with a disability or additional support needs.

Here are a few places to start:

- [BCEdAccess](#)
- [BC Complex Kids](#)
- [Family Smart](#)
- [Family Support Institute of BC](#)

Up next

Get familiar with the laws and policies that define and protect your child's right to equitable access to a full and rich education.

Understanding British Columbia's education laws and policies

WHAT'S INSIDE

Learn about the provincial laws and policies that protect education rights for all British Columbian children. This chapter also covers basic provincial funding for public schools, Truth and Reconciliation in schools, and international human rights agreements.



Click each section title to jump right to that section, or start at the beginning!

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An important note on policy language

Reading laws, regulations, and policies can be hard. And confusing. If you have questions, feel free to reach out to the Inclusion BC team. While we don't provide legal advice, we do our best to explain how you can use these laws and policies to advocate for your child's rights. We want you to know that the **BC School Act** and its policies and regulations still use terms like "special needs" or "special education." These terms appear frequently in this chapter when we refer to and explain documents. We use them because they are still used in the government's official documents. Please know these terms don't reflect our preferred rights-based language. We like to use words like "inclusive education" and "students with disabilities."

The legal world also uses specific words to mean certain things in legal and policy documents:

"MUST" — It's a requirement. It must be done.

"SHOULD" — It's encouraged. There may be an incentive provided, but it is optional.

"MAY" — It's optional. This is an enabling statement.

Now, let's go through the various levels of educational and human rights law and policy. We'll start with the Ministry of Education and Child Care laws and policies and then talk about school district policies. Then, we'll move into international human rights law. Finally, we'll discuss provincial truth and reconciliation recommendations, as well as **Jordan's Principle**.



Education laws:

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC)

BC School Act

The **BC School Act** is a provincial law that applies to primary and secondary education in British Columbia. The act outlines the roles and responsibilities of parents, students, and people working at all levels of the education system.



Quick reminder: Legal roles and responsibilities are summarized in [Chapter 3](#).

Legal definitions of “school age” and “school year”

We discussed legal school age in Chapter 5, but let's review it quickly again. Below are the legal definitions of “school age” and “school year” taken straight from the BC School Act. These are important to understand from a legal perspective as you advocate on behalf of your child. The language here is from the ministry and references other sections within the BC School Act.



[Click here or go to www.bit.ly/BC-School-Act to find the complete BC School Act.](http://www.bit.ly/BC-School-Act)

School-age: the age between the date on which a person is permitted under section 3 (1) to enroll in an educational program provided by a board and the end of the school year in which the person reaches the age of 19 years.

School year: the period beginning on July 1 and ending on the following June 30. A “school-age” student may enroll in an educational program. According to the School Act, a student is “school age” if they have reached five (5) years of age on the first day of a school year or if they will reach five (5) years of age on or before December 31 of that school year. If a student turns 19 on July 1 or later, they can enroll in school the following September.



A student must be offered a full-time educational program during the year they turn 19. This year is not an “extra year” of education but is a year in which a student remains eligible to attend.



The Ministry of Education continues to provide funding to the school board for a student's program at the same level as in previous educational years. It may be helpful if the focus of a final year of education is more community- and transition-focused than in previous years.

Minimum hours of instruction

Under the BC School Act, boards of education must offer a minimum number of hours of instruction to all students enrolled in their schools. The School Calendar Regulation says that the minimum hours are:

- 853 hours for kindergarten
- 878 for grades 1 to 7
- 952 hours for grades 8 to 12

Every single one of these hours matters. Not having the supports they need to go to school full-time poses significant challenges for children with disabilities and their families.

Inclusive Education Canada points out that part-time school attendance can contribute to:

- **Social isolation.** Regular full-time attendance helps students develop social skills, build friendships, learn alongside their peers, and generally feel like they belong.
- **More stigma.** Students who only attend part-time can feel excluded and disconnected from others in their classroom and school. This separation can be hard on their self-esteem and mental health.
- **More stress for families.** All that extra transportation, scheduling, and added home instruction means more pressure and stress on parents/caregivers.
- **Less access to support services.** Students often access different support services, like therapies, accommodations, and specialized instruction in school. Less time in school means less access to these services.
- **More scheduling changes, less routine.** Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and additional support needs often thrive on routines and predictability. Part-time school can impact these routines and lead to more emotional and behavioural dysregulation.
- **More or bigger education gaps.** Students may miss important lessons, instructions, and learning opportunities that they would otherwise get by attending school full-time.
- **Potential lost gains.** By only attending school part-time, students are at higher risk of moving backwards, not forwards, regarding academic skills, communication skills, and adaptive functioning. More support services are needed to catch up to where they once were.



[Click here to go to the Inclusive Education Canada website.](#)

Ministerial Orders

A provincial government ministry issues **Ministerial Orders**. An order gives specific instructions that must be followed. Again, "must" in legal language means it's a requirement and not optional. Each order is identified by the letters "MO" and a number. The following are Ministerial Orders and documents related to British Columbia education. The language here is theirs, not ours.



[Click the titles to download PDFs of each order or document.](#)

M150/89 — Students with Disabilities or Diverse Abilities Order

This order defines students with special needs, describes the obligation of boards of education to consult with parents regarding the placement of students with special needs, and describes policies regarding integration.

M638/95 — Individual Education Plan Order

This order sets out the requirements for boards of education to design and implement individual education plans for students with special needs.

M191/94 — Student Progress Report Order

This order describes progress reporting requirements for students with special needs.

M149/89 — Support Services for Schools Order

This order outlines the requirements for auditory systems, speech and language services, medical assessments and specialized health services.

PROTOCOL — Inter-Ministry Protocols for the Provision of Support Services to Schools

This document guides the coordination and delivery of support services to school-aged children across British Columbia. It describes the roles and responsibilities of ministries and their partner boards of education, independent school authorities, health authorities and regional offices or agencies.

Education policies:

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC)

Education policies provide regulated learning standards that promote student success and achievement. These policies come from legislation or decisions made by elected officials. In the following two sections, we'll talk about ministry-level policies that outline basic and supplementary funding and highlight other education policies that directly relate to what the government calls "special education services." Some government language is being updated to replace "special education services" with "inclusive education" but it's a work in progress – you may see both terms being used in official documents.

Ministry-mandated public school policy: Basic and supplementary student funding

The Ministry of Education and Child Care provides funding to school districts so they can deliver public education services. All school districts get a set amount of basic funding per student registered in the district, including students with disabilities and additional support needs. This type of funding is called basic allocation. School districts also get extra funding to support students with special needs. This type of funding is called supplementary funding.



[Click here to see how the ministry breaks down supplemental funding amounts based on designation categories.](#)

Basic student funding

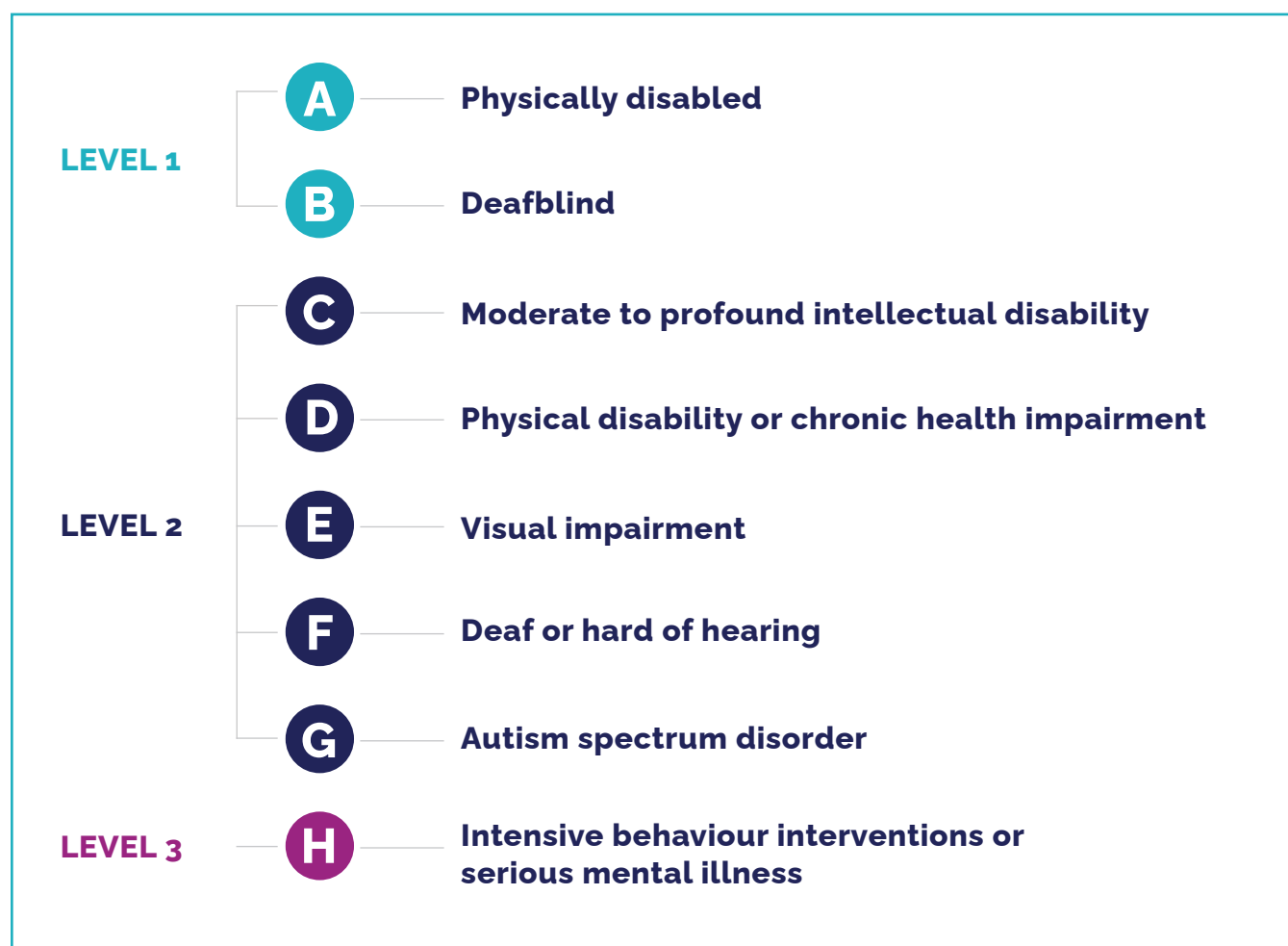
Basic allocation is intended to include supports for students with certain support needs, including students with mild intellectual disability (designation K), learning disability (designation Q), moderate behaviour support or mental illness (designation R), and students who are gifted (designation P). It also includes funds to support school boards in providing learning assistance, speech and language pathology services, hospital homebound services, and assessment services.

Supplementary funding

School districts get supplementary—or extra—funding based on the needs of students within their district and according to specific categories called designations. All of the supplementary funding must be spent supporting students within the categories for which the funding is assigned.

Supplementary funding is not attached to specific students – it's more like a pool of funds the school district gets and uses to support all their students with designated support needs. Still, most districts spend more than they receive for programs like speech and language, occupational, and behaviour support. The province breaks down support needs funding by category. Find this breakdown on the next page (it uses the ministry's language, not ours).

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION CATEGORIES AND SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING LEVELS



Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

The Ministry of Education and Child Care has a document called *Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*. It communicates all of the policies, procedures, and guidelines that support the delivery of inclusive education in public schools across the province. It acts as a single point of reference for all of the ministry's laws, policies, and guidelines, so it may be a resource you turn to often.



[Click to access the Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines online.](#)



“All students should have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs.”

— INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERVICES: A MANUAL OF
POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

LINKS TO FOUR MINISTRY POLICIES YOU MIGHT FIND USEFUL

Inclusive Education Policy

This policy explains that British Columbia promotes an inclusive education system and the right to equitable access to education. It covers themes like inclusion, placement, planning, evaluation and reporting, accountability and appeals.

K-12 Funding: Inclusive Education Policy

This policy explains the basic allocation and additional supplementary funding school districts receive from the ministry. It covers the designations or categories used by the education system and their three levels of organization.

Online Learning Policy

This policy explains what the board of education and independent school authorities can do within the online learning agreements with the Ministry of Education and Child Care. It includes the requirement that boards that offer online learning to make sure students with disabilities have appropriate supports.

Adult Funding Policy

This policy explains who is considered a non-graduated adult student and the funding options for obtaining a Dogwood or Adult Dogwood certificate. Adult students with special needs who have not graduated are eligible for special needs funding.



[Click to access](#) all of British Columbia's public school policies.

School district education policies

Every school district has their own set of policies. These policies should be made available to the public, and you can usually find them on your district's website. The Ministry of Education and Child Care has created guidelines for school districts to develop policies on specific topics. These guidelines set the minimum expectations for district policies, and school districts make their policies following their school board procedures. Exact policy language differs from district to district, but there are two specific policies that every district must have according to ministry guidelines: One is on restraint and seclusion, and the other is on appeals and hearings.

Restraint and seclusion

School districts must have a policy on **restraint** and **seclusion** in school settings based on public Ministry of Education guidelines. These guidelines help school districts form policies and procedures that prevent and discourage the use of restraint and seclusion in schools.

According to the guidelines, school district policies and procedures should:

- Focus on prevention and de-escalation.
- Outline requirements for reporting and documenting every incident where restraint or seclusion is used.
- Include training opportunities in de-escalation and positive behaviour support for all teachers.
- Detail how parents will be involved in positive behaviour support plans.



Inclusion BC is passionate about ending restraint and seclusion in schools.

[Click here to learn more, or go to \[www.inclusionbc.org/what-we-do/public-policy-systems-advocacy/stop-hurting-kids\]\(http://www.inclusionbc.org/what-we-do/public-policy-systems-advocacy/stop-hurting-kids\)](http://www.inclusionbc.org/what-we-do/public-policy-systems-advocacy/stop-hurting-kids)

Appeals and hearings

Section 11 of the BC School Act says that every district must have a policy outlining the process for conducting appeals and hearings. "Must" means it's a requirement – it's not optional. The ministry has a Practices and Procedures for Appeals manual under Section 11.1 of the School Act.



[Click to download the PDF: Practices and Procedures for Appeals under Section 11.1 of the School Act.](#)

International human rights conventions and declarations

When discussing international human rights, we'll focus on two key conventions and one declaration: The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, and the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**. Please reach out to Inclusion BC if you have any questions or need help figuring out how to apply these international human rights and declarations to your advocacy journey.

United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada agreed to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) in 2010. The agreement meant Canada formally accepted a legal obligation to carry out the terms of the international convention document. The convention addresses issues like education, legal capacity, the role of families, living in the community, and employment, among others.

Article 24, in particular, recognizes the “right of persons with disabilities to education” and includes a specific commitment to “ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.” This document can be an important tool at a local level, relevant to the lives of students with disabilities and their families living in British Columbia.

In 2018, Canada accepted the [optional protocol for the convention](#), which gave Canadians a way to make a complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of **Persons with Disabilities**. A Canadian can make a complaint if they believe their rights under the convention have been violated.

A Canadian can make a complaint through the optional protocol after they have gone through all relevant complaint procedures available in Canada. If the committee finds a person’s rights were violated, they will make recommendations to the Canadian government. These recommendations include how the rights violation should stop or how it can be prevented. Then, it’s up to the government to follow those recommendations.

In 2019, the **Canadian Human Rights Commission** became responsible for monitoring how Canada carries out the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This commission is officially recognized as the **national monitoring mechanism**.



Helpful resources on United Nations Conventions

From Inclusion Canada

- [Historic steps in recognizing human rights of Canadians with disabilities](#)

From the Canadian Human Rights Commission

- [Monitoring the rights of people with disabilities](#)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Canada agreed to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in 1991. This convention was the first human rights agreement to include disability as grounds for protection from discrimination. Its guiding principles are non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and the right to participate. This convention doesn’t address specific barriers faced by children with disabilities.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

In 2016, the Government of Canada affirmed the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), which sets out a framework for governments to build or rebuild their relationships with Indigenous peoples. In 2019, British Columbia passed the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#), which made the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People** the province’s official framework for reconciliation. In 2021, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act received Royal Assent and became a federal law in Canada.

Statistics show that Indigenous people are more likely to experience disabilities than the general population. Indigenous people with disabilities often face multiple barriers to realizing their rights. While the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provide protections for Indigenous people with disabilities, neither of them fully addresses the specific barriers they face.



[Click to read more on the United Nations and Indigenous Persons with Disabilities.](#)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations

Canada's **Truth and Reconciliation** Commission has a duty to educate all Canadians on the history of the residential school system and record the experiences of survivors, their families, and others involved. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission published a report with 94 calls to action. Many of the calls to action address education and show how colonialism's legacy still exists within our educational institutions.

Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is a child-friendly document from the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. It explains the recommendations and how the commission's work impacts and applies to children and education.



Click to download the free PDF of *Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* or type www.bit.ly/Spirit-Bear-Guide into your search bar.



Resources from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee

- [Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future – Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)
- [The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

Resources from British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

- [Reports on actions taken to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action](#)

Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle is Canada's legal obligation to make sure First Nations children get the services they need, when they need them. Jordan's Principle is named after Jordan River Anderson, a Cree child from Manitoba. Jordan was born in 1999 with complex medical needs. He stayed in the hospital after birth until, at age 2, doctors determined Jordan could go home with his family if he had the proper medical equipment and supports he needed. The Government of Canada said health care was a provincial responsibility. The Province of Manitoba said First Nations services were the Government of Canada's responsibility. Ultimately, both refused to pay for the in-home equipment and supports Jordan needed, and he died in hospital when he was 5. He never spent a single day in his family home.

Get help through Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle Enhanced Service Coordination Hub for BC is a network for service coordinators across the province. Service coordinators are based in the community and work directly with families and children to submit service requests under Jordan's Principle and the **Inuit Child First Initiative**.



Go to their website at www.jordansprinciplehubbc.ca to find a service coordinator in your community. They can help with psychoeducational assessments, school-age therapies, tutoring or in-class supports.



Email the Jordan's Principle Enhanced Service Coordination Hub for BC at jordansprinciplehub@acc-society.bc.ca.



Call **1-855-JP-CHILD (1-855-572-4453)** anytime, any day to reach the Jordan's Principal Call Centre, available 24/7. The call centre staff will take your information and send it to staff in your region who will help you get the support you need.

Métis Nation BC Miyoopimaatishihk (Wellbeing) Program

This program is available to children from birth to eight years enrolled in the Métis Family Connections Program. Through the Miyoopimaatishihk (Wellbeing) Program, families can apply for financial support to assist with the cost of a wide range of services, programs and products. These services can include respite care, speech therapy, assessments, specialized equipment, and mental health supports.



[Click for more information about the Métis Nation Miyoopimaatishihk \(Wellbeing\) Program.](#)

British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society

The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society is a non-profit organization that delivers programs, services and advocacy to meet the unique needs of Indigenous persons with disabilities. They provide free case management services to help you figure out and access complex disability and health systems. The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society also helps eligible people living in First Nation communities access benefits for persons with disabilities or monthly nutritional supplements.



[Click to visit the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society website or go to \[www.bcands.bc.ca\]\(http://www.bcands.bc.ca\) for a complete list of all the society's programs and services.](#)

A final word on human rights

Human rights are interdependent. One human right can't be enjoyed without the others. Your child is guaranteed the right to an education. For that right to be realized, their rights as a person with a disability, an Indigenous person, a person of colour, or any other protected personal characteristics must also be realized. Knowing this, you can confidently go forth, advocate, collaborate, and reach out when you need support.

Up next

Congratulations! You are well on your way to helping your child access their educational rights and enjoy school life to its fullest. The final chapter is a list of local, provincial, national, and international resources to help you in your advocacy work.

Provincial and community resources

WHAT'S INSIDE

This chapter lists provincial and community-based resources that could help you in your advocacy efforts. These resources are specific to the education system. Please let us know if you know of a helpful education-related resource you don't see here! You can email us at advocacy@inclusionbc.org.



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Rights to education resources

Human rights

- **Auton et al. v. B.C. (2004):** A British Columbia Supreme Court ruling regarding the government failing to fund applied behavioural analysis therapy for children with autism. The court found the children's rights weren't violated under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
<https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/2195/index.do>
- **BC Human Rights Commission:** Addresses root causes of inequality, discrimination, and injustice by shifting laws, policies, practices, and cultures through education, research, advocacy, inquiry, and monitoring.
<https://bchumanrights.ca>
- **British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal:** This is an independent, quasi-judicial body responsible for accepting, screening, mediating, and adjudicating human rights complaints. The Tribunal offers the parties to a complaint the opportunity to resolve the complaint through mediation. The Tribunal holds a hearing if the parties don't resolve the complaint.
<https://www.bchrt.bc.ca>
- **Hewko v. B.C. (2006):** A British Columbia Supreme Court ruling regarding a young boy with autism and how the school district responded to accommodations for access to public education. There was a partial victory: The school district was required to consult with parents regarding the student's education program, and the court ruled that reasonable accommodation was part of the duty to consult.
<https://www.canlii.org/en/bc/bcsc/doc/2006/2006bcsc1638/2006bcsc1638.html>
- **Jordan's Principle:** Canada has a legal obligation to ensure that First Nations children get the services they need when they need them.
<https://sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568396042341/1568396159824>
- **Moore v. B.C., Supreme Court of Canada (2012):** Supreme Court of Canada ruling that states adequate inclusive education (or accommodation) is not a dispensable luxury but a "ramp" to access the statutory commitment to education made to all children.
<https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/12680/index.do>



— **Ombudsperson:** The Ombudsperson investigates complaints about a public agency's unfair administrative decisions or actions. The website also includes a helpful complaint checker that helps guide you on where to go to resolve a complaint.

<https://bcombudsperson.ca>

— **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:** An international agreement protecting children's rights.

<https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/resources>

— **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** This convention aims to promote, protect, and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Article 24 recognizes the educational rights of persons with disabilities.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

British Columbia school laws, policies, and guides

— **Adult Funding Policy:** This is public school policy regarding non-graduated adult students. Non-graduated adult students are eligible for course funding to complete their Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood) or the Adult Graduation Diploma (Adult Dogwood). Boards of education may also offer specific tuition-free courses to adult students who have graduated.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/adult-funding

— **British Columbia Graduation Program Handbook:** A handbook outlining procedures and information on assessments, transcripts and data sharing. This document is updated before each school year begins.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/graduation/handbook_of_procedures.pdf

— **British Columbia Graduation Program Policy Guide:** A guide focusing on course and assessment requirements for grades 10, 11 and 12 students and the related policies for the British Columbia graduation program.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/support/graduation/graduation-policy-guide.pdf



British Columbia Safe and Caring Schools Guide: A government-produced guide for schools regarding bullying, harassment and intimidation. The guide includes sample incident reporting and student rights based on various acts, such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights Code.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teaching-tools/student-safety/scoguide.pdf

BC School Act: An act under the Ministry of Education and Child Care that provides guidelines to boards of education on what criteria they must meet. Some guidelines allow education boards to create their own policies, while others are more specific and apply to all districts.

www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96412_00

BC School Act Calendar Regulation: Regulations regarding the school calendar, including minimum hours of instruction and amendments.

www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/314_2012

BC School Act ministerial orders: Orders on the British Columbia provincial resource program for the deaf, individualized education plans, provincial resource program, special needs students, school support services, and more.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/manual-of-school-law/school-act-ministerial-orders

Diversity in British Columbia Schools – A Framework: Government-produced school guidelines supporting diversity and equitable access for students with diverse learning needs. This framework includes guiding legislation from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the British Columbia Human Rights Code, the Multiculturalism Act and more.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teaching-tools/student-safety/diversity_framework.pdf

Individualized Education Plan Order: Part of the BC School Act, this order includes the responsibilities of the school board regarding the planning, implementation, review and consultation of individualized education plans.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/legislation-policy/legislation/schoollaw/e/m638_95.pdf

Manual of British Columbia School Law, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Provides information on regulations related to the School Act. It includes education regulations such as curriculum, student conduct and school administration.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/manual-of-school-law



Meaningful consultation guidelines: This document defines what meaningful consultation is and what it isn't. It also includes suggestions on how to set the stage for meaningful consultation in meetings and communication.

<https://bccaise.org/new-resources>

Ministry of Education and Child Care Inclusive education resources: Helpful resources on inclusive education including sections on ministerial orders related to inclusive education, programs, resources and guidelines for inclusive education, child and youth in care, English language learners, and refugees, and newcomers.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/resources-for-teachers/inclusive-education

Ministry of Education and Child Care, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Funding – Inclusive Education: This policy outlines the various designations and current funding allotment for the current school year. Funding is not targeted to specific students but to boards of education to support the needs of students within their district.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/k-12-funding-inclusive-education>

Ministry of Education and Child Care and Child Care, Student Disputes and Appeals: This document outlines the process to resolve conflict and concerns regarding student disputes. It also outlines the appeals process.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/student-disputes-and-appeals

Online learning: This page has information about British Columbia's online learning and compares different classroom options (homeschooling, online learning, in-person learning).

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/classroom-alternatives/online-learning

Provincial Guidelines on Physical Restraint and Seclusion in School Settings: This publication includes provincial principles and guidelines regarding physical restraint and seclusion in the school setting.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/support/diverse-student-needs/physical-restraint-seclusion-guidelines.pdf

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Teacher Assistants or Education Assistants: This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of teachers and teacher assistants, including their roles in supporting students with special needs.

www.411.cupe.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/273/2023/07/Roles-and-Responsibilities-Joint-Paper.pdf



Inclusive Education Services – A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines: Detailed inclusive education manual from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, including the inclusive education policy, roles and responsibilities, individualized education plans, special consideration services, special need categories, and provincial resources.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/inclusive/inclusive_ed_policy_manual.pdf

Independent school resources

BC Independent School Act: The regulations that govern independent schools.

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/legislation-policy/legislation/schoollaw/independent_school_act_contents.pdf

British Columbia Independent Schools Regulation: Information on independent school operations, the inspection process, and policy recommendations.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/independent-schools

Classification of Independent Schools: The government-produced independent school policy on group classification, funding, and accountability.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/independent-schools/classification-of-independent-schools

Federation of Independent School Associations BC: A non-profit society that acts as the voice for its members, as a liaison between schools and government, and with other educational institutions. It is dedicated to supporting independent schools in maintaining their independence while seeking fair treatment in legislative and financial matters.

www.fisabc.ca

Independent Schools Association of BC Accessibility Plan: A plan for building more inclusive, accessible school environments. Twenty-six schools are included in the document, and their accessibility plans are attached.

www.docs.google.com/document/d/1N8Wbr59S8HlmujwiaJBfZmOy3SWfaQLEegWjgRclrAA/view?pli=1



Provincial Outreach Programs

British Columbia Provincial Outreach Programs overview: This webpage includes a catalogue of provincial resource programs for the 2023-2024 school year. These programs are overseen by school district teams.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teaching-tools/inclusive/prp-catalogue-of-services.pdf

Accessible Resource Centre BC: A centre that provides students with perceptual or print disabilities and their educational teams with high-quality digital alternate format materials that align with the kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum.

www.arc-bc.org

Inclusion Outreach Program: Assists school teams and families in developing inclusive programs for students with multiple and complex disabilities in schools. The team trains and mentors district partners, teachers, therapists, and educational assistants.

www.inclusionoutreach.ca

Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD): Provides support for students with autism spectrum disorder, including consultation, training and support services to school districts. Family-school liaisons can be accessed by families needing support without a referral.

www.autismoutreach.ca

Provincial Outreach Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH): Works with educational teams to address unique communication and learning styles of a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

www.popdhh.ca

Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (POPFASD): Provides training, consultation and assistance to school teams to support students living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

www.fasdoutreach.ca



Are you reading on a digital device?
Access any resource listed here with a quick click.

— **Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired:** Supports school teams to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for students with visual impairments, including students with additional exceptionalities.

www.prcvi.org

— **Provincial School Outreach:** Supports school districts with case consultations, education and shared resources and service recommendations. The school outreach team includes a school psychologist, occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, learning services teacher and board-certified behaviour analyst. This team's primary focus is on rural and remote regions.

www.bcschooloutreach.ca

— **Special Education Technology BC:** Provides assistive technologies to students with complex needs and liaises with school teams and families.

www.setbc.org

Professional associations on education

— **BC Council of Administrators of Inclusive Support in Education:** A professional association of school and district administrators committed to celebrating and supporting diversity in every classroom and school community.

www.bccaise.org

— **British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principal's Association:** A professional association representing school leaders employed as principals and vice-principals.

<https://www.bcpvpa.org/>

— **BC School Superintendents Association:** The association of superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of instruction and senior executives from British Columbia's 60 school districts.

www.bcssa.org

— **BC School Trustees Association:** A province-wide trustee association that serves and supports British Columbia's boards of education to improve student achievement.

www.bcsta.org



- **BC Teachers' Federation:** A collective labour union that supports, represents, and advocates for public school teachers and students in 70 teacher unions across B.C.
www.bctf.ca
- **Canadian Union of Public Employees:** Canada's largest union and represents workers in various sectors, including in education and early learning and child care.
www.cupe.ca
- **Teacher Regulation Branch:** Mandated under the Teachers Act to regulate professional conduct and competency of members, primarily teachers.
www.teacherregulation.gov.bc.ca
- **Teachers of Inclusive Education BC:** A group dedicated to supporting educational professionals in their efforts to provide an inclusive education for all students.
www.tiebc.com

Inclusive education resources

- **Creating a behaviour support plan:** Outlines the critical components of a behaviour support plan.
www.connectability.ca/2010/09/23/creating-a-behaviour-support-plan
- **David Pitonyak's Seven Questions to Ask When Creating a Support Plan:** David Pitonyak has a consulting practice supporting individuals who experience disability and "difficult behaviours."
www.dimage.com
- **The Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) method:** A collaborative problem-solving framework developed by a psychologist, author, and advocate Dr. Ross Greene. This framework centres around working alongside children to create positive, long-lasting behavioural change.
www.drrossgreene.com
- **Lives in Balance Initiative:** An initiative led by Dr Ross Greene that advocates for ending punitive, exclusionary discipline in schools, families, and other facilities. This website has many free resources, including a podcast, training and more.
www.livesinthebalance.org



Friendship and Belonging – Community Resource Unit Ltd: Shares extensive resources on friendship and belonging regarding students with disabilities. Includes articles, handouts, and videos on encouraging friendships, valued roles, and supports on building emotional well-being.

www.cru.org.au/our-work/inclusive-education/resources/friendships-and-belonging

A Guide to Adaptations and Modifications: This guide differentiates between adaptations and modifications and includes a decision-making model to decide the best path.

www.burnabyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/adaptations_and_modifications.pdf

What is inclusive education? A blogpost resource that defines what inclusion means, discusses features of an inclusive school, and more.

www.inclusionbc.org/resource/what-is-inclusive-education

Inclusive Education Film Series: Inclusion BC's short film series that disrupts misconceptions about students with developmental disabilities. The videos tackle topics like self-determination, working with schools, reframing challenging behaviour, and indigeneity and disability.

www.inclusionbc.org/our-resources/inclusive-education-film-series

Low Arousal Approach: An approach centred on creating low arousal environments to reduce stress and support young children with autism spectrum disorder in schools. The linked video is from Andy McDonnell, psychologist founder of the low arousal approach.

<https://www.studio3.org>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfmmHuDosLk

Psychoeducational Assessments: This article answers common questions about psychoeducational assessments, what to expect and how a psych-ed can be used once the assessment is completed.

www.sd41blogs.ca/district-psychologists/what-is-a-psycho-educational-assessment

Research on inclusive education

A summary of evidence on inclusive education by the Alana Institute: This report from August 2016 brings together results from a systematic review of 280 studies from 25 countries. It shows clear and consistent evidence that inclusive educational settings can confer substantial short and long-term benefits for students with and without disabilities.

https://alana.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf



Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion —A Review of the Literature:

This 2018 report from the European Agency looks at inclusive education and social inclusion and how inclusive education can promote social inclusion.

https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Review%20of%20the%20Literature_0.pdf

Inclusive Education – What Does the Research Say?

The Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education: Shares key findings from the Alana Institute's "A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education," including key report recommendations for fostering inclusive education.

www.allmeansall.org.au/research

Self-regulation – The MEHRIT Centre:

Shares an approach to enhancing self-regulation by understanding and dealing with stress. The goal is to enhance resilience, motivation, learning and wellbeing. Included is a learning hub, book recommendations, training and more.

www.self-reg.ca

Shelley Moore – Inclusive Education: Dr. Shelley Moore is a teacher, researcher and advocate on inclusive education who empowers schools to support all learners through inclusive practices. She uses a creative, engaging approach in her 5 Moore Minute videos that serve as a tool to educate school teams and families.

www.youtube.com/c/FiveMooreMinutes

You'll also find plenty of useful resources on her website.

www.drshelleymoore.com

Social Thinking:

The Social Thinking methodology teaches individuals how to understand the social world better, foster relationships, develop organizational skills and build social competencies to meet their social goals. The website includes free webinars, products, resources and more.

www.socialthinking.com

What is inclusive education? Inclusive education means all students attend and are welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school life. This webpage expands on inclusive education, guiding principles, values, and beliefs.

www.inclusiveeducation.ca/about/what-is-ie



Zones of Regulation approach: Zones of Regulation is a proactive, skills-based approach that provides a shared language to talk and teach about self-regulation. It is okay to be in any zone and to acknowledge, accept and support feelings in each zone.

www.zonesofregulation.com

Restraint and seclusion

Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint: Informs changes in policy and practice to reduce and eliminate the use of punitive discipline and outdated behavioural management approaches.

www.endseclusion.org

International Coalition Against Restraint and Seclusion: Champions the human rights of all children globally. ICARS believes using restraint and seclusion in schools is a danger and threat to all children. It aims to advocate for and protect the fundamental human rights of children and youth worldwide.

www.againstrestraint.com

Stop Hurting Kids: Inclusion BC's campaign calling to end restraint and seclusion in British Columbia public schools. These efforts include a full report, survey reports, and recommendations.

www.inclusionbc.org/what-we-do/public-policy-systems-advocacy/stop-hurting-kids

Indigenous resources

BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society: A non-profit organization that delivers programs, services and advocacy to meet the unique needs of Indigenous persons with disabilities. They provide free case management services to help navigate and access complex disability and health systems.

www.bcands.bc.ca

British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreements – Supporting First Nation Student Success: An initiative between the province, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, and Canada that sets the foundation for enhancement of the British Columbia public education system. Funding for transportation for First Nations students is a vital part of this agreement.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/resource-management/bctea



First Nations Health Authority: A health and wellness partner to more than 200 diverse First Nations communities and citizens in British Columbia. They address service gaps and champion culturally safe practices in the healthcare system. They also provide mental health support, assessments, school-age therapies such as speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, tutoring, or in-class supports.

www.fnha.ca

Jordan's Principle Call Centre: 1-855-JP-CHILD (1-855-572-4453). Free and available 24/7 support for access to psycho-educational assessments, school-age therapies such as speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, tutoring or in-class supports, and more.

Métis Nation of British Columbia: A federally recognized body representing 39 Métis chartered communities in British Columbia. It offers services and programs for Métis citizens, communities, culture, heritage, language, skills training, health care and more.

www.mnbc.ca

Métis Nation BC Miyoopimaatishihk (Wellbeing) Program: A program developed by the Métis Nation of British Columbia that offers financial support for Métis children from birth to eight years to help with the cost of various services, programs and products.

www.mnbc.ca/work-programs/programs-services/miyoopimaatishihk-wellbeing-program

Person-centered planning and self advocacy resources

BC People First: A non-profit provincial organization that is part of an international People First movement.

www.bcpeoplefirst.com

BC Self Advocate Leadership Network: A network of self advocates from Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and Northern British Columbia organizations. They aim to bring self advocacy leaders together to bring about positive change for people with disabilities and their communities.

www.bcsaln.com



———— **Chilliwack People First:** Chilliwack People First is part of the People First movement. They advocate for people with developmental disabilities to be seen for their abilities and supported to be full citizens in their communities.

www.cscl.org/about-us/bc-people-first

———— **Inclusion Press Person-Centered Planning:** Helpful tools related to person-centered planning, such as MAPS, PATH, and Circles of Support.

www.inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning

———— **My Booklet BC:** A free online tool for creating personalized information books for your loved one or themselves. This tool encourages teams (schools, agencies, medical teams) to engage in person-centered planning and support.

www.mybookletbc.com

———— **People First of Canada:** A national organization representing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They are a national voice focused on the right to freedom, choice and equality.

www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca

———— **Self Advocates of the Rockies:** A dedicated team of professionals focused on providing services that empower individuals with diverse abilities to develop and maintain autonomy within their community.

www.realmbc.ca/category/self-advocates-of-the-rockies

———— **Self Advocates of Semiahmoo:** Builds community, accessibility and inclusion in their community, province and country. They collaborate and partner with various organizations to make positive change.

www.uniti4all.com/self-advocates-of-semiahmoo

———— **Talk North West BC Facebook group:** A self advocacy group of people with developmental disabilities launched to support social connection through the COVID pandemic.

www.facebook.com — [search Talk North West BC \(Pages\) Non-Profit Organization](https://www.facebook.com/search/Talk%20North%20West%20BC%20(Pages)%20Non-Profit%20Organization)

———— **Speaking Up Self-Advocacy:** A Facebook group for advocacy initiatives on inclusion, accessibility and more.

www.facebook.com/groups/871356340310984/



WayFinders: Offers personalized conversations and resources to families to empower people with disabilities to find their direction toward fuller, richer lives in their community. Wayfinders facilitators can provide free support regarding person-centred planning, including support with transition to adulthood.

www.wayfindersbc.ca

Transition planning resources

BC Centre for Ability's transitioning to high school guide: This guide is for parents of children with diverse abilities and covers three main sections: preparing yourself, school process and mental wellness.

<https://inclusionbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/BCCFA-Transitioning-to-High-School-Guide.pdf>

Children with Disabilities or Diversabilities Starting School: A helpful guide for parents of children with disabilities as they prepare for starting school.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/special-needs-supports-for-families/supporting-transitions/special-needs-starting-school>

Guide on Preparing to Access Community Living BC Supports: This transition planning guide can begin to be used at age 16 and lays out the key steps in the transition to Community Living BC.

www.communitylivingbc.ca/what-support-is-available/preparing-access-clbc-supports

Cross-ministry Transition Planning Protocol: Covers topics related to government services and supports for youth with support needs. Topics include the steps in the transition planning process, guiding principles, a list of government services and supports, and their role in transition planning and implementation.

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/children-teens-with-support-needs/2012_ytpp_protocol.pdf

Education Planner BC: A free online tool that helps people find their education and career path in British Columbia.

www.educationplannerbc.ca



FindSupport BC transitions timeline: A helpful transition timeline to guide people with disabilities and their families through various items to consider at different stages of life.

www.findsupportbc.com/timeline

On My Way: A transition planning guide for families and students that can be used in workshops or on its own to prepare a student for life after high school. This guide is from Inclusion BC.

www.inclusionbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/TransitionPlanningBooklet.pdf

Primary Years Information for Teachers — Transition to Kindergarten: A framework and guide for teachers to support students transitioning to kindergarten.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/primary-years

Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE): A series of guides on support transition planning, helping young people explore their hopes and dreams for the future and making a transition plan. Eligibility guidelines are listed on the website.

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/youth-transitions

Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD): Find system navigators who can support transitions of youth aged 16 to 24 and their families in 145 communities across the province. Once you become eligible for Community Living BC, you can request support from one of the Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities navigators.

www.communitylivingbc.ca/what-support-is-available/preparing-access-clbc-supports/services-to-adults-with-developmental-disabilities-stadd

STEPS Forward: Partners with post-secondary institutions across British Columbia to co-create inclusive post-secondary education initiatives that support belonging, for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in both the academic and social life of their campuses.

www.bc-ipse.org

Transition to Adult Care—BC Children's Hospital: A program offered through BC Children's Hospital to support youth with special health care needs and their families or caregivers to gain the confidence, skills and knowledge to be ready to enter the adult health care system.

www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/support-services/transition-to-adult-care

Transition planning handbook—North Vancouver School District: A helpful guide and planning tool created to support grade 10 to 12 students with support needs as they plan for their future.

www.sd44.ca/ProgramsServices/InclusiveEducation/Documents/TransitionPlanning.pdf



Mental health resources

FamilySmart: A non-profit organization that helps children, young people, their families, and caring adults through parent peer support, monthly events, resources, and workshops to support the mental health of children, youth and families.

www.familysmart.ca

Foundry: A network of centers that provide integrated health and wellness services for young people aged 12 to 24 and their caregivers. They have in-person and virtual services, including counselling, peer support and various educational opportunities. They also have a three-step Foundry Pathfinder tool to help you find personalized supports.

www.foundrybc.ca

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre through BC Children's Hospital: Provides mental health and substance use information, resources, and peer support to families across the province. They also support people of all ages with eating disorders. Their services are free of charge.

www.keltymentalhealth.ca

Stigma-Free Mental Health Society: A non-profit that provides educational tools and leadership to foster awareness of stigma, providing pathways to change. Services include educating children and young people on mental well-being and stigma and providing programs tailored to rural residents.

www.stigmafreementalhealth.com

Legal assistance

Child and Youth Legal Centre: Provides legal support for young people experiencing problems relating to family law, child protection, a breach of human rights and many other legal issues.

www.scyofbc.org/child-youth-legal-centre

Community Legal Assistance Society: A non-profit law firm that provides legal assistance and works to advance the law to address the critical needs of those who are disadvantaged or face discrimination.

www.clasbc.net



Are you reading on a digital device?
Access any resource listed here with a quick click.

Disability Law Clinic: Provides a free summary advice and referral service, a confidential legal service, to persons with disabilities from across British Columbia on certain disability-related areas of law, like accessibility laws, human rights discrimination, access to services, workplace accommodations, post-secondary education, transportation, decision-making rights, removing committees, public guardian and trustee and long-term disability insurance.

www.disabilityalliancebc.org/program/disability-law-clinic

Disability Law Clinic Resource Referral Guide: Includes information about legal resources arranged by topic, and some non-legal resources.

www.disabilityalliancebc.org/programs/disability-law-clinic-resource-referral-guide

Legal Aid BC: Offers free legal advice, prioritizing people with low incomes. Legal aid offers representation regarding family law, child protection, criminal law, immigration and mental health. They also provide advice from family lawyers and duty counsel lawyers.

www.legalaid.bc.ca

Sources Community Law Clinic: Provides advocacy, legal advice and representation, mainly to low-income people and families.

www.sourcesbc.ca/our-services/community-law-clinic

Advocacy organizations

ADHD Advocacy Society of BC: Provides information to help aid in advocacy journeys. This society also works with local government leaders to create awareness around the lack of current services and share how the attention hyperactivity deficit disorder community can be better supported.

www.adhdbcsociety.com

Advocate for Service Quality: Helps government better support teenagers and adults with developmental disabilities by advocating collaboratively with teens with developmental disabilities who are entering adulthood, teens with support needs and family members and caregivers who support a person with a developmental disability.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/services-for-people-with-disabilities/supports-services/advocate-for-service-quality>



Autistics United Canada: A grassroots advocacy organization by and for autistic people in what is colonially known as Canada.

www.autisticsunitedca.org

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils: Acts as an officially recognized collective voice for parents of public schools. They aim to advance meaningful parent participation throughout the public education system to advocate for the success of all students.

www.bccpac.bc.ca/upload/2016/05/lm-tab1_parent_involvement-basic_principles_0.pdf

BCEdAccess Society: A volunteer-run organization that provides information, support and advocacy for families of students with disabilities and complex learners in British Columbia. They advocate through their peer support group, presentations, workshops, and at a systemic level. BCEdAccess also publishes an exclusion tracker report and has a private Facebook support group that parents can join. See the second link for a helpful guide on using a rights-based approach to advocate and resolve conflict for students with disabilities in BC education.

www.bcedaccess.com

Also from BCEdAccess Society: A helpful guide on how to use a rights-based approach to advocate and resolve conflict for students with disabilities in BC education.

www.bcedaccess.com/2020/02/13/advocacy-and-conflict-resolution

BC Complex Kids Society: A grassroots group of families who have children with health complexities. Their Facebook page includes important updates, events, and ways to get involved in advocacy.

www.facebook.com/BCComplexKids

Disability Alliance of BC: A provincial, cross-disability voice that supports people with disabilities to live with dignity and independence. They offer support for accessing persons with disabilities benefits, the Canada pension plan, the disability tax credit and the registered disability savings plan. They also have a disability law clinic and a program that matches wheelchair users with accessible, affordable housing.

www.disabilityalliancebc.org

Dyslexia BC: A parent-led grassroots movement concerned with the limited access to educational interventions and resources for dyslexia. They advocate within the kindergarten to grade 12 education system, post-secondary education, the community, and the workplace.

www.dyslexiabc.ca



Family Support Institute of BC: A provincial non-profit society committed to supporting families who have a family member with a disability. They have resource parents/peers who have a family member with a disability. These people are trained volunteers who support by sharing experiences, expertise, and guidance.

www.familysupportbc.com

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society: First Call puts children and youth first through public education, community mobilization, and public policy advocacy. Their work includes systemic advocacy on various issues related to children and youth.

www.firstcallbc.org

First Nations Education Steering Committee: A policy and advocacy organization that represents and works on behalf of First Nations in British Columbia. They are mandated to support First Nations students and advance First Nations education.

www.fnesc.ca

Inclusion Canada: A national federation working to advance the full inclusion and human rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families.

www.inclusioncanada.ca

Inclusive Education Canada: A working group of researchers, advocates, professionals, and other experts who work to implement inclusive education policy through research, investment in teachers and students and building capacity in our schools.

www.inclusiveeducation.ca

Parent Support Services Society of BC: Supports the well-being of all families and children by empowering those in a parenting role through community connections, research, education and advocacy. They offer free parenting support groups, workshops, a kinship care help line and more.

www.parentsupportbc.ca

PovNet: An online community of advocates and front-line workers that addresses poverty and promotes access to justice for vulnerable residents of British Columbia.

www.povnet.org

Representative for Children and Youth: Advocates to ensure that the rights and interests of children, youth and young adults are protected and upheld and that their views are heard and considered by decision-makers. They can support youth transitioning out of government care and into Community Living BC services. They can't support in the educational system or speak for children regarding legal decisions.

www.rcybc.ca



Resources specific to condition, disability or disorder

Aide BC: Canada's largest resource hub for content catered to autism and neurodivergent communities. Their website includes a location program map to help find services and a lending library with over 3,000 books on autism. They also have many helpful educational videos and toolkits.

www.aidecanada.ca

The Asante Centre: The Asante Centre believes in diverse abilities and is committed to understanding and addressing developmental stress during pre-conception, pregnancy, and early childhood. They work alongside families to support those who have experienced stressors and live with a developmental disability.

www.asantecentre.org

Autism Community Training: Specializes in evidence-informed training, research and resources to support neurodivergent individuals. They provide tailored services, education and advocacy initiatives to promote true equity and understanding.

www.actcommunity.ca

Autism and Intellectual Disability Search: An online tool for searching an extensive database of resources related to autism and intellectual disabilities. Resources can be found in 36 languages.

www.aid.actcommunity.ca

Autism BC: Autism BC aims to help the autism community live their best lives. They empower, support and connect the autism community in BC. Autism BC provides workshops, social clubs, and support groups, and have a resource team that can support in directing to the best resources and services to suit your needs.

www.autismbc.ca

BC Centre for Ability: Provides community-based services to enhance the quality of life for children, youth with special needs and adults with disabilities. They host child and youth programs related to brain injury, early intervention, family counselling, key worker programs for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and complex developmental behavioural conditions, and supported child development.

www.bc-cfa.org



Canadian Deafblind Association BC: Helps people with deafblindness to achieve the best quality of life through personalized, life-long intervention.

www.cdbabc.ca

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, BC Chapter: Dedicated to decreasing isolation, removing barriers, and promoting an accessible and welcoming society for people living with hearing loss. Their key objectives are focused on education, self-empowerment, advocacy and accessibility.

www.chha-bc.org

CanChild: Research centre that focuses on children and youth with developmental conditions and their families. They developed the F-Words for child development to help people focus on what children can do: functioning, family, fitness, fun, friends and future.

www.canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/f-words-in-childhood-disability

Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults: A program for adults aged 19 and older who require an augmentative/alternative communication system due to a severe communication disability.

www.cayabc.net

Cerebral Palsy Association of BC: A non-profit organization with the vision of creating a life without limits for people with disabilities. They host activities such as adapted yoga, dance and movement therapy. They also host support groups for individuals with cerebral palsy and caregivers.

www.bccerebralpalsy.com

Child Development & Rehabilitation InfoSource: A source for development, rehabilitation and support information and resources for children and youth with neurodiversity and/or disability.

www.cdrinfosource.ca

Down Syndrome Resource Foundation: Supports people living with Down syndrome and their families with individualized educational programs, health services, information resources, and rich social connections so each person can flourish. They offer group educational and recreational programs and personalized educational and health services.

www.dsrf.org

FindSupport BC: Connects families of persons with disabilities with resources. They also have a map of British Columbia to explore accessible public locations.

www.findsupportbc.com



Are you reading on a digital device?
Access any resource listed here with a quick click.

Inspire Kids – FASD Support Society of BC: Stands with parents and caregivers of children and youth with fetal alcohol syndrome. They focus on education, support and advocacy as their key pillars.

www.inspirefasd.ca

Rolling with ADHD: A unique video and presentation series that offers bite-sized insights, ideas and strategies to help teachers support students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in the classroom.

www.healthymindslearning.ca/rollingwith-adhd

Complex medical needs

Nursing Support Services: Helps parents and caregivers of children and youth with medical complexities to lead active, healthy lives in their communities. They provide respite care in the home, teaches and supports staff with diabetes care and tube feeds and more.

www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre/our-services/nursing-support

Sunny Hill Health Centre at BC Children's Hospital: This clinic provides specialized developmental assessments and rehabilitation services to children and youth and their families.

www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre

Gender and disability

Disabled Women's Network Canada: Their mission is to end poverty, isolation, discrimination, and violence experienced by women with disabilities and deaf women.

www.dawncanada.net/about/about

QMUNITY – British Columbia's Queer, Trans, and Two-spirit Resource Centre: QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver that works to improve queer, trans, and two-spirit lives through services, connection and leadership. QMUNITY provides counselling, peer support groups, special events, inclusivity workshops, and more.

www.qmunity.ca

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Canada: A well-established and dedicated advocate for gender equality for all women, girls, trans, and non-binary people. They focus on litigation, law reform, and public education.

www.leaf.ca

Dictionary of common words and terms

A

Accommodation: Changes or adjustments to the learning environment to support students so they can learn the same material as their peers. Accommodations could include breaks, larger print, additional time, smaller group settings, assistive technology, and preferential seating.

Adaptations: Teaching and assessment strategies that accommodate students' needs so they can achieve the learning outcomes of the grade-level curriculum.

Annual Instructional Plan (AIP): This is an educational plan for English language learners. It includes language and literacy goals that can be reasonably met in the current school year.

Applied behavioural analysis: A type of therapy based on the science of learning and behaviour. This therapy is frequently used with children with autism and other developmental disorders. The therapy goal is to increase helpful behaviours and decrease harmful behaviours.

Autism spectrum disorder: A diverse group of conditions related to brain development that impact a person's communication and social interactions.

B

BC Health Authorities: These regional health authorities deliver health services within five geographic areas of the province: Island Health, Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal, Interior Health, and Northern Health.

BC School Act: This provincial law applies to primary and secondary education in British Columbia. It outlines legal roles, rights, and responsibilities for parents, students, and the education system.

C

Canadian Human Rights Commission: An agency that promotes and protects human rights in Canada.

Child and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) worker: A person who works for the Ministry of Child and Family Development and supports children, youth, and families in accessing services and funding for eligible children and youth.

Circles of support: A key component of person-centred planning. They involve expanding and strengthening a person's network of friends and other support. These could include neighbours, support providers, and teammates, for example.

Class placement: Determines who your child's teacher is and who else is in their class. The school principal determines class placement.

Community Living BC (CLBC): A provincial crown corporation that supports adults with developmental disabilities and their families in connecting to life-enriching services and programs in their community. A provincial or federal crown corporation is structured like a private or independent company. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is another example of a federal crown corporation.

Competency-based individualized education plan (CB-IEP): A strengths-based, person-centred learning plan developed for students with individualized learning needs. A CB-IEP includes competencies that combine skills, processes, behaviours, and habits of mind.

Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) Network: A diagnostic service that provides assessments for children ages 18 months to 19 years across the province. Your child will be assessed by a dedicated team of pediatric specialists, including developmental pediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists.

Core competencies: Thinking, communication, and personal and social skills. These core competencies are part of the British Columbia curriculum and directly related to educating and preparing students for lifelong learning.

Cultural safety (in schools): A concept and belief that schools should be aware that some students could react emotionally to learning about topics that have affected their own lives, their families' lives, or their cultural community. Students can also respond emotionally to hearing and learning about the adversity, unfair treatment, and challenges others have faced.

Curricular competencies: The specific skills and abilities students need to learn and use in school. These competencies include knowledge and the application of the knowledge. For example, in math, curricular competencies include problem-solving, critical thinking, and applying math concepts to real-world situations.

D

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act: This act commits the province to aligning its policies with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ensuring the protection and respect of Indigenous rights and cultures. The government must develop and implement an action plan for this purpose.

Designation: A category represented by a letter assigned to students with a diagnosis that recognizes an exceptional learning need. All students with designations must have an individual education plan (IEP). Every year, school districts receive supplemental funding based on the number of students with certain designations in each district.

Diversity (in schools): When students with different abilities, life experiences, personalities, cultural backgrounds, identities, and viewpoints come together in the same space to learn and play.

Dogwood Diploma: The British Columbia certificate of graduation awarded to students who complete the required courses and meet the provincial graduation standards.

E

Education assistant (EA): Someone who works in classrooms with teachers to support students with learning activities, especially those who require additional help.

Educational team: The team is the people who come together to support the students as they make and meet goals. Students should be involved in the planning and decision-making of their own education as much as possible. What this looks like will differ for each student and can even change over time as they get older.

English Language Learner (ELL): A student learning English as a second language and who needs additional English language development support to access and succeed with the curriculum.

Evergreen Certificate/School Completion Certificate: The British Columbia certificate of school completion awarded to students to celebrate success in learning. It recognizes the achievements of students who met their individualized goals but didn't meet the complete provincial graduation standards to be awarded a Dogwood Diploma.

F

Formal assessment: Structured and standardized evaluations, like tests and exams, measure students' skills in various aspects of learning. These assessments provide factual information about a student's achievement and help guide instructional decisions.

Functional Behaviour assessment (FBA): This assessment aims to identify, understand, and explain students' behaviour within their context (classroom, school). The results can be used to find effective strategies to support more positive behaviours.

I

Independent school: A privately funded and operated school that isn't part of the public education system. It can design its curriculum, policies, and admission requirements while following specific provincial standards.

Indigenous liaison worker: A professional who supports and facilitates communication between Indigenous students, families, and schools. They work to address cultural needs, promote Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum, and make sure Indigenous students get the support and resources they need for their educational success.

Indigenous support worker: A professional who assists Indigenous students and their families to create a support plan and get personalized, culturally meaningful resources.

Individualized education plan (IEP): A customized educational plan developed for students with diverse learning needs. It outlines specific learning goals, accommodations, modifications, and support services tailored to students' unique needs to help them succeed in their education.

Informal assessment: A non-standardized, flexible evaluation method teachers use to assess a student's learning and progress. It may include observations, discussions, quizzes, and student work samples, which give ongoing insights into a student's understanding and development.

Institutionalized: Being placed in a formal institution, like a residential facility, where someone is separated from the rest of society and often has limitations on their autonomy and inclusion in their community.

Integrated case management (ICM) meeting: A meeting that brings together various services and support systems to address a student's needs. It integrates different aspects of care and support for more holistic solutions.

Integration: When students with disabilities are in shared spaces for activities and may be doing parallel activities but are not fully included in a meaningful way with their peers.

Intersectionality: Recognition that we are all the sum of many parts, including ability, health, race, class, gender, culture, language ability, gender identity, and so much more. All of these parts of us inform the way we see and experience the world around us. These parts can also drive discrimination and oppression or make people vulnerable and "othered."

Inuit Child First Initiative: A program that integrates Inuit culture and language into the curriculum and gives targeted support to address the unique needs of Inuit children.

J

Jordan's Principle: Canada's legal obligation is to make sure First Nations children get the services they need when they need them. Jordan's Principle is named in memory of Jordan River Anderson, a Cree child from Manitoba who died in hospital after the government of Canada and the province of Manitoba refused to pay for necessary in-home medical supports. Both levels of government claimed the other was responsible for care.

L

Learning assistance teacher: A professional who provides specialized support to students with diverse learning needs by offering personalized instruction, interventions, and strategies to help them succeed academically and overcome challenges.

M

MAPS: A person-centred planning process for getting to know a person more deeply, dreaming with them, and building a plan to move in the direction of their dreams.

Mediator: A neutral third party leading communication and negotiation between conflicting people or groups to reach a resolution or agreement. The mediator doesn't make decisions but guides parties toward finding an acceptable solution to both sides.

Ministerial Order: An official order issued by a government minister. These orders establish policies, regulations, or procedures within their authority. From an education perspective, orders can mandate specific requirements or standards for schools and educational programs.

Modification: A change in expected learning outcomes that involves altering the curriculum. Examples of modifications can include different questions, lower-level reading, alternative projects, shortened assignments, an adjusted grading scale, and more.

Multidisciplinary care team: A group of professionals from different fields (like teachers, counsellors, and health care providers) working together to provide comprehensive and coordinated support for individuals with complex needs.

N

National monitoring mechanism: This mechanism is often used to oversee and ensure compliance with specific provincial standards and regulations, such as those related to human rights, education, or environmental practices while monitoring the effectiveness and progress of these initiatives within the province.

Nonviolent communication (NVC): A method of communication that focuses on expressing oneself honestly and empathetically while listening to others with compassion. It emphasizes understanding needs, avoiding blame or judgment, and fostering constructive dialogue to resolve conflicts and build positive relationships.

O

Ombudsperson: An independent official who investigates and resolves complaints from the public about unfair treatment or maladministration by provincial government agencies, municipal governments, and certain organizations. They ensure accountability, transparency, and fairness in government operations and services.

P

PATH: This person-centred planning process imagines different futures by thinking backward, setting future goals, and imagining how they can come true.

Performative scale: A tool to assess and measure students' performance or achievements across various criteria. It helps educators evaluate various aspects of student work, like skills, behaviours, and understanding, often providing a way to quantify and compare performance levels in a structured manner.

Person-centred planning: An approach that focuses on designing and delivering support based on a person's unique needs, preferences, and goals. It involves actively engaging the person in planning their care or educational path, ensuring that decisions are tailored to their aspirations and values.

Persons with Disabilities (PWD): This designation is needed to access provincial disability assistance and supplements. To be eligible for disability assistance in British Columbia, a person must meet the ministry's criteria for the PWD designation.

Plan of supervision: A plan communicating how education staff will oversee and support students, especially those needing additional assistance or monitoring. It includes specific strategies for supervising students' progress, behaviour, and learning, setting goals, and providing regular feedback to encourage success and address challenges.

Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBS): A proactive strategy that promotes and reinforces positive behaviours and addresses challenging ones by setting goals and implementing supportive interventions.

Provincial graduation assessments: Standardized tests designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills in key curriculum areas, including literacy and numeracy. These assessments help determine whether students meet the provincial requirements for high school graduation and a Dogwood Diploma.

Provincial Outreach Programs (POPs): Outreach services to support educators, students, and families to meet the needs of students with disabilities within public, independent and First Nations schools. These programs also include homeschool settings. Program staff are subject matter experts who work to ensure all students' needs are met.

Psychoeducational assessment (Psych-Ed): A formal assessment designed to measure cognitive ability, memory, attention, behaviour, social and emotional functioning, academic functioning and more. It provides recommendations for supports and accommodations that may help a child or youth at home and school.

R

Resource teacher: An educator who provides specialized support to students with diverse learning needs in school. They help implement individualized education plans (IEPs), collaborate with classroom teachers, and make sure learning is accessible for all students.

Restraint: When a child's movement is restricted so they can't move their upper body, arms, legs, or head freely.

S

School-based team (SBT): A group of school staff who meet regularly to problem-solve and help classroom teachers develop and use instructional and management strategies. This team also coordinates support resources for students within the school.

Seclusion: When a child is put alone in a room or area and isn't free to leave or believes they aren't free to leave.

Self-determination: The ability to make choices and decisions, leading to greater autonomy and control over their life.

Sensory processing disorder: A condition where the brain has difficulty receiving and responding to sensory information. This difficulty can lead to challenges in processing and reacting to sensory stimuli like sounds, textures, or lights. Over- or under-sensitivity to sensory inputs can impact daily functioning and behaviour.

Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD): Offers services to help transitioning youth and their families in many British Columbia communities. STADD's navigators support coordinating, planning, and accessing supports and services through the transition period between 16 and 24 years old.

Seven C's of communication: An effective communication strategy which includes being clear, concise, concrete, correct, courteous, complete, and coherent.

SMART goals: A framework to set education goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based. Inclusive education advocate and researcher Shelley Moore has redefined SMART goals as strength-based, meaningful, authentic, responsive, and triangulated (multiple types and examples of how a student shows learning).

Steps Forward: A provincial initiative for inclusive post-secondary education. This initiative aims to support belonging for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their academic and social lives on campus.

Student learning plan/Student support plan (SLP/SSP): A personalized plan that can be created for a student who doesn't have a ministry designation but needs support in one or more areas of learning.

Student safety plan: An individualized plan developed with district staff, school staff, and parents to support a student whose behaviours could escalate and cause a risk of injury to themselves or others. This plan provides directions for appropriate staff responses if a child's behaviour escalates. The goal is to prevent high-risk behaviour from happening.

T

Transition planning: Preparing students for significant changes in their educational journey. One of the biggest transitions is from high school to life after high school, but transition planning can also be helpful when children start kindergarten and when students move from elementary to middle to high school.

Truth and Reconciliation: The process of acknowledging and addressing historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities

U

United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: An international treaty that protects and promotes the human rights and dignity of people with disabilities. This convention establishes principles and standards for accessibility, equality, and non-discrimination that guide countries as they create supportive environments for people with disabilities and ensure their full inclusion and participation in society.

Common acronyms and what they stand for

As a parent/caregiver, you might hear your school team and other people using acronyms or shortened versions of words. All these initials can be confusing and frustrating until you become familiar with them. Here's a helpful list of common acronyms you might see, hear, and read, and what they stand for:

AIP	Annual Instructional Plan
ABA	Applied Behavioural Analysis
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BA	Behaviour Analyst
BI	Behavioural Interventionist
BCBA	Board Certified Behaviour Analyst
CB-IEP	Competency-based Individualized Education Plan
CDBC	Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions
CLBC	Community Living British Columbia
CYSN	Children and Youth with Support Needs
CYMH	Child and Youth Mental Health
DDMH	Developmental Disabilities Mental Health
EA	Education Assistant
ELL	English Language Learner
FBA	Functional Behaviour Assessment
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
ICM	Integrated Case Management
MCFD	Ministry of Children and Family Development
MECC	Ministry of Education and Child Care
MAPS	My Achievement Pathway to Success
PAC	Parent Advisory Council
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
PBS	Positive Behaviour Support Plan
PATH	Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope
Psych-Ed	Psychoeducational Assessment
STADD	Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities
SLP	Student Learning Plan; also Speech and Language Pathologist
SSP	Student Support Plan
OT	Occupational Therapist
PT	Physiotherapist

Things to do before, during, and after meeting with your child's educational team

Meetings with your child's educational team can be stressful and overwhelming. It helps to go in with a plan so you can focus on advocating for the right outcomes for your child.

Before the meeting

- Be clear on the purpose of the meeting.
- Know your rights and your child's rights ([Chapter 3](#)).
- If you called the meeting, prepare and email an agenda to people you know will be there.
- Ask for an agenda if someone else has called the meeting.
- Clarify what decisions will be made at the meeting, if any.
- Decide what materials to bring.
- Prepare your presentation, questions, or concerns.
- Be realistic about what one meeting will be able to cover.
- Ask who will be attending and what their roles will be.
- Invite support people familiar with you and your child (such as therapists) or others you may need (such as translators). If necessary, ask the school for help arranging this.
- If you invite support people, notify the person who called the meeting that others will be attending, prepare supporters with copies of relevant materials, and let supporters know the meeting's purpose.

During the meeting

- Listen actively—it's harder than it sounds! It's okay to have a few seconds of silence before you respond.
- Ask everyone there to introduce themselves and explain their role.
- Be accurate.
- Ask questions and express your opinion.
- Seek facts and clarification, if necessary.
- Be open to ideas.
- Begin statements with "I."
- Take careful notes or have someone else take them for you.
- Make sure you understand the information presented by professionals.
- Bring a photo of the student if the student isn't attending.
- Summarize the discussion and review the decisions made.
- Don't agree on a decision or sign anything you aren't comfortable with.
- Remember that you have the right to think about requests before deciding. School staff also have this right.
- Ask for a copy of meeting notes taken by others.
- Identify the next steps, identify who's responsible for carrying them out, and set reasonable timelines.
- Set follow-up meetings if necessary.



After the meeting


- Review your meeting notes and add anything you missed.
- Compare your notes with minutes taken by others.
- Respond in writing to the person who led the meeting (or the principal), thank them for their time or meeting, and acknowledge if the meeting was different, the fact that it went well, or a solution was found. Outline your understanding of significant points covered or decisions made. Indicate whether or not you agree. Also, note dates set for completing tasks, describe your future role or responsibilities and include positive feedback.



Tips for reviewing your child's individualized education plan (IEP)

So, the school has sent you the individualized education plan (or competency-based individualized education plan) they've drafted for your child. How do you know if it's accurate and appropriate? Individualized education plans typically measure "learning" and "success" with a strategy using the acronym **S.M.A.R.T.** This strategy says goals should be: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely.

However, as advocate and researcher Shelley Moore points out, this strategy must be revised. She offers a different framework you can use to make sure your child's plan reflects a new kind of SMART. To evaluate the plan, ask yourself if the goals are:

 **Strength-based**
 **Authentic**
 **Meaningful**
 **Responsive**
 **Triangulated**

Using this new strategy, here are some questions you can ask yourself as you review and evaluate your child's individualized education plan each year:

- Are the goals clearly stated?
- Do the goals match with the standard curriculum and core competencies?
- Do the goals promote the inclusion of your child?
- Was the student involved in educational planning and decision-making?
- Does the plan reflect competence and communicate high expectations?
- Do the goals prepare your child for the future?
- Do the goals incorporate their interests and strengths?
- Are there long-term and short-term goals?
- Are the people responsible for helping meet the goals noted?
- Does plan include other services like speech and language or occupational therapy?
- Does the plan include upcoming transitions, if needed?
- How will my child's progress be measured or evaluated? Who is evaluating them?
- How will we know when the goals are reached?
- Does the plan include all program options and extracurricular opportunities?
- Is there a review date set?



[Click to watch Shelley's Moore's video called "See Ya Later, S.M.A.R.T goals!"](#) (6 minutes)

Save for later? Copy/paste this link:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOrntS8NrUY

Checklist for September:

Prepping for a new year, new teacher, and new needs

If there's one thing that can reduce stress, it's a helpful list! We've put together a checklist of things to do to help you adjust to a new school year and set you and your child up for a successful transition into a new classroom. Some of the things on this list can be done as the school term starts, and others can wait.



Know your and your child's educational rights (or remind yourself of them).

- [Click to read this short article](#) called Right to Education from Inclusive Education Canada (available at www.inclusiveeducation.ca/learn/right-to-education).



Make a one-page profile about your child for the education team.

"Wait—didn't I do this last year? Do I have to do it again?" Yes, it's always a good idea! A lot can change in a year when you're a kid. Here are a few examples and templates:

- [myBooklet BC](#) is a free online resource created by a parent.
- [A Day In Our Shoes blog](#) has free printable one-page profiles you can fill out.



Find the names and contact information for members of the school team.

Ask your school (school administration is back at work the last two weeks of August), or these details might be on your school's website. Find info for the teacher, education assistant, resource teacher or learning support teacher, and principal or vice-principal.



Learn what an individualized education plan (IEP) is, or refresh your memory!

This plan will shape your child's learning for the year, and the first meeting with the education team is usually in October or November. You can connect with your school district to learn about the specific format they use for this plan. Here are some resources on individualized education plans:

- [POPARD video](#) explaining individualized education plans
- [Parent guide](#) from BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
- [Plan template example](#) from a school district
- [Video about individualized education plan goals](#) by Shelley Moore
- [Read chapter 5](#) of this handbook





Catch up with short articles and videos.

There are so many resources that detail what school might be like for your child, how you can help, or get more information. We picked a few of our favourites for you:

- [Exercising Self Determination in our Schools](#) is a short film from our Inclusive Education series
- [Strategies for a Successful Kindergarten Year](#) is a short film about a parent helping their child successfully transition into their first year at school. Parent guide from BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
- [Social-Emotional Health from BC Centre for Ability shares information and a video](#) about promoting social-emotional health in school-aged children



Reach out when you need support!

We're including this as a "thing to do" because finding time, the right words or questions, or the courage to ask for support can be hard. This is what Inclusion BC does for parents and caregivers just like you. If your child and your family's experience during this back-to-school is challenging, you have many options.

- [Explore our Inclusion BC federation members](#) list to find support and advocacy organizations in your community or:
- [Click here to fill in the BCEDAccess Exclusion Tracker](#). They are collecting data to document experiences of exclusion in our province.



Get family support.

Here are some peer networks you can connect with:

- [Family Support Institute of BC](#): A provincial volunteer parent network.
- [The parent group for BCEdAccess](#): A Facebook group
- [BC Complex Kids](#): A Facebook group




There will always be things to learn and do, but this checklist is a great start! Make it manageable to you and remember: take it one step at a time. If you found this information helpful, please consider sharing it with your networks.

Find more information on inclusive education at www.inclusionbc.org

List of special needs designations by the Ministry of Education and Child Care

The Ministry of Education and Child Care provides funding to school districts so they can deliver public education services. All school districts get basic allocation: a set amount of basic funding per student registered in the school district, which includes students with disabilities and additional support needs. School districts also get extra—or supplementary—funding to support students with special needs. Your child must

have a special needs designation for an individualized education plan (IEP). The British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care applies these designations to recognize students with chronic health conditions, special physical or mental health needs, or learning challenges. They use the following lettering system to identify and group the kind of support a student may need.

 Click the links below to learn more about ministry funding for public schools:

- [General \(basic\) funding](#)
- [Inclusive education funding](#)



Writing effective emails to people in the school system

Email is often the best and fastest way to reach someone. It's also an easy way to document your communications for your record-keeping. Writing an email can be challenging, especially when emotions are involved. So, how do you write an email that will lead to a positive outcome? Follow this general outline to communicate your needs and wants effectively. We've provided an example of what each step of the outline could look like:

1 State the facts of the situation in non-emotional language.

"My child was not allowed to participate in a classroom activity."

2 Next, explain how the facts of the situation make you (and your child) feel.

Choose a couple of words that can help you express your feelings. Examples of feelings might be scared, confused, curious, or frustrated.

"I feel frustrated and sad that Cole wasn't part of this group activity. He came home very sad and angry, and it took hours for him to feel calm."

3 Then, communicate your needs.

Tell them what you need. This will help you build up your request. Examples of needs are clarity, empathy, hope, trust, and collaboration.

"I need clarity on why Cole wasn't part of the lesson."

4 Finally, make your request.

Make your specific ask. It could be a meeting, an assessment, an increase in support hours, a review of the individualized education plan, or something else.

"Can I meet with Cole's education team to develop a plan to support Cole in the classroom during all group activities?"



Click here for a list of words that can help you communicate your feelings and needs, or bookmark this link: www.nvcacademy.com/media/NVCA/learning-tools/NVCA-feelings-needs.pdf

Busting myths about Grade 13

Let's start with what Grade 13 isn't

It isn't a "bonus year."

It isn't a "hold-back" year.

It isn't only for students with individualized education plans or support needs.



It is an option for all students in B.C. because it is based on when a student is still "school age" as defined by the School Act.

Grade 13 is simply a year beyond Grade 12 and is available to any student in British Columbia who is "of school age." Most youth are 18 when they finish grade 12 but are considered "of school age" until they are 19.

According to the BC School Act, if you turn 19 on July 1st or after, you can enroll in school for the next whole academic year. So yes, if a student is school-age, they can return to school. There's no need for any approval process, and you can't be denied. The school can claim them for the basic allocation, and the district can get the supplemental allocation if the student has a designation from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. The student's learning plans, goals, supports, and services must continue through this year.



If the school district has any questions or doubts about this, they can email the Compliance Branch of the Ministry of Education and Child Care at EDUC.Compliance@gov.bc.ca.

Non-graduating adults

If a student is older than 19, was enrolled in the school year before, and is working towards their Dogwood graduation requirements, they can continue to be enrolled. They are called "non-graduating adults." In this case, adult funding comes into effect, and the district would get the basic allocation plus adult funding but not supplemental funding.



[Click here to find information on the Ministry of Education and Child Care's adult funding policy.](#)

Tips: Planning successful transitions

A well-planned transition can be the difference between flourishing and floundering. So, how do you plan for success? This two-page list of ideas is a great place to start!



Start or maintain an organized binder.

Keep copies of all your child's assessments, medical records, and contacts for the professionals who support or work with your child. Also, include a detailed profile of your child. This kind of organization comes in handy with each transition.



Meet with your child's school in May or June so you can plan for the start of school.

Introduce your child, share any relevant assessments and information, and ask if the school is open to consultation from other professionals working with your child. If it applies, you can also ask to invite someone who has been working with your child in a daycare or preschool setting. They often already have a plan and can offer insights into valuable strategies and supports that work for your child.



Get to know your district.

Each school and district has their inclusion policy and practices published on their website. Visit these websites to understand different departments and find out who you can reach out to if there are any issues.



Work as a team right from the start.

By working together, parents/caregivers and schools can provide the best and most supportive learning environment at home and school. Let the school know your child's strengths and areas they may need support. Ask who will be responsible for supporting them in challenging times.



Plan for your child to start kindergarten on the same day as every student does.

Kindergarten students usually begin the school year with a gradual entry. All students should be in classrooms with their peers after the gradual entry period. In October or November, the school will invite you to be part of the individualized educational plan (IEP). An IEP is a working document that lists their strengths, challenges, goals, and supports needs for the school year.



Follow the proper channels to have your voice heard.

Parents have the right to be consulted and involved in planning, developing and implementing their child's educational program. If you have concerns about what's happening in the school or classroom, start by talking with the teacher. Students in primary grades often have communication books, which are very helpful in open dialogue with your classroom teacher. Ask the teacher what type of communication works for them. It should be easy to fill out and include information from home to school and school to home. If things aren't resolved, then speak to the school principal. Still no resolution? Then, you can reach out to the school district.





Ask for a meeting at the end of the school year to review the plan for next year.

Ask if the goals for this year have been met, and ask for examples of success. If there were challenges, talk about what's working and what's not. See if there are any changes to medical or support needs. You want to begin each year feeling confident in the school's ability to support your child. Keep collaborating so that there is good communication between home and school.



Learn what assessments are done in your school district and when.

Assessments are used to identify a child's learning strengths and support needs. Each school district offers different assessments at different stages. Assessments are required to verify access to [Community Living BC \(CLBC\) services](#), provincial [persons with disability \(PWD\) benefits](#), and some post-secondary student aid for students with disabilities.

Transitioning into high school

Going into high school can bring many emotions and challenges for you and your child as you start thinking about the future beyond school. Make sure your child's individualized educational plan is up-to-date. You should be invited to a meeting with the high school education team every fall.

In high school, you will have a case manager or resource teacher who will be your child's main person of contact. They will be responsible for writing the individualized educational plan, letting teachers know how your child learns best, and communicating any accommodations or modifications your child might need. Include your child in this process so their voice is heard.



Click here for a helpful transitions timeline from the Family Support Institute of BC. The simple checklist guides you through all of your child's transitions from birth to young adulthood.

Dogwood or Evergreen?

There may be a conversation to discuss whether your child will continue to [pursue a Dogwood Diploma or shift to an Evergreen Certificate path](#). Both documents mark the completion of high school but carry different requirements. Together, you can decide the best route for your child.

From high school to adulthood

Transition to adulthood will take more time and planning. The services your child has been accessing will shift from under the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to Community Living BC (CLBC). You'll start coordinating this shift after your child turns 16. Lean on your case manager or resource teacher at this time, as well as your Children and Youth Support Needs (CYSN) worker. They have experience setting up students for a successful transition. Together, you can discover your child's hopes and dreams for the future.

Thank you.

Advocating for your child is hard, important work and you're doing great

That's a wrap on the Parent's Handbook on Inclusive Education! We hope you found some comfort, strength, guidance, information, ideas, and support in its pages. Feel free to use the next few pages to make notes, create lists, or keep important contact information you gather during your journey.

Inclusive education practices, policies and laws are in constant change. In most cases, this change signals important shifts towards true inclusion. It also means the information presented in this handbook needs to be updated regularly. If you notice something has changed and needs to be updated, please email us at advocacy@inclusionbc.org.

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