

Accessible Community Forum: Accessible Education in BC Summary Report

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PART I: Panelists

1. Tony Botelho (Host)
 - a. Director, SFU Career & Volunteer Services
2. Carly Christensen
 - a. Assistant Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education (ECPS), UBC Vancouver
3. Mike Prescott
 - a. Project Manager, Accessible Organizations Project, Disability Alliance BC
4. Jenn Fane
 - a. Director of Education, The Learning Disabilities Society
5. Frank Smith
 - a. National Coordinator, National Educational Association of Disabled Students
6. Hans (Uli) Egger
 - a. RHFAC Accessibility Certification Specialist, The Rick Hansen Foundation

PART II: Forum

- 41 total EventBrite registrants
- 36 total Zoom attendees (including ConnecTra staff, panelists and hosts)

PART III: SURVEY RESPONSE SUMMARY

40 total respondents participated in the survey.

- Respondents' relationship with the disability community
 - 20 respondents have a visible disability
 - 23 respondents have a hidden or invisible disability
 - 7 respondents are the primary care aid for a PWD
 - 1 respondent was a healthcare professional or another type of aid for a PWD
 - 1 respondent did not have a disability
- Types of disabilities respondents live with
- Most common (23) disability among respondents was a mobility impairment followed by a chronic illness (13) and mental health (10)
- Several respondents also indicated having a
 - Hearing impairment (7)
 - Visual impairment (3)
 - Cognitive disability (7)
 - Memory impairment (6)
 - Communication impairment (6)
 - Degenerative disease (8)
 - Learning disability (6)
- 18 respondents indicated being wheelchair users, 10 respondents indicated they regularly use a cane/walker/crutches and a few other respondents indicated using a white cane/hearing aids and prosthetics
- Respondents' educational experience in BC:
 - 10 are currently BC students
 - 20 attended elementary school in BC
 - 23 attended secondary school in BC
 - 21 attended post-secondary school in BC
 - 10 participated in a trades or specialized training program in BC
 - 8 attended education outside of BC
- Type of schooling respondents received:

- 35 public
 - 10 private
 - 2 homeschool
 - 9 online
- One respondent shared that they think that public university and colleges are more accessible for PWD compared to private post-secondary institutions.
- Respondent ages:
 - 2 under 18
 - 3 18-24
 - 7 25-34
 - 8 35-44
 - 9 45-54
 - 7 55-64
 - 3 65+
- Most respondents are currently located in the Metro Vancouver area. Most common location was the Vancouver area. Other responses included Burnaby, Richmond, Surrey, Nanaimo, New Westminster, and the Okanagan.
- 59% of respondents do not think there are adequate accessible school options in BC.
- Types of barriers respondents faced trying to find accessible schools:
 - 12 don't know where to find information about which schools are accessible
 - 12 indicated the information they could find about accessible education is not sufficient
 - 10 indicated that the services and programs dedicated to helping people with disabilities in education are not accessible to them
 - 2 indicated that there are no accessible school options in their area
 - 1 has been waitlisted for accessible school options
- 75% respondents are not aware of any programs, services or organizations that help people find accessible education options in BC
- The services and programs that a few respondents did access included the disability resource center in their respective schools, Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment, CAYA, CAPER, CNIB, library services for people with visual impairment, and Neil Squire
- 73% of respondents do not feel that they or their dependent can obtain accessible education in their area without financial assistance given their current level of income

- 55% of respondents are not aware of any financial assistance programs dedicated to helping people with disabilities pay for accessible education
- The financial assistance programs that respondents did access to pay for accessible education options in BC include BC Student Aid, WorkBC, SCI-BC, Disability allowance, Neil Squire, Adult Upgrading Grant, Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment
- 25% of respondents indicated that they currently receive or have received funding, bursary or financial assistance to help pay for their education
- 56% of the respondents who indicated receiving financial assistance said the funding met their needs while 40% indicated that it did not
- 45% of respondents indicated that they have been denied financial assistance from a program or service provider when trying to obtain education
- 75% of respondents do not think there enough funding or financial assistance available to help people with disabilities in British Columbia to afford education
- 63% of respondents do not think there are adequate financial resources available to create more accessible education options in British Columbia
- How difficult was it for respondents to determine whether a potential school would be physically accessible for them?
 - 6 very easy
 - 5 easy
 - 9 moderate
 - 8 difficult
 - 5 extremely difficult
- Most commonly indicated minimum requirements needed for an educational facility to be physically accessible for respondents
 - 21 Wide, wheelchair-accessible doorways
 - 20 Wide hallways and passageways
 - 24 Wheelchair ramps
 - 20 Zero step entrances and exits
 - 26 Residential lifts or elevators
 - 20 Door levers/accessible door handles
 - 22 Adaptations to make the bathroom easier to use
 - 26 Accessible tables and furniture

- 23 automatic door openers
 - 22 accessible parking
- 70% of respondents require some form of assistive technology to succeed in an academic setting
- 48% of respondents who indicated they require assistive technology said that their educational facility did not provide them with the technology or devices they required.
- 40% of respondents indicated that they require an education assistant or support team in order to succeed in an academic setting
- 52% of respondents who indicated that they require an education assistant or support team were not provided with one by their educational facility
- 33% of respondents do not know how to request accommodations for their needs within the educational system in BC while 53% do
- 63% of respondents have required accommodations for their needs within the BC educational system
- The most common barriers that respondents faced when trying to secure accommodations in the BC educational system include
 - Their school not providing them with adequate accommodations
 - Overly cumbersome paperwork and legal/administrative processes
 - Accommodation options not meeting their needs
 - Not being provided with alternative options to accommodate their needs
 - Paperwork and legal/administrative processes being difficult to understand
 - Not knowing what accommodations to ask for
- 57% of respondents were not aware of any programs, services or organizations that help people with disabilities request accommodations within the educational system in BC
- Organizations, programs and services that respondents accessed to request educational accommodations include SET-BC, Mosaic, Neil Squire, Assistive Technology BC, GVS, Disability Services, Student Aid BC
- When accommodations were secured, 13 respondents indicated they were adequate to facilitate their educational needs while 15 indicated they were not.
- The most common barriers preventing accommodations from facilitating respondents educational needs were
 - Not having appropriate facilities/equipment to implement accommodations

- Their school not being able to being willing to do provide with adequate accommodations
 - Staff/faculty refusing to allow accommodations
 - Other barriers included
 - There was not available staff to implement their accommodations adequately
 - There was not appropriate training to implement their accommodations adequately
- 33% of respondents indicated that their educational facility did not meet their accessibility requirements well at all.
- Most respondents were forced to just make due, some were able to access more online options during COVID but most of those online accommodations have been phased out
- Respondents reported varying levels of inclusivity within their respective educational facilities
 - 3 very inclusive
 - 15 somewhat inclusive
 - 10 neutral
 - 9 somewhat non-inclusive
 - 4 very non-inclusive
- 43% of respondents indicated they feel excluded from classrooms, 25% indicated that they feel excluded from clubs or committees, 35% feel excluded from athletics, 30% feel excluded from field trips, and 38% feel excluded from extracurricular activities
- 78% if respondents indicated that have been placed in segregated classrooms because of their disability
- 83% of respondents indicated that they have been secluded or physically restrained at least once before when being disciplined
- Some examples include being made to stand in the cloakroom, crammed in with the wet coats, boots & umbrellas, with nowhere to sit as well as being attached and based in a resource room class
- 65% of respondents indicated that they do feel safe in their academic environment while 15% indicated they do not and 18% only feel safe sometimes
- 65% of respondents have indicated that they have experienced or felt some sort of discrimination based on your disability in your academic experience in BC (e.g. accommodation process, visitation, attendance, etc.)
- 35% of respondents indicated that teachers and support staff were only adequately trained to support students with disabilities sometimes while 20% indicated they never would

- Lack of training extends to students with physical, intellectual, and learning disability as well as those who are neurodiverse
- 45% of respondents indicated that they only feel supported and seen by teachers and support staff sometimes while 13% indicated they never do
- 50% of respondents indicated they don't think students are ever informed and educated about people living with various disabilities by teacher and support staff
- Some of the most highly indicated suggestions that respondents provided that would have made them better supported in their educational environment include
 - Better training for teachers/support staff
 - More disability awareness for all students
 - Adapted learning materials for your needs
- OTHER COMMENTS and recurring questions
 - More financial investment in supporting students with disabilities by hiring more teaching assistants
 - Many respondents think there should be more education about PWD and the different kind of disabilities that exist for both staff and students since there is still a lot of misinformation
 - Students with disabilities should be able to learn alongside students without disabilities instead of being segregated into separate classrooms
 - There should be more information available about the accessibility of certain programs and courses e.g. weekly workload would look like, duration of classes, etc. and physical requirements.
 - More support needed for students with invisible disabilities or whose disability does not fit the narrow definition of disability provided by their schools accessibility department