

# Accessible Community Forum: Accessible Education

SUMMARY KEYWORDS students, disability, disabilities, education, accessibility, accommodations, teacher, question, school, access, university, funding, including, experience, accessible, bc, program, organization, washrooms, support

It will live online for duration of a couple of couple months or whatnot. So if you're not you're right at the beginning you'll catch it later. My name is Emily and I am the connector Program Coordinator Welcome to our accessibility community community forum on Accessible Education. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the importance of the land on which this online event is taking place. These are the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, and in particular the Squamish Musqueam and slay with with First Nations. This acknowledgement is a statement to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility in our own understanding of local indigenous peoples and their history. Please join me at a brief moment of reflection.

8:33

so thank you for joining us and participating in this accessibility community forum on Accessible Education presented by the Disability foundation and hope co hosted by the connector society My name is Emily, I am your connector Program Coordinator. The purpose of this board is to gain insights and feedback from the community around accessible education in British Columbia. Direct Connect draft about your diverse opinions and perspectives. We want this to be a safe environment for everyone to share. So please be respectful of what others have to say. We're gonna go over a few housekeeping rules.

9:01 Before mostly this forum is being recorded and streamed to Facebook and YouTube. So you may choose as a participant to have your camera on or off. All participants will be muted upon entry. To ask a question, type your question into the chat box or use the raise hand function under reactions in the bottom of your screen. And one of the volunteers will unmute you when Tony our host calls on the chat box for comments. If you require a screen reader, we recommend you close the chat. We will be sending out a complete transcript of the chat after the event all attendees so you'll be able to catch up on everything there automatically is captioning available. Please go to the meeting transcripts and then show the title to turn them on.

Our agenda is a brief welcome introductions of our fabulous panelists. And then we'll have a live discussion for just over an hour and a half and a closing.

9:46 Now we're going to play a short video outlining some of the other programs and events that can create opportunities for people living with disabilities. By providing information, resources and programs geared toward greater inclusion and quality of life. Some of the programs we offer through our online learning platform connect together, including art service Mondays, where we highlight a local organization for initiative. Wednesday chair yoga, Bobby Seale Comiskey Thursday adoptive fitness,

Meghan Williams, Friday rotating dance classes posted by Janice Lorenz and Joanne and other initiatives, including presentations by the disabled independent gardeners Association's global program and our perspective series.

10:26 Our next accessible community forum is on accessible education be part of the conversation on November 18, from one to 3pm education climate, register date accessible education ACs are updated on our website [connection.org](http://connection.org) Or find us on Facebook Connect or society.

10:45 Also we are having a connector holiday get together in person for free at the Creekside Community Center on December 6, that's Tuesday. It's going to happen from five to 7pm there will be Carolyn, we're making centerpieces. It's gonna be really wonderful and I will put the registration link in the chat as well. All right, let's move on to our panelists. So I will do a quick introduction and then I will let them introduce themselves to you all. So today's panel consists of Dr. Carly Christensen and assistant professor at UBC. Carly identifies as a person with a disability who advocates for disability justice within schooling. Prescott, who is the project manager for the accessible organizations project and disability Alliance BC and a postdoctoral fellow at UBC and Rehabilitation Sciences. Dr. Jennifer Fane who is the Director of Education at LDS, the learning disability society, PhD in education, social policy and public health and is a BC certified teacher Frank Smith, who has been the National Coordinator for the National Educational Association of disabled students also known as needs since 1986. Research access and accommodation issues he researches access and accommodation issues as they apply to Canada's colleges and universities.

11:52 And last we have Edgar sits on the accessible standards Canada technical committee for a model standard of accessibility for the built environment and holds an Rh fac professional designation. So now I will let them introduce themselves and elaborate a little bit more. Let's begin with Dr. Carly Christiansen welcome

12:12 She her pronouns. As Emily explained, I am an assistant professor at University British Columbia my work looks a lot like supporting inclusive education. So this would be k 12 education system.

12:23 I previously was teacher in Ontario. I also taught in First Nations communities in northern Ontario.

12:31 Wonderful, thank you so much. Next my Prescott, Prescott. As mentioned, I'm the project manager for the accessible organizations project which in which I'm working with over 800 organizations throughout BC, including school districts, independent schools and post secondary institutions to establish accessibility committees develop accessibility plans and create feedback mechanisms. I am a manual wheelchair user with a far too many years of education. I'm in grade 29 I have a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from the University of Illinois and MBA from Simon Fraser and MA in urban

planning from University of Waterloo and a PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences from UBC. I've done postdocs in geomatics and avow and I'm currently a postdoc at UBC and working with SFU as well in rehab Sciences and Technology.

13:19 Fantastic, and what an upgrade 29 is like actually calculated out or just the bit that you say yes, great 29 Wow, fantastic. Next, Dr. Jennifer

13:31 muted. What's gonna happen to me, of course, everyone I was gonna say I have always had I made it through 26. So I understand, calculates my career as a teacher, the newest Minster and tri city school districts and have worked with learners, diverse learners in the five sector elementary schools. To the high school, and I'm in the post secondary system for over eight years as well, mostly working in teacher education. I currently am the Director of Education at the Learning Disability society or LDS. We're a Vancouver based nonprofit charity that serves over 400 learners a year in both academic social skill and early intervention programs. It's nice to join everyone here.

14:07 Again, Frank Smith.

14:10 Thank you, Emily, and welcome everybody to this event. As was mentioned earlier, Frank Smith, I'm the National Coordinator of the National Educational Association of disabled students. And while I'm an old guy, I've been involved with the organization since 1986, as was also mentioned, we are primarily a youth serving organization and most of the folks who are on our board of directors, which represents the provinces across Canada, and also our staff and consultants, our our youth with disabilities are 90% of people who are involved with your organization and 100% kidding myself and 100% of persons with disabilities. The board is made up of students and graduates with disabilities so graduates with disabilities within five years of completing a college university program. We are an independent organization and we're also a member of the Council Canadians with Disabilities consider the CCD National Council table which is for national disability organizations and provincial disability organizations across the country. The organization does research events, we have four fabulous websites, which I'll talk about later if that sounds confusing, but they each have a different purpose. We're all over social media. We offer a national to national student awards programs that provide hundreds of 1000s

of dollars to disabled students across Canada and we are all about consumer focus to all the work that we do. So the phrase that counsel community disabilities often uses is a voice where we're very much plugged into that so when we work with service providers and professionals, and collaborate with them and advocate the work that we do, we take it from a consumer directed approach. Most of the funding we got us through Employment, Social Development Canada, and we also have funding through through our programs, private sector and from other through other entities. So, Peter, thank you. Thank you for all that you need to do. That's fantastic. And last but not least, if you could explain a bit about what you got. Hi, everyone. My name is Julie Edgar, accessibility certification specialist and adjudicator for the Rick Hansen foundation accessibility certification program with multiple that you have difficulty saying RH fac.

So we have approximately 140 professionals across the country that rate sites for meaningful access, and that would include schools, high schools, elementary schools, colleges, universities, and other things like prisons, stadiums, you name it we've rated so I have short gray hair and a beard for those that can't see me. I'm currently wearing a white shirt and identify as he AM. I met my wife Kim in 1985. And Kim sustained cervical spinal cord injury. She's a quadriplegic in 1984, the year before, and we have been on this journey together since then. And it took us to the Rick Hansen foundation about five years ago. And since its inception, and this has just been growing well and we love to work with people in communities, etc. And hopefully we'll be able to help you out with some of your questions today.

16:54 Fantastic, thank you for describing all of that, that I tried myself out. I was like alright, now I'd love to hand this over to our host so please welcome our host, Tony patella. He's the director of SNPs career and volunteer services. And Tony has also worked in post secondary disability support offices and moderated our accessible community forum on inclusive employment last year. So welcome back.

17:18 Thank you for that warm welcome

17:21 Through shoes, it's nice to be back in another accessible community for apologize there. And I'm also dealing with funny shadows. So I apologize for if I could come in and out for those who are needing to see me speak. So I think we can get right into we got a lot of questions. We have a fantastic panel and something we can just go straight to the questions. So let's do this. First one, Dr. Jennifer Fang, you are on. Education NBC includes birth to five elementary schools, secondary schools, universities, colleges and trade schools. These various institutions cater to a wide range of ages, interests and needs. So first off, if you can start by defining the different types of learning within these institutions, and you can also define the differences between homeschooling Distributed Learning brick and mortar schools and home learning programs.

18:04 Thank you, Tony. I'll try to get started maybe remind me if there's anything I forgot in there. For those of you that are joining inter provincially or for those of you are not overly familiar with the

BC setting that there's quite a lot going on there. That birth to five services much like post secondary services. Or pay per use. So they are quite varied and both include both public public institutions, private institutions, and rectified it is all pay per use, private not for profit style service provision. When it comes to K to 12. Schooling we have a public system that goes throughout the province. There also are independent schools which receive provincial funding as well as parents tuition, parent family tuition, and there also are some private schools as well, but they're smaller in number. When it comes to the K to 12 system. They're also multiple ways in which learners are engaging in the schooling system. So we have what are called brick and mortar schools, which are your neighborhood schools that you might wander around, walk down the block and physically see that students attend small districts, the province of respondents broken into school districts, there's about 80 of them throughout the province. Many of them also offer different models. So they might offer a home learners program, which is a program that

students might add a few hours a week or a couple hours a day in a school like environment and do the rest of their learning independently at home. And there's also distributed learning models which may be through a school district which will be a fully online program that students can access from home or there might be some contact hours in schooling environment as well as an in an at home environment as well. COVID has really increased the amount of ways in which people are able to access K to 12 schooling in just in a variety of ways. So more options between hybrid models essentially between in person and online service provision. There are also a range of distributed learning schools that exist only in the internet, essentially that learners from across the sea can enroll in without worries about catchment. Sort of probably a big high level overview of the complexity of public education, public and private education in BC. Don't know if there's if it'd be helpful trying to drill down in any specific areas. I think for now, that spring, I think it's set us up in terms of a nice context. So I think that's I think that was the key here and I think some of the questions as we move forward, we're gonna have the opportunity to go a little bit deeper, but thank you for that. Fantastic, getting us off the ground. So which in this case, we're gonna open it up to the entire panel to just get your perspectives on about, you know, what do you see as some of the major differences between the private and public sector when it comes to meeting students accessibility needs and who wants to go first with

20:21 Julie, I saw your mouth but I wasn't sure if you were in the dark. I'm pretty cool with that. So I'm going to do a bit of a spiel here, and it's about where we were 35 years ago and where we are now. So when Ken went to university 35 years ago, it was not easy. For sure the campus came and attended and its campus here in Vancouver was not built with her in mind. her classmates literally had to carry her up the stairs to get to her classes, or she had to take elevators or she had to take ramps if there was a ramp even available. Libraries utilized microfiche, which is far beyond a lot of people's memory. But there were no computers and you had to ask for help. Every time you turned around. There was nothing that was accessible for people that had low vision or blind people that were deaf or hard of hearing.

21:03 Also, people with mobility disability, there's all sorts of challenges that happened in there. Let's talk about signage and wayfinding. So, approximately, I rated approximately 100 schools and that's university campuses college trades, elementary High School, private and public, you name it. The biggest thing that was missing in my opinion wayfinding and signage. And I can remember being a young kid going to high school for my very first day, and I had a high degree of anxiety as a child and going into that first day of school and not knowing where to go and how to get there was the part that was the most bothersome for me and it took me a long time to sort of come to grips with learning where things were in school, I was tired of hearing, I am hard of hearing and that was not accommodated in my day in school at all. There was no consideration for people that were hard of hearing. And to this day.

21:51 When you look at a classroom and you look for meaningful access for children, that classroom easy to get into, does that classroom make you a spectacle when you go into the classroom? Or do you go in there and flow in with the other children and enjoy your class as all the other students do? And where if you're a teacher with a disability that needs to go into the classroom? I would say the biggest thing that I noticed in all of those schools what there was 99% of them did not have any technologies

from hearing none. And there was one school out of 100 that had it. So that's not a very good rate. So that illumination, you won't be able to see clearly in a class to be able to see the the board nowadays it's whiteboards and chalkboards.

22:27 That's really important. And I just always like to remember where I was as a child and where children are today. And that's we're encompassing more children into schools these days. I see talk in the background and chat about neuro diverse etc. That's really important. We have to learn how to accommodate all people. Thank you

22:44 Thank you for that and thank you for that, you know that historical context. Those remembering how things were not that long ago, and also the things that can be improved. I thought, I made a note about signage, which is to get back to a fairly straightforward, low cost thing that can be done. That could have a tremendous impact, just like anyone else on the panel has anything else you'd like to add on this or we can move to another question about accessibility in terms of private versus public public systems. In the case called schooling system, you're going to see generally a significant in my experience, and I work very closely with 400 learners across about 60 school districts. I don't see a huge difference between the level of support across independent schools or public schools because it's ministry funding, that's profit that ostensibly provides a provision, unfortunately, BC, what is called high incidence disabilities, which are more common disabilities like learning disabilities, behavioral challenges, these high incidents because they're common, the province actually does not get the student funding. There's no child or learner specific funding that comes through for common disabilities, high incidence disabilities, there is some funding individual funding for low incidence disabilities so less common, such as ASD, severe behavior or physical health challenges, but the funding model which is very flawed, because I strongly believe that all individuals with disabilities deserve supports is the same in both public and independent schools. That there are some private schools that are during the well resource because parent tuition is extraordinarily high, and then there might be a difference in those schools. But then again, that that's really a family resource capacity versus actually a system its capacity. So generally, you're not going to see again, in my experience a significant difference between what students actually can receive in an independent versus public school unless the parent fees are very, very high. When it comes to post secondary you will Genesee generally in my experience, the better accommodations and supports in public post secondary versus private providers in post secondary. So there's a bit of a more significant difference there. In birth to five generally you'll see the most comprehensive supports and training in not for profit organizations or organizations connected to universities, medical centers, and again, ones that have strong board oversight. private providers can there's not as much support for private providers even though there's licensing but again, you'll see the bigger the biggest difference between for profit and private providers in that sector.

24:52 Wonderful. Thank you for tuning in that thread of the private public, and also just eliminating some similarities to work where there's a fee structure because there's often discussion about the you know, certain type of school being better or not. And I think the importance is, you know, we have to look at the individual institution and sometimes context so that's fantastic. Thanks for that.

25:10 We're gonna keep moving on. And since we're on the topic of accommodations, we're going to keep going on that thread. A third of survey respondents do not know how to request accommodations for their needs within the educational system, etc. So Frank, where can you get this information? And what is the best way to go about requesting accommodation and as you're finding, I want Mike to start thinking about maybe some of your own experience on this to add to what Frank might have to say. So Frank, if you could start us off. Perfect to repeat the question, Tony.

25:38 I know try to do it more articulately

25:41 Just wasn't listening carefully

25:45 It's basically now the idea that 37 respondents reports to not knowing how to request accommodation from their educational institution working to get the information on where to go and how to do this. What's your insights from your experience with these?

26:00 Well, I mean, I think that there are a number of considerations The first one of course for every student for students leaving high school to go to college or university. Number one, decision shouldn't be made around them choice for the field of study that the student has to go into are passionate about, that should be the first consideration. Of course, finding universities or colleges that that have that program, whether it's journalism or engineering or medicine, whatever the case may be, right, recognizing there may be undergraduate study to get to certain special programs. So there's a path that has to be followed with respect to that. And then in terms of sort of visuals a student or person first responsible decisions with respect to secondary education and ambitions with respect to there's got to begin with lesson number one consideration. And then there's the issue around access to financial assistance to go to college university. So that's an understanding of potential federal funding programs, the canister and financial assistance.

27:58 There are lots of considerations there. Of course, it has to do with individual and it has to do with the individual's disability and how they experience that learning environment. And we recognize Of course, that there are lots of students who have all processability types who don't require any accommodations or don't believe but they do. And sometimes if there are accommodations that are required, and the student will typically register with accessibility services or disability services like logcat was become familiar as well of course, with supports and services that are available including peer support services that are available through student unions and student governments. There are many on campus disabled students groups that can provide that sort of peer support, often support through student unions. But one thing I think, picking up on what really said earlier about the the difference between the 1980s and today and I can certainly reflect upon that given my post secondary education,

career path and working in this field or organization. Certainly a lot has changed. We'll see it has to do with technology has to do with our understanding of universal design. And there's a lot of advancements in technology that have leveled the playing field and provided opportunities for disabled students that weren't there before. One thing that remains the case, unfortunately, in a lot of ways is a model of service provision and accommodations is still very much medical model in the gap to provide documentation to prove your disability to get the services that you need extra time or if you need adaptive technology or whatever the case may be. There is also documentation required with respect to your financial assistance and the level that you get in terms of grants. For example, for the services and equipment grant, canister and financial assistance program. There are requirements that documentation required, you know that many students with disabilities are reluctant to provide certain documentation, I feel they don't need to provide as well right and up until now, of course, they've been students with expensive episodic disabilities, mental health conditions, etc. Not sort of easily diagnoseable in some cases that have been left out of the equation that have not been properly accommodated. I'll just I'll just mention one more thing. With respect to this is that of financial aid for positive change in the last few months is that Canada's foreign financial assistance program has changed its definition of disability, or eligibility for disability specific features of program for permanent disability to include persistent and blocked from being recorded federal government, I believe, another 40,000 students who have disabilities that would be classified as persistent and flawed, which make you will be eligible for financial aid. So I'll just leave off with one more thing. If students are looking to access to information on accessibility services, financial aid, you name it, we have a lot of information available and resources available through our websites, including disability or Stotsky, which is totally devoted to to financial assistance, specific information.

30:53 Thank you, Frank. That was great and Carly, get your hand up and let you have some stuff here. Yeah, thank you so much for that.

30:59 One of the things that continues to be a persistent issue in the transition from secondary school into post secondary is this medical model and the need for all these documents. And so one thing that can happen to students as they leave their high school setting is that they could need another assessment because sometimes to access Student Accessibility centers at their university, the tests need to be within a certain range of years. And that adult assessment then needs to happen. And due to COVID and various other issues, the waitlist to get these assessments through their university and college can be years and years of no documentation in post secondary education, which translates to years of no accommodations that are your legal right to have. And so this is a persistent problem. And the other thing along with this is due to various issues. For example, the lack of culturally responsive assessment, the lack of gender dysphoria, well, the gender disparity diagnoses of various disabilities. For example, female presenting students with ADHD often go undiagnosed through informative school years, they could end up in post secondary and not have a diagnosis yet. And so this also creates these long wait lists. In the Student Accessibility Center, which further causes another disparity. So some university and college students that end up having to pay out of pocket for these assessments to be able to get their accommodations. That's what I have to say about the Post Secondary Transition. But then, you are a K through 12 student and accessing accommodations. While they're still a medical model.



Predominantly most provinces there are some provinces that have moved more to a need space model of providing service provisions for diverse students, but you still will be required to go through a process. It will work like for example, to create an IEP and individual education plan that should include accommodations listed, but it also should include the strength. We're hoping to move more towards a strength base or NBC a competency based Individual Education Plan. So that's a positive move in education. But those IEP documents they need to be in deep consultation with parents caregivers, the child themselves. And when that happens, that's the space that you as people with disabilities and parents caregivers can say, all the things I need in a school setting to learn to be socially included and academically included in my classroom. We also know there are barriers in that process but that is when we go we mandated process so as parents and people with disabilities, students disabilities in K through 12. You can that's normally where your voice is supposed to be heard.

33:28 Thank you for that thorough, very rich addition to their to the conversation and Jen has her hand up so you get the Florida just because this is a common question I often get about parents of families and children wanting IEPs and the K to 12 system in BC. And unfortunately, a school is ~ 10 ~ not legally required in British Columbia to write an IEP for students unless they have a ministry designation.

33:49 Which that doesn't mean they won't there are schools that write IEPs anyways without this, which is another level of disparity because sometimes it's a seen between schools and school districts, but schools do not legally have to provide an IEP unless there's a ministry designation and a ministry designation often doesn't happen without lengthy documentation, often a psycho educational assessment. Psycho educational assessments are very difficult to access in DC out of pocket. They're between two to \$3,500 school districts only have budget to put a handful of students through these assessments per year. So and often had students with the most significant behavioral challenges that get the assessments versus students who are otherwise quiet, well behaved students in the classroom who really do need them due to learning differences, ADHD, autism, all other types of diagnoses. So if anyone is kind of wondering what it actually looks like on the ground, often in terms of IEP provision, there are there's a lot of inequities and it can be very challenging for parents and families to move their child through that through that process due to a lack of resourcing.

34:41 Wonderful thanks for that added clarity and Mike on on in the in the batter's box for a while. Here. I wanted to get you know, your perspective.

34:50 Especially, and also from your 29 grades of school, they want to add and then we'll go to Hooli right after? Well, from my perspective, the challenges that I've seen are really about the ecosystem of accessibility. So when you sort of put things into silos, of issues, it really misses how the sort of the network of experiences happen. So like my research, even though it's more on mobility in the public space and outdoor space, I'm interested in how that journey modeling how you go through education, and so you can have your physical space at your school that's perfectly accessible, that's never gonna have a bad shot.

35:25 But you know, how you get into school.

35:28 And then other issues once you're at school, things like the IPS and stuff like that. And one of the things that I found in my research is, it was sort of alluded to is around sort of this episodic element but the temporary barriers that come up, people have difficulties navigating. And so if you've not experienced in the area of disability or accessibility, then you're really having to think on your feet or your chair about how to deal with that. And it's, it's not like historically we've had this this idea of promoting attendance and, and those aspects to women and

36:07 whenever I think about

those links coming into play, and not thinking of it simply as everything has to be perfect. It's really about how can we do the best job with the resources we have to a certain degree? I mean, yes, we have standards that we want to achieve, but we have to understand that there are going to be limitations. And if you don't understand how everything's connected, then you're not necessarily going to have ROI, huge bang for your buck. So one example this is purely a physical world kind of thing. is interesting. We're losing one of the buildings they wanted to improve access to is that they spent a lot of money on the washroom and a ramp into the building there being 40 \$60,000 Whatever it is, however, the get to the ramp, you had to go up a 10% hill. So this new building really in the ramp and everything to great job for the guys delivering the beer. Because as a graduate public.

36:55 And it's just indicative of how thinking about how that goes, deeper connections happen and if you miss it, because they having a disability is really there's a requirement for a seamless experience, whether it's education or anything, I think and when you have a break in that chain, it really makes it almost impossible. situation to to be to move forward. So I'd like to see these education systems really model things out from the different perspectives, whether it's the teachers, the students, administrators and stuff like that and really find the levers in there that will make the experience as a student or that much better place and I love this sort of bringing into systems perspective. Things are interconnected, very few things happen in isolation. And the interconnection is not just indicative. It's complex. The nature of interconnection is complex because of all the different influences and ways things influence each other and then are influenced by the things that they've just influenced. We're gonna go at least Boolean Frank noticed, reading schools and others and be to a point that I think Jen brought this up the other day when we all met is that there were restricted by catchments. So perhaps that needs to be looked at as a betterment for students that would do better at the school rather than that school. And not because of the teaching that's available to teachers are all great, but the actual built environment that they need to get into and whether there are quiet rooms for people, whether there are a good accessible washrooms, depending on the child's needs, etc. And Carly, you touched on this as well was age and sometimes taking longer to complete something, whether it's in college or university, in my view, also in elementary and high school students take longer to complete their first segment of school. And are we looking at that as well, you know, there's that magic number of 18 that kids are kind of, sort of

taken out of the system, and that can be a lot of a lot of difficulty for parents and for children. So looking at your model party that you're talking about that sometimes it takes longer to achieve, whether it's high school graduation, or it's a university degree that takes you seven years to complete rather than four years to complete. So a really good point of view. So leave that open on the floor for for Jen and Carly, if you want to comment on that. But the catchment area I think, is an important one to move children into a better environment for them, not for the school district.

39:06 No, thank you for your points and Jen, Carly and Carly.

39:10 So, the issue of catchment is quite interesting. So, the thing is, is that we like accessible schools to me also includes being inclusive schools. And in this mission for Inclusive Education. Children should have the right to attend their neighborhood school, where their siblings if they have them would be where their peers would be. And so when we know that one school is physically more accessible, or maybe in other ways more accessible, like teaching strategies employed, the amount of universal design that the school is doing in their classrooms, for example, like, it's actually a problem in my mind, because what we're then saying is, is a student with a disability being discriminated against in their catchment area, but now they have to attend a different school. And so, one thing I teach my bn students, so many students that are becoming teachers here at UBC, it is not actually legal to tell a parent of a child with a disability in a public school, that they can't attend this school that they have to go to a different school. And the reason why is because the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada says you can't discriminate based on ability. So the real question here is, to me if it was any other minority group, would we be able to say you can't come to this school but you can go to another school, not with your peers, not with your neighbors in a different area and we could have to bust you or you have to figure out a way to get there. That would be seen as extremely wrong and it shouldn't be in this case to this has been tested and various provinces legally. And it has been taught that like in Manitoba, for example, you can't do that. And so, here in BC, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms still stands you can't discriminate.

40:40 discriminate kids based on their disability. But on top of that, we also have the BC school act, and in the BC sector the only way you can deny entry to a school to go to school for a student in your district is based on numbers. And so it isn't, it doesn't have an asterix, it says unless they have these physical needs, unless they need the following nursing needs. There's no Asterix and so to me, that is also signaling. I hear a lot of stories and in my research I've come across a lot of people's lived experiences where they have been told to attend to different school. So this is really problematic. And we need to do better and have schools at the at the same level of accessibility for our kids because they have that right. I agree with that. I was speaking more to choice person. Some parents might want to choose where a child might want to choose a different school that they would like to go to me growing up in East Vancouver. I probably would have chosen a different high school could I have gone to a different high school and up but I wasn't offered that choice. So that that that's where I'm coming from I'm not bring with you at all. I believe that all schools should be universally accessible for everyone. Yes, I agree. I wasn't as mean that you disagreed, though I was more meaning that when we talk petulant, this is how I

see it play out is that instead of focusing on like parent choice, we focus on school districts being able to move people instead, which is the problem.

41:54 Wonderful discussion.

41:55 This is really coming on one question and Frank, you started we're gonna let you wrap up this question.

42:04 You, Frank, I started nursing. Therefore, I shall finish and I guess, to follow up on what Tony just said about the the line of reasoning there.

42:13 I think that Well, certainly, you know, it's talking about different levels of education right. And I think that elementary school in particular, we know that students, kids children may have a disability or not for a number of years of their lives, not in a position where they're the primary decision makers. Their parents are making decisions for them and their teachers. And professional people.

42:37 And things like that, right are making decisions on behalf of the students, which could be become particularly problematic when you have lots of elementary and secondary schools. There are lots of issues around physical accessibility.

42:51 Of course, sadly, for a lot of students are limited choices that are available to them and to their parents at a critical time in their development.

43:00 When all school should be available to them all supposed to be accessible. And then you know, these things are less of an issue when you move into public post secondary. Somebody mentioned earlier, that the private colleges for example, are terrible for accessibility and first, student services.

43:16 Disability Services and Public post secondary sure there are lots of universities, older, lots of older buildings that can choose reference more flexibility, more of an effort to concentration provincial dollars, etc. To ensure that the public secondary experience is more likely to be student centered and accessible and available to more students at the lower levels of the early stages of educational development, but I think that we need to sort of reconfigure the way we look at not thinking about the post secondary context can either be configured the way we think about disabilities, higher education, for example, and what accommodations or services are available. So I think we can get away from we still have this problematic medical model, which triggers and services documentation is provided. So we need to get

away from this notion of disability accommodations, thinking of it as something that's exceptional, or perhaps burdensome, burdensome on the institution or on people who are teaching or providing services. It's not at all it shouldn't be considered that way. All Canadians deserve the full access to education at all levels, including college and university education. And the what's provided in a post secondary context, whether it relates to academic experience in the classroom learning experience, the campus life experience, interacting with other people in the campus community, the physical accessibility of versus in colleges and most physical spaces, we should be thinking about human accommodations. disability accommodations, in other words, are all different all people are individuals. Disability is only one part of somebody's identity. Think about gender race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation. intersectional lens, and considering that students with disabilities are students like any other students, maybe some different learning styles or approaches, maybe some physical access issues that are dealt with by some students and not by others. Any accommodations that are provided in the post secondary space, or in academic life or campus life or in physical spaces, should be considered to be part of the human experience for human accommodations.

45:53 You don't have if you don't have to do to people who don't have disabilities, or don't, whether they have a disability, for example, or disabilities, all smoke individuals and they work differently. They work experience life differently. Disability is part of the human experience. We have to get away from this notion of thinking. These are disability accommodations. It's a special or exceptional thing that's being done to support students who are somehow extraordinarily different from the rest of the student population only part of the student population and it's that's the way we need to look at it that everybody needs to be fully included. And people with disabilities are brilliant, passionate in many ways because of the disability experience. single persons are more creative in their in their thinking they're more apt to use the word I don't think people are to communicate this word, but more resilient. It's fair to say right so that can mean that the disabled student learning approaches and certain populations might be different from appear doesn't have a disability. Students might actually be a lot more creative in their approach to their academic experience might be a lot more creative and passionate and and have extraordinary abilities that actually expand from the from the disability experience. They have as human beings. So I think we need to consider that. I know that like in the mid 80s, large organization started.

47:13 I think it was really, we're talking about the years. Certainly there was more black and white in terms of here and also we had segregated, much more segregated education.

47:26 Still, some aspects of segregation within civility experience to there's less about, stop this medical model. And the thing that bothers me is you know, do we, for example, if somebody has a physical disability, does a service provider or faculty member even know that the medical condition that just disability, despite a bifida or cerebral palsy, or whatever the case may be, that doesn't matter. It's just it's part of that student get around.

47:52 Or they move through life and through campus experience. They happen to use a wheelchair, they happen to require certain accommodations because of who they are. The medical stuff is not it's not so important and a lot of waste nobody's business, right. So we've seen in some cases, we've actually seen human rights complaints that have been filed like they weren't.

48:12 One student at Duke University in Ontario, objected to the fact that she was being asked to provide documentation she had some conditions, was being asked to provide specific documentation on the types of mental illness that she had.

48:25 On certain medications, stuff like that. That doesn't matter. I mean, that sort of stuff. It becomes like certain points based on one's privacy and unnecessary provision of accessible learning experiences and accessible education.

48:41 Yeah, thanks for that Frank. And I got like some of the thinking back on on the human aspect of this and the individuals and make the institutions such like the one where I work at SFU got what are we doing for you know, we wanted to be a plus experience for all and taking some of that, so I didn't see really put your hand up. We have quite a few questions coming from the audience. We have a quick addition to that. I'll try to be as quick as I can about it. You know, looking at any type of school situation, and accommodating students, we should be looking at Universal Design for all students, not just a person with a mobility disability. There's many other disabilities that we're we seem to focus mostly on mobility. And that is because code was kind of based on mobility, and is the main focus of code over the years. We are however, we now we are moving on to when we're talking about all people these days, and that's super important. When I grew up, I went to elementary school in the 60s. So I'm the old guy here, one of the old guys here. And there was no integrated school. In those days, we were segregated. So children that had disability, never went to school with me, and I never saw a child with a disability until I was in high school. And so things have changed for the better in a big way. We people are becoming versus everyone is becoming part of society, which is just super important. People of all intellectual levels, and people all ability are becoming part of society. So that's that's, I took that away from Frank and Frankie. Thanks for bringing that up. That was a really great segment that you put on the table here. Thank you.

50:01 Thanks for Yeah, I just gotta love the way everyone's feeling and everyone's comments as well. It's it's been much we touched.

50:06 On this theme we've had Sam from the audience has passed on a question and he says in my experience at a public post secondary institution, the Disability Center staff are so overwhelmed that they actively work to create barriers for students to access disability centers and accommodation, because they can't handle the number of students otherwise and they admit this openly. Anyone any comments or reactions to that?

50:30 I'm certainly unfortunately, it is a reality that this access units Disability Services, most secular institutions are overwhelmed by the number of students that they're trying to serve. That is one of the big challenges to that comes when students matriculate from high school into post secondary or reentered postsecondary after taking a break. Often, they don't know the timelines of requests that need to go in and they also maybe don't know the documentation they need in order to work with a Disability Services Unit or access unit. So often there's a significant bottleneck. That happens especially September to October, students are realizing they have to book appointments, the appointments are full, they have to get the documentation all these things are going through. So I think it's absolutely like I obviously would like to acknowledge the experience here that that is undeniably true. I also personally have quite a few issues in my role as Director of Education LDS and trying to support learners. That are accessing public institutions, but some of the requirements for documentation, which I think are actually really progressive and novel, for example, we have learners here with a diagnosed learning disability that that is a lifelong disability. Nothing can ever possibly change a person who person will have a learning disability forever. Yet, as Carly said they're required to have a psycho psycho educational assessment within five years. Why that makes zero sense, but it's a permanent, persistent disability that will call that person forever. Their accommodation requests are generally pretty easily facilitated, like at the university level, often request for more time, different access material like recorded lectures like they're honestly easily done this idea you need a 35,030 \$500 assessment to do a five a five day assessment, again, that you already did to evidence that you still have a permanent learning facility is really challenging. And a lot of that comes like why post secondary institutions often stick to those things. It's because what's in ministry guidelines, they don't have to, but they'll choose to toe the line and hold those ministry guidelines. So I have had some luck with engaging with access units at some institutions and getting some individual exceptions for students. Unfortunately, squeaky wheels do get the grease and advocacy can be really powerful, but I systemically am struggling to deal sometimes with access units with with rules really don't make any sense for students. So positively somewhat is that if there is funding for adults in post secondary with disabilities to do those assessments that it does exist. There's also funding for academic academic support as well if you have documentation to us a person with a disability. So learning to play the system is going to be probably your best bet but if you want to college it's not fairness and systems don't don't work that well. Currently in any any level right now.

52:49 So yeah, just even the question around if something doesn't change, why do we need this updated? Some of these processes and systems just become institutionalized.

52:59 The question we have why do we need that? I think Carla, you had your head.

53:02 I think and thank you, Sam for your question. And I was a high school teacher. And I did a lot of transition planning. So most provinces in their suggested policy or an IEP, once you're in high school, 14 years old, they're supposed to include transition plan that helps you with that transition from high school to whatever you're doing after. Now, obviously, it's definitely not there could be a gap like where

you rank or you work for awhile and then come back with a secondary, but if you are planning to go from high school into post secondary, your team your school based team in high school is supposed to be helping you make those initial contacts with the Student Accessibility Center. They are supposed to be helping you reach out and find out what documentation are they required, what could we do right now that would still be valid by the time you get there, for example, and think that the short story, one of my students, we were in one of these meetings, he was already accepted to university and we were processing some of the paperwork he has autism spectrum disorder. And then the Student Accessibility Center at his Ontario university, gave like a list of the things that they were anticipating he would need as accommodation. And it was very classic things like set a time, maybe a due date, extensions, things like that. And then he looked at the list and he basically stood up and said, Oh, I can go home now. And we're like, Oh, do you want to end the meeting and he was like, well, it looks like when I turn 18 and go to university, I don't have autism anymore.

54:23 Because all the accommodations that he had in high school, there were so many that we've seen that worked and he wasn't seeing those on the university accommodation sheet. And so, yes, we need them to go to the Accessibility Center and we do want them to get the documentation. But what is offered is often less than what they experienced and the support levels they experienced in high school. And transition planning only works if all of those people are there and the school is actually doing the transition plan and having the parents there and having the student there too. So another sort of two in that pool system you're talking about?

54:58 Yeah, thank you. And you have to see, again, the issue of system seems to be coming up over and over again in terms of the you know, the interconnectedness or when it's not as connected as it should be or could be. So thank you. And we have another audience question from Tara on this topic of autism spectrum disorder disorder, they wrote I do a ton of reading on ASD and there isn't much for accessibility for autistic adults in any form of education or support systems across Canada. This issue is systemic across Canada and the older one is the older one is the less support there is how has BC addressed this issue.

55:30 On our panel, start on this one.

55:35 I can at least maybe maybe jump in just because we do. LDS do serve autistic adults who are looking for supports for both found transition into the workforce or workforce transition or also the transition back into University College.

55:48 Obviously, right there is very little out there and what is out there is usually for vocational training or workforce training or trying to get individuals back into the workforce.



55:58 So I'm not sure exactly sort of the full realm. I don't know what the question was also about like social programs, social services, civic engagement like beyond education and retraining. But if someone is looking specifically for supports for workforce transition or academic transition for autistic adults, absolutely feel free to get in contact with with LDS, you can actually support with that. For life skills and social skills. I think Autism Spectrum Disorder is quite challenging to for programming for adults, just the diversity, the way that ASD presents and young a lot of the supports are for autistic adults who have very high support needs who need support with assisted living, or other like sort of day to day existence. I think unfortunately, autistic adults have probably received zero support or those that can easily mask or who have subsidized they missed sort of opportunities to be connected in with with community and support. And I think that is a huge blind spot. BC is trying to work towards more of a needs based model. It's hardly mentioned. So they're hoping to replace current ASD funding model with a hub based models.

This is all sort of happening right now. There's not been a lot of information shared about what that looks like. What's covered, I think blind spot for the families that I work with is that ASD for example, has autism has all the funding essentially that ADHD has zero funding and decreasing an individual ASD versus individuals with ADHD, just as diagnosed don't actually tell you anything about the needs of the individual what supports they actually need. So I think we really need to work through needs based model that is not like going against that medical model at that I need to be like what does this individual need? Let's get them what they need versus this diagnosis means you need this and this diagnosis means you don't need anything which clearly is inaccurate. So I'll let someone else kind of take it from there.

57:29 Off of education, as you as you mentioned, is to get employment. And there are a lot of barriers to employment.

57:35 Whether it's PTSD, whether it's in neurodiverse, whether it's having a physical disability or being blind or deaf, there are many barriers. So there's a lot of basics that need to be in place for people starting in the school system. And I'm going to just touch on a few of them as an older gender washrooms that are universal washrooms to accommodate students that may not be comfortable going into a small washer that might need an adult change table or an overhead lift to to help them make it to their date. So they don't have to go home and miss a whole day of school and possibly wouldn't become an adult a whole day of work. Maybe just missing an hour of work instead of the whole day. So I like to look at those things and my friend Marika who I've known since she was born, she's now 30 years old. She's an adult. She does not comprehend written words she never has. When she was born, they said that she would never walk or run or talk. She does all those things. And but she cannot understand written words. So having things like pictograms as her get through like she lost at Vancouver Airport on her own. She was at an Olympic event and was able to we find her way to her group by using pictograms. So having things that are outside of the scope of what we normally think of.

58:43 We need an education. A lot of those are barriers, just basic barriers for meaningful access for everyone and you know, there's all sorts of things written down here, but I'm gonna try to keep it short here. So it's just about breaking down those barriers, no matter who the student is or who the child is or who the adult is that we can accommodate them. So a lot of people might need a quiet area and an office, they might need a room to just go sit by himself for a while. So our employers recognizing this probably not. Our school is recognizing this somewhat. It's getting better, but aspect of getting employed is really, really important. Important for all people, people, it's meaningful to have a great job like, I love my job.

59:18 Best thing that's ever happened to that's not the case for everyone. Not everybody has that same opportunity of finding something that's very meaningful for them. So we need to guide them on that path and give them all the resources that we can to get them there so that they have that meaningful position in life, whatever it might be, and the range and the idea that ended that also could shift and change. what's meaningful for someone at one point might change as they move on through their lives as well.

59:42 Tara, who initiated the question, had some comments and so I believe we're going to try and unmute. And everyone. I grew up in BC. Northern Vancouver Island when supports were very few and far between and special needs classes back then were very segregated and they didn't really optimize the abilities of a disabled person growing up. So what that happens very much like medical school special needs.

1:00:09 Basic idea. Now, as I got older up until about 14, I'm looking at various parts of ECE accommodation for invisible disabilities and learning disability. We didn't know what wasn't 39 Now as I aged

1:00:31 39 years old

1:00:34 while attending school, Marquess college, I believe he's got some some views on the comments in there. That's college being discriminatory and really like when it came to disabilities, especially those with invisible disabilities like this is still happening to a lot of students across Canada.

1:00:53 I have especially the fact that I have no supports when it comes to family because my family is to Secretary far away. I have my husband, but he is undiagnosed autistic. So we got two Autistics in this household, that when they retire are going to need help when they age are independent. There was nothing for people that are in the upper echelons unless if you are below 30, a tech savvy artistic for which body fit my husband does that's computer with my computer to my husband all the time saying how is he going to fix this? disabilities for like Then should we not address this issue?

1:01:32 Aren't handled once

1:01:40 I just like to really think Tara for her contribution and absolutely I think everyone on this panel would obviously agree that this is an unacceptable the level of support for adults with disabilities especially those who are able to make independently and do just well enough that essentially they're not captured by social, other social services. So it's a catch all and it's not good enough if it's not okay.

1:02:03 Yeah, you know, we've seen significant cuts to social health education funding over regressive, increasingly regressive governments and BC over the past 2030 years, and this is what cuts look like. This is what happens when you continually cut education and health setting budgets. So my organization we do a lot of advocacy in this area we're trying to push but again, like we need people to get out there and vote for change and actually make meaningful change in any way says we don't need to do in this area. Like I don't even know what to say to them because there are 10s of 1000s of British Columbians suffering without the supports that they that they need to thrive and just doing okay, enough is not good enough. That's not it's not the life that's acceptable for Canadians. So I just thank you for sharing Torah and again, I hope people continue to pick up the torch and make a meaningful difference will be that they vote in the way they advocate and how we talk about the need for better services for British Columbians.

1:02:49 Thank you for raising that it looks a few more like Franklin, partly that to your thoughts as well.

1:02:59 Thank you for that question. I think that we I know that it was it was really was talking about you need all individuals with disabilities to be able to follow their path that they wanted to get into the career that they want to pursue and to live up to hopefully fulfilling and also kind of like that will afford them. Everybody in this country is entitled to back to the matter. It's though that we and this affects folks with disabilities at all levels, but including students who are in post secondary and those who waited for post secondary education or those who have no post secondary education, but our adults with disabilities are sort of struggling. We have in this country. We have some support systems that are inadequate, right. So we have, for example, disability benefits programs that are different from one province to another. They're all inadequate. Usually depending on the on the province in the provincial government to be a little bit more, a little bit better. from one province to another.

1:04:02 In Ontario, our office at Carleton University. We're in Ottawa, Ontario. We are a national organization and I think it'd be the Ontario context. We have a Conservative government Ontario government, which is I don't want to get too much into politics here. But of course it's really progressive in bad water for people with disabilities and people who are often living below the margins and we have this province, the Ontario Disability Support Program provides like \$100 a month or something for an

individual that's well below the poverty line was recently there was a 5% increase announced and also there's been an increase announced on the threshold income threshold it used to be \$500 you can make and receive your benefits of the clawbacks. Now it's \$1,000 in Ontario, still we know that making with disability to rely on on disability benefits while there's students and youth in school stuck in this in this situation where if you graduate if you're in school, in a province like Ontario, and receive and you're receiving disability benefits, lots of folks who are receiving disability benefits. You can get a summer job for example, and you can even work eight weeks or 10 weeks, but have that impact your ODSP panels as soon as you graduate university if you still need to be on Ontario Disability Support, then you get the \$400 and you have this income threshold which was 500,000 1000. So what happens is a lot of people were highly qualified for secondary education. Ambitions when it comes to their careers are reluctant to to lose their vital benefits that they need for drugs or for medication, sports.

1:05:48 Psychologists, mobility devices, whatever and are stuck in a situation where they're either unemployed or underemployed. Now have in this country of course, we're getting close to being a candidate disability benefits. federal benefit, we don't know what that's gonna look like exactly. gonna qualify how much it's going to be put up

1:06:07 What's your concerns ours? How much will it be three concerns? How much will it be qualified? Well, the provincial governments just take money away. Federal governments provide persons with disabilities, right. So we have, we have this spiraling, sort of circling situation of poverty at the same time.

1:06:25 On the, on the positive side, an increasing number of persons with disabilities going into post secondary education. An increasing percentage of folks who are graduating with degrees and diplomas and expertise in many fields. Situation is starting to get a little bit better.

1:06:42 And there there are opportunities. We have legislation, including provincial disability legislation in BC starting in Ontario, and other provinces and we have enabling human rights legislation like the accessible fat and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. So sadly, of course, we need to we need to have good support in a country like Canada, which considers itself progressive need to have the levers of human rights legislation to ensure in education and employment in daily life that the rights of persons with disabilities are being respected. And the discrimination that's being addressed, but it's often often people are voiceless because they're so entrenched in their own poverty or lack of supports and services.

1:07:30 No thanks. And I think we may be coming back to some issues around finance already later on. And I also thanks for raising the callback disincentive for work which is a really frustrating one. I know for myself and many others quickly as I've moved into the career space, knowing how important experiences both for the experience for opening up other possibilities and if there's disincentives for people to try things even for you know, for shorter periods or whatever it might be the down string

effects are can be quite devastating. Currently, the job you had up on that one, I think did an excellent job.

I wanted to mention, I have that I have been trying to teach a lot more to my teacher candidates is about ableism and the language of ableism and that this should be being taught as part of the social justice movement in our K through 12. Schools straight up into university because when we name something and call it what it is, it brings power. And so Cara, thank you so much for sharing your lived experience. And those are examples of severe ableism and we have ableism that kind of just like racism, it can interact in all these complex ways in subtle ways and hidden ways, in systemic in nature, cultural ways.

1:08:39 What we're talking about with all of the like poverty, and we're gonna get to another question about that later, but those are examples of systemic ableism. And we need to talk about it and we need to gain a greater understanding of that. We need our teachers and our schools to understand that when they limit the abilities and disabilities that when they assume less competency that is ablest when they plan for the average student instead of who is in front of them, that is ablest and that is a type of discrimination and it violates things like the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities CRPD and if we're really going to move towards the accessible Canada Act between 40 That means all ableism including it when we talk about social justice like is the eye and Evi so when we say Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, when we're not doing that that was or ableist discriminations occurred. I think it's a perfect segue we might come back to in terms of a question that came up earlier and basically, from the server response indicated that many have experienced or felt some sort of discrimination based on their disability in their academic experience in BC, respondents indicated that teachers and support staff are only adequately trained to support students with physical disabilities, lack of training extensive students with physical, intellectual and learning disability as well, as well as those who are neuro diverse. Can you talk about the type of training you've made some mention to you have the class it's not part of the curriculum?

1:09:55 A little bit more, but this is mandatory. Is it enough? Is it ever enough?

1:09:59 Yeah. Okay. So no, it's not enough, in my opinion. And I think when I think about inclusion, and where we need to get to where we are, it can become quite daunting. I have really appreciated other members. Write up where we've come from, and that encourages me to hope for a future that is more accessible and inclusive to our students. One of the barriers however, in the literature around more inclusive schools, I'm talking specifically K to 12. Schools is Teacher based attitudes. So it's not just the training that they need to have about kids, but it's also overcoming that systemic discrimination that is embedded in all of our social systems that has discriminated and continues to discriminate disproportionately towards people with disabilities. So we have to be unlearning and have them be students with disabilities as capable people that add to the diversity of their classroom that have multi dimensional identities and someone in the past I think maybe talked about this earlier, intersectional identities, they're not a disability, and that's it. They're also they also have a racial identity, a religious

identity, a gender identity, etc. And so we've seen that complexity. So in our classes at UBC, there isn't required course to become a bctf. So ABC certified is the inclusion of students with exceptionalities is what is called in the class into the general classroom, and they are required to take that class now. But the step forward is Teacher Education. The literature is telling us that it can't just be one class, it needs to be embedded throughout the entire program. Every teacher ed program, so if you are becoming a teacher, and you're in a class, about literacy, and how you teach reading, are we talking about this 16 to 20% of students with disabilities and how they are going to learn how to read. And so yes, I love teaching this class, but I want that content. Just in my class. I want it in every class and when they're in practicality are they go work in a classroom with a supervising teacher? Are we talking about disability? Are they seeing systems that are getting in the way the BC government wants them to work? Are they pointing out to our teacher candidate? IEP, this is how it's used. So those are some of the barriers in teacher education. And then I can't I can't mention this part about teachers that were training 20 years ago, they didn't have even the class that I'm teaching. And so then we also have this thing where change we put out new teachers that have more training than the ones before, but what do we do about the teachers already in the field that didn't even have the opportunity necessarily to have that training? And so this is where professional development comes in. And there are a lot of school districts who hire wonderful people that go in and talk about inclusion that train teachers in the field right now. But that can be quite haphazard with which districts are focusing on this, which teachers get to come to all this subject to do this Pro D. What about the support staff? And so this is where that gap in the time of this system, it can almost feel frozen in time.

1:12:50 So my hope is that there'll be more districts that will put inclusion and training teachers that did have this chance and the teachers that did to further embed that practice.

1:12:59 And that's where I hope we're going

1:13:03 that direction. And I know most of the challenge of the it's not just that we're training, but there's a system that's been in place for decades and people who've been educating as long as shifting culture. So it can be really challenging. So thanks for your perspective. We're gonna go early than Jeff. Tara's comment about inclusion and who's hiring. So, a lot of times when people have disability in Damascus, they're often sent into organizations that are disability oriented so that that's where their area of employment opportunity is, rather than a broad spectrum of employment opportunity. And I can remember people that graduated from UBC, many years ago, and their only option was to go work for a nonprofit, disability oriented organization because we'll be able to fire them that they just could not get a job. And the other opportunity sometimes is government government is pretty good at hiring people with disability across a broad spectrum. But from that is pretty low, in my opinion. So I really like what you had to say, Tara and Carly. Thank you. That was really informative.

1:14:00 Thank you. Thanks for that.

1:14:02 That's what Carly was saying about your education. But the biggest challenge of teacher education in BC offered by adults for five institutions. And most of the programs are between one year to two years that sit on top of the bachelor's degree. So it's actually a very short period of time teacher education, where say a year 16 months where you're trying to transition students between classroom based learning and school based learning and back and forth from these competencies, and there definitely is a recognition of special education or supporting students with disabilities is very important. There's also really other extremely important competing areas as well, such as Indigenous education and digitizing the curriculum, as well as the Sochi curriculum on sexual orientation gender identity. So teacher candidates right now are trying to grapple with a large amount of social change in the areas of accessibility disability of indigeneity, as well as stigmatization of people of different genders and orientations. And it's very challenging to equip them with the critical thinking skills to engage with all of those topics and apply them at the same time within 16 months. While they're actually trying to also learn the other types of things they need to learn on the job as new teachers such as classroom management strategies, how to design and then to integrate curriculum, how to be a professional in a school environment. So it's actually very tricky. I've been in teacher education for 10 years and I'm sure Carly say the same thing. It's very hard to do this work meaningfully with students are often very focused on what do I do in the classroom, I need to get my lesson plans and get my curriculum plans to go out there and do good work. And then they're also facing schools that are under resourced. Under equipped and teachers who quite frankly, often don't know what when it started face IEP might look like or what accommodations look like or what the differentiation curriculum look like. So I'm also very hopeful because I've worked with hundreds of teacher candidates and on placement and they're more than 100 Many, many, many, and I see lots of change and lots of great things happening but it will take decades to really systemically change the scoring system because we have teachers who have been teaching in school for 40 years who when they did teacher education, these those types of students, people with disabilities are not in classrooms, they never once received training on it. They did not work with those students. And now they're expected to do that without the training and support and support staff that they need to so I'm optimistic about where we're going. I see people doing this work I'm so thankful for experts like Carly who are teaching these courses and doing them well. But it will take time it will actually take time to there.

1:16:08 That's a good point there and like, get your head up at something out there. Actually, it's a question based on what we were just talking about in both areas and in terms of one area I think that's missing and I'm not even educating myself, about hiring people with disability and trying to encourage more people with disabilities to get into the education tracks as well. I think it's that way you can start some of those issues and I'm not sure where you are in your experience.

1:16:38 My question was about whether or not the hiring of people with disabilities so that into those positions so that you can jumpstart accessibility question. How is that being addressed?

1:16:50 You have your handout that was related to that. I will let you go. Frank, the current source, sort of picking up on what Jen just said.

1:17:00 I think it's really important that we have the people with disabilities are reflected across society in all different types of organizations.

1:17:10 And in all different fields, writing and clearly with higher education training.

1:17:16 For highly skilled individuals disabilities who are graduating and are able to move into teaching positions are able to move into

1:17:25 positions that are available in government departments and corporations and private sector, industries etc. It's only when the profile of the company be the wrong word. It's only when the composition of the organization fully representative of people with disabilities and when I say that but in an intersectional way, change happens right so in my own orbit during for people that are not particularly close to me, but I pull them up sometimes family and people are associated with over the years, who are getting to the point where they're ready to retire and they're saying, God, I'm retiring now because I can handle all this. Diversity and Inclusion, this bulk agenda of people, even people I know I've written to those people, they really need to retire because it's only that change will only happen to organization.

1:18:28 Like, if you have, you have no black people, I can rationalize people in your organization, where you're going to understand what it means.

1:18:36 what that experience is, like, how you're gonna be more accommodating, accommodating as an employer. Or as a high school or an elementary school or whatever, right. I mean, you need to have your organization needs to be reflective and representative of the community, of course, and things versus fiscally. So the thinking will change and approaches will change based on the composition of the of the organization I had an interview with, with a journalist in DC a couple weeks ago, reached out to me and said, Talk to me about all genders, washrooms. Somebody else on the panel panel and measuring all gender washrooms. I can't remember who that was. Okay, that's great. You know, it's really interesting. Weeks before I had this interview, and I'm not an expert in all gendered washrooms, and accessibility with accessible design for two weeks we reached out to me I was at the University and University of our offices, and I was using went to the coffee shop on the fourth floor, the University Center, and the all gendered washroom had just been completed they renovated slowly and renovated two washrooms by roosters coffeehouse. One was male, one female, and they turned it into this one big space. That's an all gender Washington. Use it for the first time like two weeks ago. I was so impressed with the facility had been adult gender Washington sports, thought it was great, but this was finally happening.



1:19:52 Carleton University Unicenter with the Student Union, so you're expected to progress with things like that would happen. And then I took a picture that was assigned by the washroom explained to you explain what the benefits of all gender washroom was and how it was inclusive and supportive of everyone. That includes of course, people who get to fly differently when it comes to their gender includes people with disabilities that includes parents, with children, all these things. So I saw you know, two weeks later, I had this interview with NBC I shared a photo that I taken with my cell phone inside the cell gender, Washington. Here's an example of inclusive design of an inclusive space.

1:20:36 Universal design, in other words, is it this place that will serve the most people and it's good for everybody. That doesn't mean you know, depending on the building, depending on the space, there might still be a requirement for single occupancy, but maybe take the nameplate off it says male or female, and just say, don't just the washroom priority to persons with disabilities or something like that. So there's an example right? There or something that the thinking behind the reason we're doing it the question from, in many cases from people, trans community, from people who didn't comfortable using regular only originally, there was pushback on the rights of conservative people were saying wasn't everything that couldn't be done right. And we find that when we do that it's better for everyone. And then getting back to the point about accessibility services stop being overwhelmed.

1:21:35 I think that that is very true and we're hearing that oftentimes, they have to wait a couple of weeks to get an appointment or they have to there's a backlog registered to use the office in the first place. So and we have a lot of appreciation for people who work in that area. Many of them are really dedicated students request in terms of accommodations and respect what they need to try to offer services that are respectful of the student voice in the students experience. The other is thinking about, okay, there was a time thinking was of a disability, you should go to accessibility services that support you here, this particular office, so you have to go over there, right. So it's constantly pushing students off to say, just your designated space, hopefully to take pressure off Accessibility Services recognizing still be a requirement for some level of expertise and specialized supports or whatever equipment and all those things that every single office, universal university or college campus will let lecture hall every single teaching staff member will use the word trained, should have the capacity, and often that is just like human empathy and understanding and listening to students have the capacity to whatever support students need human accommodation as human beings we learned differently and maybe have different requirements all have the right to use to access the learning access to spaces, all those things, right. So I think that that's sort of all gendered washroom. A perfect example of something that people thought years ago was impossible, and it was just this left wing notion by certain people was dangerous, whatever, no, it's better. It's better for everybody.

1:23:21 And we can find a way of doing it, but sometimes it's the people who need those spaces, who have to push other people who are naturally resistant, make it happen.

1:23:32 Thank you. Wonderful excels

1:23:34 And I've really noticed this quarter to three. We're in our we're in our homestretch currently, some some comments you'd like to add on that as we were getting ready for wrap up. I'll be really quick. So there has been some research done about teachers with disabilities in schools, and I totally liked what Frank was talking about, about the need to diversify our national working staff and what do schools look like? Who is getting to teach our future students?

1:23:57 So what materials are we using to teach? So for example, do we have books that represent people with disabilities? Do we have content about people disabilities, and when we talk about historical movements are when we do a novice study in a class. We people just feel this way. Forever. This has been part of the human experience. And so when you're teaching a history class is that when you read a children's book to your grade to class, do you have any that represent people with disabilities? But then also who are these teachers and I?

1:24:24 Obviously, these are trying to become more equitable in who we have and recruit for our teacher education programs, and the experiences of people with disabilities in teacher education. That is a new space of being research and seeing how they experienced that as a person with a disability myself that was a teacher, I can say from my own lived experience. That schools were not always the most inclusive place to work. And print my other principal once said, like, how are we going to become an inclusive place for kids with disability when we can't make it inclusive for Carly to be a teacher in this school? And so that speaks volumes for what Frank was just saying about the need for people with disabilities in these workplaces. And so I think that is a shout out to school districts and teacher education programs to really consider what that would be.

1:25:06 Thank you that that's wonderful. And I do want to check in with my computer because one of the questions I've been thinking and it's been is this idea that works and actually given your grade 29 which is still one of my favorite concepts. You've actually participated school systems in different provinces. I want to just talk about what some of the things you've witnessed or experienced in the different contexts, undergrad and graduate level, BC, Ontario and any other place you may have been at, for some perspective. I would say they're not really a lot of great differences. It's more maybe over time. It's really dependent on if you've got the right champions within your organization, I think that's makes a big difference. But you know, I think a lot of the things that everybody's been talking about is still an evolution and evolutionary process and doesn't necessarily trickle down to us a really bad term. To everything else that might be within that education system, whether it's post secondary or secondary, etc. And, and again, I think it kind of goes back to having more representation, considering accessibility, the physical environment, social environment, how you bring parents into the conversation, so it's been very different. I went to University of Illinois, where it's basically the origin of accessibility and disability sports. So it's where wheelchair basketball started and that's why I went there on a wheelchair basketball scholarship. So very different than anything else. There's no thought there even recreation

programs for instance, there's, I've yet to see any of those opportunities like I always think, why am I putting it in the recreation group when offering any opportunities, those so it's kind of differently can really depend whereas Douglas College, for instance, provides great and that's because they had a champion who happen to be the women's national team, wheelchair basketball team coach. So it's, it can be a lot based on who's in the system and whether or not they're thinking against systemically about how accessibility and inclusion is incorporated in how they deliver their services.

1:26:56 Such as people in certain contexts or environments that can shift things or what the the institution wants to offer. Agenda a quick because we're getting to final statement. Time. Just really quick, just because a lot of the comment in the chat around autistic individuals and maybe a lack of inclusion. So I just wanted to say that I'm very proud that I have several neurodivergent educators on staff and instructors, autistic instructors, because I think it is very important that we do have autistic educators and our divergent educators working with all children but also of course has to do with neurodivergent children because if you do not see yourself reflected in teaching and education, you are not likely an educator and then we can never actually redress the exclusion of people with physical or and invisible and or invisible disabilities in education. So there are there certainly like our artistic educators are never educators just like there are LGBTQ plus educators but they may or may not even feel comfortable being open about their neurodivergent in education settings due to worry about perception or pushback and all these types of things as well. So I think there are definitely there are autistic neurodivergent adults with disabilities out there that may not necessarily necessarily people might not be aware they may not feel comfortable and or they might have been excluded. So I think employers, schools education systems, have a big really need to, as Carly said make them actually who's not just for students, but for educators and teachers and students to see themselves reflected in an education and I think that we're making progress but we're still a long way away from addressing the exclusion.

1:28:18

Points. That's some progress on lots still to be done.

1:28:22 We're almost at time we were gonna wrap up. The conversation has been so Richard, we've actually had trouble getting credit. I think we need to have a part two and three. I'm assuming but there has been a sound put up an earlier question and so maybe there's only be able to give a quick response. Is it standard practice that post secondary students are unable to access accommodations that costs money unless they apply for students? And just so we can think of that question as a direct answer to that, but then also thinking that in general, and this is maybe for our final comment, there was a lot of concerns or issues around the state of financial assistance for individuals with disabilities to be able to afford education. So maybe as people think their final comment, I want to think about the very specific question, is it standard practice that post secondary students required or need to apply for student loan to access accommodations? I don't have a specific insight.

1:29:16 My understanding is that there are grants available for students with disabilities to access funds for assistive technologies or other support such as specialized tutoring assessments. My understanding is

that that you need to apply for those grant funds to be able to receive the grant funds and use them but I am not aware that one has to have a student loan in order to be eligible. I do I do actually have questions about eligibility and whether we need to be eligible for student loans to access those grants though, because sometimes their income means so some students have come from wealthy families, for example, aren't eligible for students that could be hangups, which might mean that they're likely might be challenges in accessing funds for a psycho educational assessment. So I think there is a lack of need for clarity in that space because we have learners struggling to move through those systems and access that funding effectively. That's not my understanding and if that is the case, and that would be a significant equity. Issue. Yep.

1:30:03 And frankly, quickly

1:30:11 gotta get the opposite.

1:30:14 I was wasn't muted anyway, on the subject of financials and things we're trying to do as an organization by creating the website disability warsop. Ca, we're trying to put in one place information, federal, provincial and territorial financial aid, along with funding that's available from non government organizations, and also private sector funders in some cases, and also Americans, our organization for the worse programs that we run. The thing about our disability award fancy website is actually has scholarships, awards and bursaries that are offered to disabled students through individual schools across the country over 200 Post Secondary School So oftentimes, for example, will be like Memorial scholarships are created. For example, when somebody passes away their scholarship was created to provide funding to disabled students or students with a certain type of disability in somebody's memory. And that made that scholarship maybe 2000 or \$5,000 a year, maybe to a number of different students, but sometimes those there may be hundreds and hundreds of these scholarships within college or university that students aren't even aware of, unless they do a lot of their own digging. So this is one of the things we tried to do with our disability was a website. And medical, of course includes information. Federal programs like the cannabis can Financial Assistance Program, most students receive a combination of federal and provincial grants and loans oftentimes because the ones that financial aid is integrated. I'm not exactly sure what the portion of funding is from each but for example, to Jen's point you know, there is the services and equipment grant.

1:31:38 Disabled Students can access if they have exceptional engineers, exceptional, higher higher than costs, for equipment or for tutors or interpreters or whatever. Then with the other students would have up to \$20,000 a year. And the thing that I think is really encouraging even though there are two parts to lots of funding, it's still too low to support many students adequately through their secondary studies, but there has been for the last 20 or 30 years within financial aid programs to offer more grants and loans for the for the proportion of grants to loans to shift to be called the federal program used to be called the candidacy of molds program. Last year they changed the Naval Academy Student Financial

Assistance Program with good reason. As the portion of Brasil shifted. It's a very good thing. And during the pandemic offline grants.

1:32:29 All these were doubled. And our organization along became Federation of Students, other student organizations, encouraging the federal government to keep the grants at the same level, the doubling that happened a couple of years ago because that additional funding was not only needed during the pandemic during this extraordinary circumstances that all of us found ourselves into and students what continues and continues to be an issue going forward. So the so the, the financial EPS is critical, it will say to them with our own funding programs, we noticed the accessibility Resilience Program was created during the pandemic and run run for two years. Now, to support unmet cost needs to a disabled student, federal government and Social Health Canada's student learning program. When students got their applications for this additional funding and they could get up to \$5,000 for our worst program. We found students were reporting to us in the application system.

1:33:25 Technology. I see that we've had some students who said that they weren't using their cell phones during their schoolwork because they couldn't afford to buy a laptop. So still hear stories like that, and those are not isolated.

1:33:39 Oftentimes, we've got students who are living in families where there are in lower socioeconomic circumstances, at a disadvantage to begin with so parents can can afford to buy their son or daughter a laptop. If they know they can't get funding for financial aid programs to support that cost. So why don't we still have things are getting better, but we still have a lot of work to do and a lot of advocacy for financial aid programs.

1:34:05 And thank you for thanking me I'm wrapping us up on some of the financial issues and get them wonderful and I'm gonna pass it back to Emily to help with our closing. Three o'clock on the dots. Thank you so much. Tony's such a wonderful job. Moderating conversation. Yes, Melissa put in the chat was very informative. I learned a ton. Thank you to our panelists. Carly, my gen. Frank.

1:34:25 Thank you so much. We learned so much and yeah, I mean, we could do a part two, part three on all this. So I just wanna let everyone know in attendance that a transcript of the chat box as well as the actual Zoom meeting, will be edited and just cleaned up for spelling and whatnot and then sent out to all attendees, we will also pull resources that were mentioned from that gentleman should be able to link to them and they will be added to our resource page on our website. So we have an education tab for that. And yeah, I hope that you will join us in our other programming and [connector.org/events](https://connector.org/events) come to the Christmas holiday party December 6. And I really appreciate these conversations that are among most of my favorite programming that we have here at the Disability Foundation. We do also send all of that information to a list that we put together of people in the education sector, NBC that can instigate real change. So it comes with a lot of city officials, government officials, and we will be sending out all of

our survey findings and information from this chat along to them. So as Frank said, things are improving but we still have a long way to go and I hope that you being a part of this conversation and feeling like you were heard and learn something contributes to that. So thank you so much to everyone, for having us for being here.

1:35:33 The live stream is copy that.

1:35:37 Yes. Thank you so much. That was incredible.

1:35:41 There's so much information

1:35:43 I learned a ton. So thank you for including me thanks to all the panelists. It's hard to get everyone sometimes.

1:35:51 So thank you. Yeah, thank you again for your time Tony. did wonderful. Managing Estonia

1:35:58 Totally. Alright, take care. All right.

1:36:02 Wonderful

All right. 1:36:06

First.

1:36:11 Yeah, that was really, really great.

1:36:14 Like, I'm like, I wish some people at my school were watching

1:36:20 the wrap up and send it to whoever Yeah, and for people to have this information. Yeah. Like.

1:36:27 Like, it's such great information. But then Emily's it's like preaching to the choir, but it's like, how do you make sure it gets to the people who really need to hear that's happening. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, for sure. Yeah. So next week, we will be doing all that work. We'll be wrapping up bases and sending it to the people that should hear about it. Yeah, have an awesome weekend. Thank you for your help today. And if you just otter Yeah, just record whatever hours you did today. I really appreciate your help and getting all the new streaming.

1:36:51 Know what was going on with saying, you know if it was just trying to catch up, and it was cool, it might have been because we stopped the livestream and then started it again. But regardless, we will just download this video from Facebook and I put it on.

1:37:05 Jennifer, you were awesome. I know you don't have access to your mind. Thank you for all of your help.

1:37:09 Like next week and see if you want to volunteer hours as well. Okay, have a great weekend