

BC Parents of Special Needs Kids - Action for Equitable Access to Education

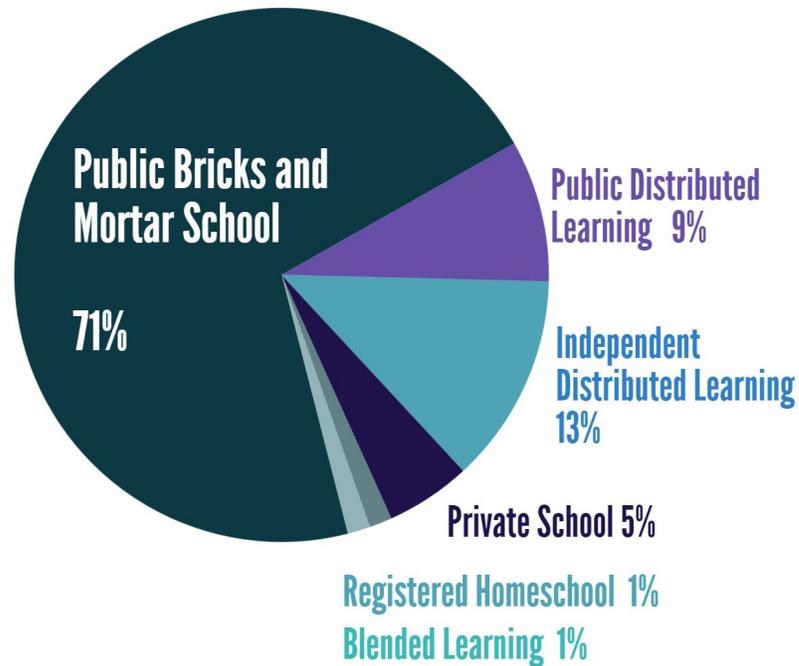
Survey Results

Important Details:

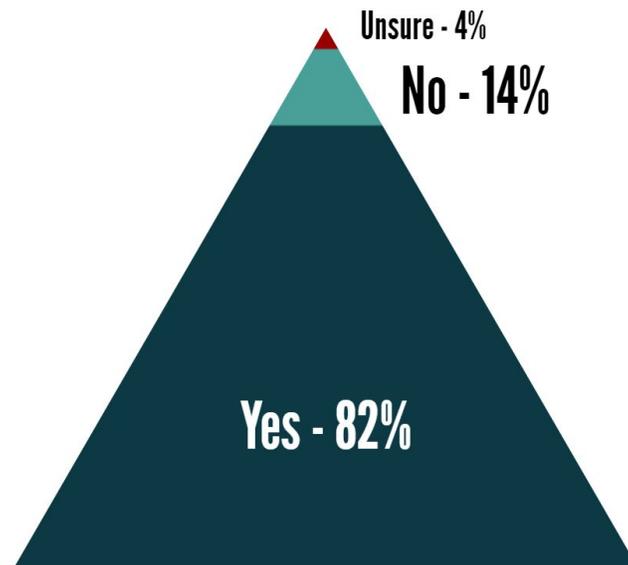
This survey is not scientific, and should only be used as a reference point to further discussion regarding current opinions of parents who have children who have extra learning support needs in public bricks and mortar education in their community. Parents/caregivers who have children who are accessing a public bricks and mortar school (or had accessed in the past) were invited to participate via the survey being posted on a number of Facebook groups for parents who have children with disabilities. The survey was also posted on twitter and shared via email.

The survey was open for two weeks, and generated a total of 318 responses from across 34 School Districts in the province of British Columbia. The Districts of Vancouver (42) , Abbotsford (41) and Surrey (34) generated the most responses. Separate reports for each of those districts are also available.

Parents/caregivers were asked to identify what type of schooling their child was currently accessing.

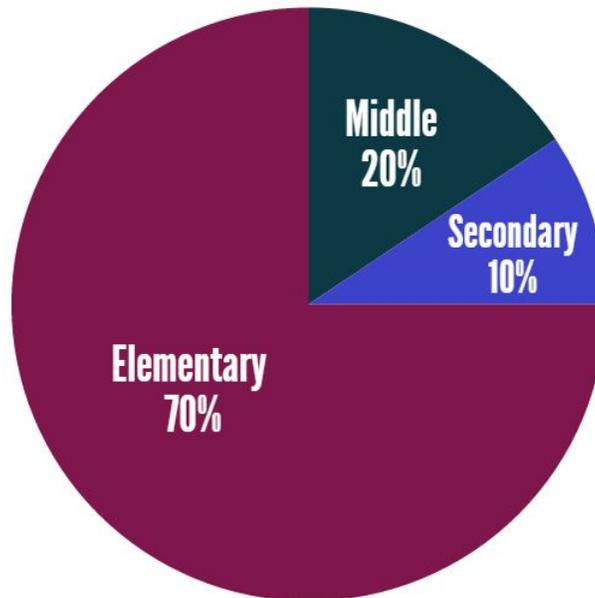


Parents/caregivers indicated whether or not their child currently has a designation/category.

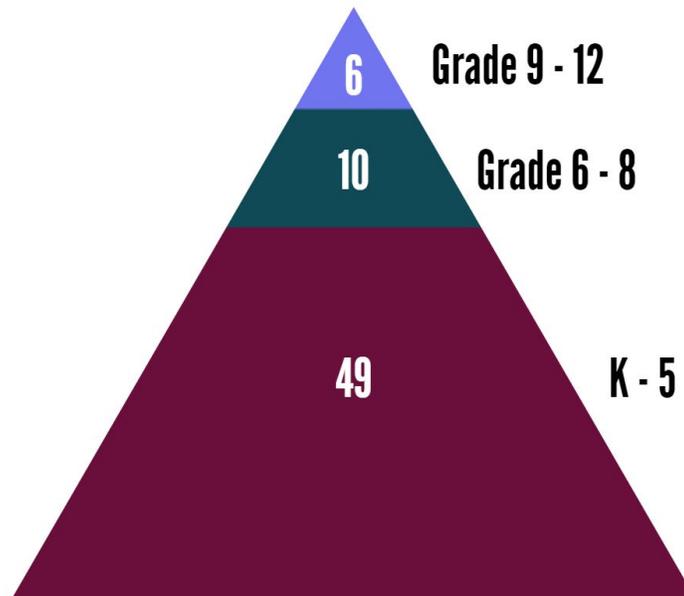


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Parents/Caregivers were asked to indicate the current grade level of their child.

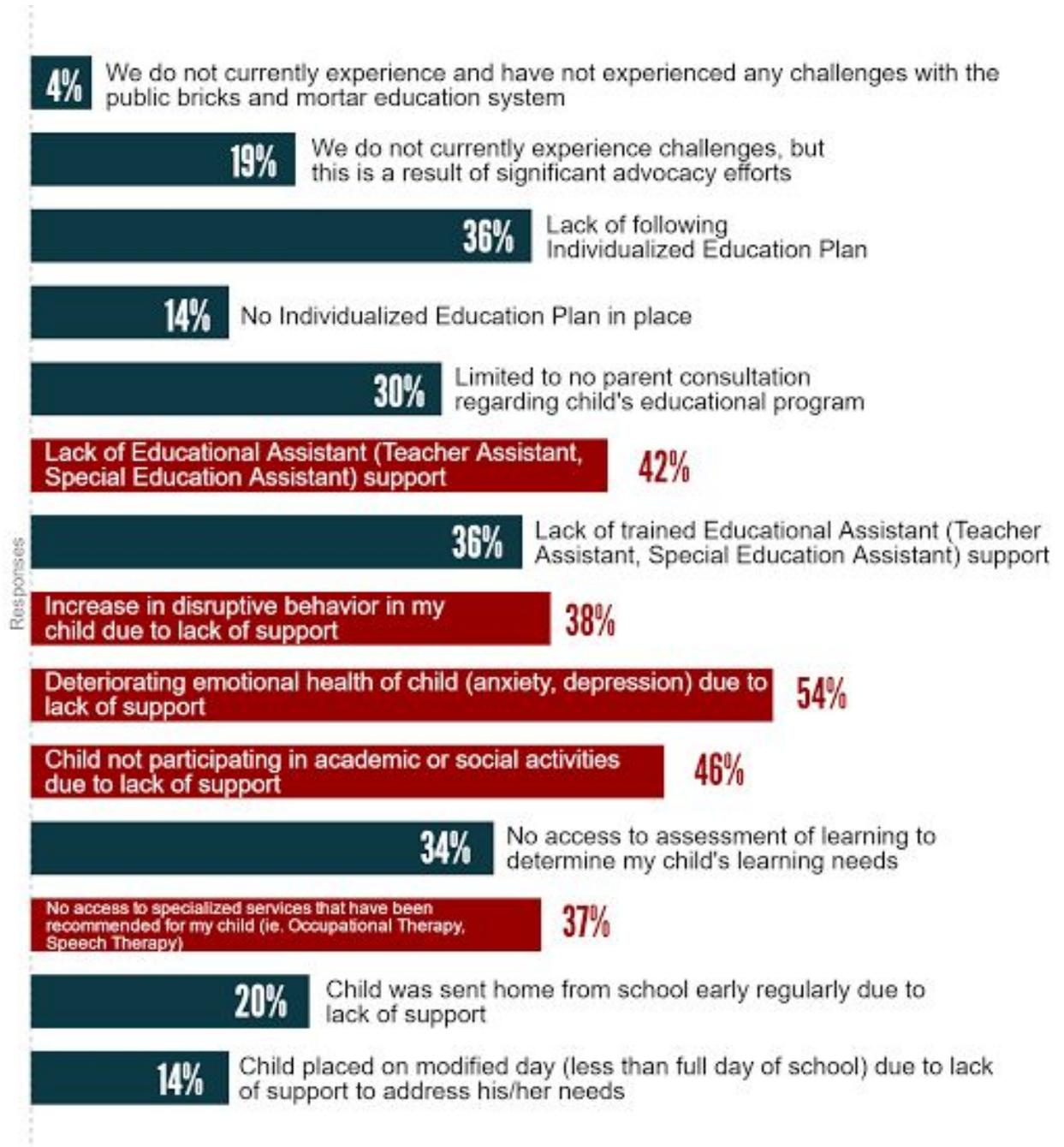


Of the parents/caregivers who indicated they had removed their child from public bricks and mortar school, this is the breakdown of the last grade level their child attended (where this information was supplied by the parent/caregiver).



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Parents/caregivers were asked to identify the challenges they experience(d) in public bricks and mortar schools. Participants were allowed to indicate multiple checkboxes.



A number of parents/caregivers indicated "Other". A sampling of their comments are provided below:

"P Designation - district has no policies, procedures, programs, or support"

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“child regularly refused to attend school due to untrained EAs and teachers”

“he spent the majority of his days in grade 6 in the resource room, often unsupervised. He has always been a target for bullying as well, with little to no action taken on the part of the school.”

“My student was bullied regularly and was disciplined for finally standing up to the bully. He was also left outside unattended for 45 minutes in grade 1.”

“Child’s behaviour consultant not overly welcome in school, little access to SPL, no access to ABA, district very closed “

“Child left in hallway or sent to the office every day”

“they treated my ASD child as a behaviour problem. They did not respond to him as a child with special needs. They punished him.”

“no appropriate curriculum materials to support IEP”

“We are experiencing the challenges caused by underfunding. Over-crowded school, decrepit building, portables, not enough books, reduced library time, PAC fundraising.”

“When my son’s CEA is away my son has to stay home. “

“IEP is not SMART...goals and objectives not measurable. “

“Delays in access to services,long wait lists”

“We’ve had some minor challenges met with open communication at our school.”

“Recognition of his unique needs lacking, focus was on behaviour not modifications to support him that would help the behaviours”

“no IEP and no school personnel with any training or knowledge of her medical condition.”

“Unacceptable level of medical support from Nursing Support Services (Type 1 Diabetes), resulted in us obtaining private comprehensive care plan with full accessibility provided for by school district and full training agreed to by school”

“Cancellation of the gifted program, which had been working so very well”

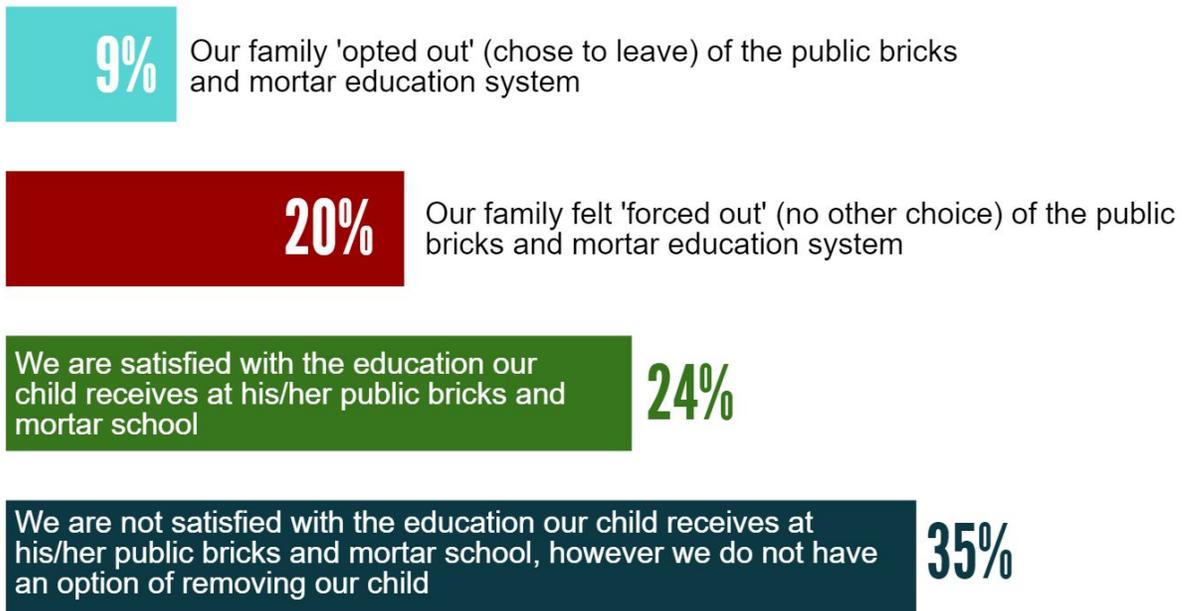
“My child did not have the supports in place that countless professionals stepped forward to advocate for stating my child could be successful if they were in order “

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“Very effective SEA moved to another position shortly after the school year began (our sons second year with her). This threw him off completely. Also after 1.5 years in a behaviour support program he was (although well supported) not getting much out of being there any longer. It turns out the home environment is flexible and adaptable enough to meet his particular learning needs at this time”

“Not attending anymore, will not graduate! No program for severe anxiety available for grade 11/12”

Parents/caregivers were asked to share which statement was most accurate regarding their experience with public bricks and mortar education for their child.



Parents and Caregivers were invited to share any other comments regarding public bricks and mortar education.

Comments included:

1. We want to try brick and mortar school again next year but in a different school district.
2. My child's education is suffering due to the lack of resources, the lack of adaptive learning tools for student and graduate teachers, and the lack of regular assessment of his learning/retention of subject matter.

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3. Please make it a kinder more empathic environment for special needs children. Please give us more EA hours and train the EAs. Please help our kids learn the things that they excel at and go easier on them when they cannot measure up to the other things. Please start assigning our kids, and others too, less homework and let the children just be kids longer. Thank you for your time and energies. So many good vibes your way.
4. The amazing strides our child has made are because of specific people who helped him at his school-not because the system gave him those opportunities automatically. We fought for them, and 3-4 specific people at our school did. Frequently on their own time. Also because of the help we got him outside of school, one parent switching to stay-at-home, and intense parental work.
5. We no longer have a public school system, when one has to pay \$500 in advance for your child to get music (a 'complementary' program in 2016-17), can pay for private assessments to speed along a designation, or attends a school with deep pockets (a PAC that can fundraise \$40,000) to pay for additional programs that poorer schools cannot, etc.
6. I am currently moving my child from one brick and mortar to another. The special needs manager at the new school is amazing and I want her to oversee my daughter. The school we are leaving I felt unhappy since kindergarten but did not know where to go. I felt pushed out.
7. It took quite a few years of advocating for my child and now he is finally getting the support he needs. It isn't as much as he needs but I was told that it was because his funding doesn't cover what he needs
8. I am raising 2 special needs children. One gets support and is having his best year ever, the other one gets no support and is having his worst year ever. The plan that was agreed on keeps changing without consulting me. Everything has not been consistent . He has missed most of the year and I am fed up.
9. I have no doubt the teachers in the public school system worked hard to accommodate my son, but only the High Potential Special Needs classroom, which was cancelled 5 years ago due to lack of funding, worked well. The smaller classes at the Christian school, plus the AFU funding that paid to have staff educated about autism (and also in combination with ADD and giftedness) have made the difference and my son is now doing very well.
10. The anxious behaviors and self-harm that were happening consistently in the public brick and mirror school have diminished as my child has been home. The emotional health of my child was severely affected by the lack of modifications and lack of appropriate

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support in the public school. The brick and mortar schools need a wider lens of what children with differences need and they also need.

11. The school system does not understand the needs of my child and, while they have been open to suggestions from our community team for modifications, there is insufficient staffing support, proper training for staff, and lack understanding due to minimal knowledge of how to help my child succeed.
12. I'm finding that lack of common sense resources is a problem for us...being put off for updated testing over and over again. Needing the Psych Ed testing redone for high school when testing was done in grade 3, has proven to be enormously challenging to get....understanding all the ins and outs of school vs district policy is also a barrier. Who has that kind of time to become an expert on the funding placement and workings of the system. Excluded from decision making regarding our child future, with the excuse that the resource teacher is new to the job. Constantly being made to feel like they know better than us the parents. We deal with all the meltdowns, and backlash that come home with our children, once they leave the structured environment. Why are we misinformed, avoided, and generally passed over, when we are the ones who are left picking up the pieces of our kids lives and trying to figure out the next dysfunctional crummy system we now have to deal with in order to help our kids succeed. It creates an overload on us, as we are one person and they are a large staff team with bodies and resources....parent burn out is just a matter of time, then we have no time, energy, or ability to continue our fight. It one big hot mess of a system, with very little hope. Fighting for the basics should never happen, and a test needed to help a child with success should never be delayed or denied. When someone needs a little extra help, it should be put into place without a fight, and in a timely manner without the parents having to push so hard for every little scrap of help. The system is flawed...too many paper pushers and not enough direct services....less meetings about why we aren't providing for the child and more active services in place to help where needed. Proactive school system rather than a reactive one.
13. Advocating and getting help for my child is a full time job.
14. Took us 4 years to finally get our son psycho ed assessment. Was given an H designation recently. Waiting to see if program available. Horrifying as a parent to watch your child struggle for so long. And it hurts him as he has a younger brother that gets help because of Autism designation. And I can not explain why he doesn't get help. Frustrating Now 12 month wait to be seen at Sunny Hill. *sigh*
15. I was deeply disappointed with the Public School system and particularly the school my son attended. He was diagnosed with a speech language disorder, ADHD, and anxiety and posttraumatic stress stemming from the lack of support and inappropriate care he

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received in a public school. He is now receiving far more support, the teachers are caring and sensitive to his needs.

16. Even though I do feel that my child's school is very supportive, caring and goes out of their way to be supportive, they are restricted by limited funding and my child could be doing so much better with full support.
17. Overall the bricks and mortar school has worked with our family as a team. I often have to follow up with promises made. Often I know more about things than the school does (no one in the school had ever heard of DCD - Developmental Coordination Disorder - until both my children had it. Once they learned about it, the school devoted a whole Pro-D day learning about it.
18. Our children's situation at public school has improved dramatically, but only with strong advocacy, moving houses, and changing School Districts.
19. The staff at my child's school is very dedicated and they do, indeed, try to do the best they can. There never seems to be enough time to communicate effectively with staff or for staff to communicate with each other. It is unclear to me exactly what type and to what extent the SEA's are trained in understanding the needs of my child. It seems very much like the situation for my child is one of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. While adaptations are tried to be made for her, it would be far more effective for the entire class to be taught in a more autism-friendly way. What works for autism is good for all kids. It would also be very helpful if the school culture would truly embrace the idea of inclusion and do more to educate the students about autism, anxiety, etc..
20. Next year we will not be doing brick and mortar. It will be a hybrid of brick and mortar and virtual school. and yes I feel forced out from lack of support.
21. Last year we were forced out mid year. through lots of hard conversations and me taking to the school what my son told me he needed along with an updated psych-ed. we were able to approach public school. overall , 99.9% happy now, he is engaged,happy, exploring many things, and has 2 most awesome cea's during the day. my son is now heading to puberty, which has also some challenges but the big part is collaboration of the team to look at what my son needs. i could not have imagined this last year at this time. feel blessed
22. My kid's needs are medical and life- threatening but not behavioral or academic. There is a gap in services for these kids too and public education does not adequately accommodate.
23. I feel like I have no other option at this point but to leave the "bricks and mortar" schools. We have strongly advocated for 3 years with the school, switched schools and as a

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family have given everything we can to try to work with the schools to create a supportive environment. We were unable to make it happen and watched our child regress and suffer high anxiety and emotional distress. As much as we do want to see our child successful in school, we came to a point where pushing and advocating any further would continue the downward spiral in our child. Our family was under high stress and for our well being we have chosen to walk away from the "bricks and mortar school" and join a Distributed Learning school where we could have access to the services she needs without the constant advocating. Hire people who have training to work with her. We will take a large financial hit and I will lose my career because of it. But we just can't keep the fight going.