

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Annual Survey Shows Covid-19 Increased Exclusion of Children with Disabilities

BRITISH COLUMBIA—July 21, 2020--BCEdAccess has released the results of its 2019/20 Exclusion Tracker. The total number of parent reports of exclusion of BC K-12 students with disabilities increased by **179%** over last year, from 492 to 883.

The full report is attached.

The survey results showed that access to education continues to be an issue for BC children and youth with disabilities and the pandemic made the inequity worse. The discrimination even impacted some frontline Essential Service workers, who were denied child care. In April, **only 20% of survey respondents** said they were offered educational assistant support for their child. Several also noted that their School Districts had already offered their child's educational assistant alternative work.

From a parent: *"His EA felt pressure to do child care for essential workers' children or risk being out of work so she is doing that. She is video conferencing with my son twice weekly for 20 minutes each on her own time to keep the connection with him."*

In May, **nearly a third** of respondents stated that no support had been provided from their school Districts when we asked about receiving child care, education, food, mental health, respite, technology, or tutoring.

From a parent: *"My child requires full support in all aspects of daily living. Getting 20 minutes of video conference support to learn basics (numbers/letters) is not working."*

From a parent: *"Had to email all the way up the chain and copy trustees to get my child access to 4 hours/week of in person instruction."*

"It is tragic that so many of our children were left behind by their schools during the Covid-19 crisis," said Nicole Kaler, a senior Board member of BCEdAccess. "These exclusions increased the traumatic impact of the pandemic. There is some time to plan and we want school districts to learn from these documented failures and make changes in September."

Since March, all students with disabilities had the same option to attend school full time as the children of Essential Service workers yet the majority of survey respondents who wanted full-time schooling said that they were not receiving it. Even in June when schools reopened for all students, **only 11.9%** of respondents' children were attending full time.

BCEdAccess also learned from some survey responses and other correspondence, that several families were never informed about their right to have full time schooling. In May, of the letters provided to us from 14 different school Districts only 3 mentioned that full time, in person attendance was an option for students with disabilities. The other 11 Districts did not include this information.

Jenn Newby, parent and co-author of the final report says “Two years into tracking exclusion and a global pandemic later, we are seeing this tsunami of inequity and denied access to education. All I can think is, what are the long term effects of ongoing exclusion going to be on children like ours? Where is the accountability?”

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About BCEdAccess

Founded in 2014 by a small group of parents struggling to get their kids support at school, BCEdAccess has grown to over 2700 community members. We work to effect the change needed for all BC youth and children to have equitable access to education.

BCEdAccess will continue to provide grassroots support to families by hosting their **6th Education Advocacy Conference virtually, from Sep 17th to 23rd**. The conference will provide information about the process of advocacy in the BC Education system and inspire parents by creating the space for advocates and allies from across BC to connect, share and support one another..

The Exclusion Tracker is a parent survey that has run for the last two years, tracking the exclusion of children with disabilities from the BC education system. This report represents the combination of the regular annual survey conducted from September 2019 to March 2020, and three respective “snapshots” (April 8, May 4, June 10) taken after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.