



November 3, 2017

Summary Report: Survey for Parents of Students who are denied a Full Day at School

Under the BC School Act every child in our province, regardless of ability, has the right to receive access to a fully funded public education. However, BCCPAC has heard from hundreds of parents of children with special needs who are not allowed to attend school full time. For three weeks this fall, we conducted a province wide survey to gain a better understanding of how widespread this problem is in B.C. schools.

Well over 800 parents of children with special needs responded to the survey, representing 51 of the 60 school districts in the province. The data has clarified three key issues which prevent students with more complex learning needs from accessing their right to a full education.

Almost half of those who responded indicated that their children were not allowed to remain at school for as long as other students on a daily basis. The amount of educational time these children missed ranged from half an hour to over three hours daily, with 132 parents being told to keep their children home for more than half the school day every day.

Another significant concern is the number of days that special needs students are being told to stay home due to staff shortages and the lack of properly trained support. In many cases, if the Educational Assistant who helps to support the students with more complex learning needs is absent from the class, the parents of these students are told to keep their children at home. In our survey, parents reported that 336 special needs students had to miss school due to staff shortages, with 104 students missing ten or more days per year.

How much of the school day does your child miss everyday?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| less than an hour | 12.90% | 48 |
| 1 hour to 2 hours | 18.82% | 70 |
| 2 hours to 3 hours | 32.80% | 122 |
| more than 3 hours | 35.48% | 132 |
| | Answered | 372 |
| | Skipped | 471 |

How often is your child kept home from school due to staff shortages?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Once or twice per year | 27.68% | 93 |
| 3 to 5 times per year | 29.46% | 99 |
| 6 to 9 times per year | 11.90% | 40 |
| 10 or more times per year | 30.95% | 104 |
| | Answered | 336 |
| | Skipped | 507 |

How often is your child sent home after an incident or because of behaviour at school without documentation?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| One or twice per year | 22.70% | 79 |
| 3 to 5 times per year | 25.29% | 88 |
| Between 6-9 times per year | 19.83% | 69 |
| 10 or more times per year | 32.18% | 112 |
| | Answered | 348 |
| | Skipped | 495 |

Also, a significant number of children with more complex needs are sent home because of behavioural incidents at school. In our survey, 348 parents said that their special needs children were sent home due to behavioural problems, with 112 families indicating that this happened ten or more times during the school year. Often these exclusions from school, which amount to undocumented suspensions due to disability, can continue for days or weeks.

The BCCPAC survey results indicate that the concerns expressed by many families that their children with special needs are being denied their right to equitably access a full day of school are significant and systemic, resulting in hundreds of the most vulnerable students being denied many hours of education every year.

The comments left by survey respondents describe the tremendous strain this puts on many families with special needs children. Students who are regularly denied attendance at school often struggle from serious anxiety and a decrease in self esteem as they fall further behind academically and are denied much needed opportunities to socialize with their peers. Their parents suffer from the stress of continually having to advocate for their children to receive their fundamental right to an education, as is the right of all children in B.C. In many cases, one parent is required to cut back the number of hours they work, or quit their job entirely, to be “on call” to pick their child up early from school or keep them home, thus putting financial strain on the family as well.

All students, regardless of ability, have the right to an education. BCCPAC will continue to advocate for adequate and appropriate resources and support in each classroom in order to ensure that all students can be successful at school and achieve their full academic potential.

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About BCCPAC

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