
Exclusion Tracker Report 2022-23

September 12,
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BCEdAccess Society



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Introduction

The BCEdAccess K-12 Education Exclusion Tracker was initiated to monitor and report on the exclusion of disabled students by the British Columbia education system. This report aims to shed light on the ongoing barriers to equitable access to education experienced by these students, emphasizing the urgency for systemic change.



This report covers BCEdAccess' 5th year collecting data on the exclusion of disabled students, province-wide, from their education.

This annual data collection has proven to be crucial in identifying some of the barriers that lead to exclusion in schools. From physical accessibility to discriminatory policies and practice, once identified, schools and districts can take action to address and remove these barriers.

Monitoring exclusions holds educational institutions and policymakers accountable for ensuring equitable access to education for disabled students. Government to ensure the necessary resources, supports, and accommodations are provided to disabled students to enable their full participation in education, through funding, training, and all other methods available to them.

Gathering this data provides evidence that can inform policy and practice. and increases awareness around these issues, with the hopeful result of mobilizing support for necessary changes.

Equitable access to education is foundational to a just society. Under the human rights model of disability, we don't merely accommodate; we ensure that education is accessible, inclusive, and individualized in every location for all students, honouring intersecting identities and considering their impacts. It is a collective responsibility and a legal obligation to ensure that all students have this access.

A note on intersecting identities

Educational exclusion does not affect all students equally. Our data shows it has a disproportionate impact on certain groups of students, including those who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, 2SLGBTQ+ , and those from low-income backgrounds.

Systemic racism and discrimination often intersect with ableism, leading to compounding impacts for BIPOC students with disabilities. These students are facing additional barriers related to language, culture, and racial discrimination. We are seeing, as one example, families of Indigenous students citing additional barriers related to the ongoing impacts of colonization, lack of culturally appropriate services and supports.

2SLGBTQ+ students with disabilities often face multiple layers of discrimination and exclusion based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and disability. Discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff has been addressed system-wide in BC with positive results, but because intersectionality has not been a part of this work, we are still seeing an impact on these students if they hold another oppressed identity such as disability. Deadnaming and other examples of discrimination against disabled, transgender students came to us in this year's reporting from families and students.

We have seen year after year in our data that disabled students from low-income backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by exclusion. This is unsurprising given that 1 in 5 children in BC are still living below the poverty line. This discrimination due to socio-economic status is evident this year in particular in the data around exclusions lasting longer than 4 months.

The intersection of these and other oppressed identities often leads to a compounding effect, where the barriers are multiplied. A BIPOC student who is also 2SLGBTQ+ and from a low-income background is up against many layers of systemic discrimination in addition to their disability.

Education staff must be equipped to identify and dismantle the systemic barriers that students with intersecting identities encounter. Policy and funding must be directed to addressing systemic racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination in the education system and society as a whole.



Nicole Kaler, Chair

Education staff must be equipped to identify and dismantle the systemic barriers that students with intersecting identities encounter.



Tracy Humphreys, Executive Director

By the numbers

These are the high level numbers we look at each year - number of respondents to our survey, number of student respondents, and number of individual days or incidents of exclusion.

How we calculate incidents/days of exclusion:

We add up number of days in the categories under a month.

We use an average of 18 days per month, for 2-4 months we use 3 months, and over 4 months we use 5 months.

There are many reports of over 4 months of exclusion that are the full school year, so the overall days/incidents of exclusion is likely a significant underestimate.

Type	number	Thoughts
Number of respondents	406 (288 initial survey, 128 repeat survey)	Over 5 years the number of respondents hasn't increased a lot. The survey is complex and not easy for families who have little extra time to spare.
Number of student respondents	70	big increase over previous year, and an important contribution for us to the data
How many individual incidents/days of exclusion?	5973	big increase again, mostly related to length of exclusions increasing

Key Findings

While many of the issues we see each year have remained consistent and unfortunately we see no improvement in any areas yet, there are a few which rise to the top of our list of concerns.

No
measurable
improvement

Restraint and Seclusion

Tracker reports of children being restrained and/or secluded has shown no measurable improvement. Inclusion BC has been sounding the alarm on this since 2013. The Ministry of Education and Child Care has [provincial guidance](#) and all school districts have policy based on it, yet the data indicates that this practice continues to affect too many children, with no measurable improvement from previous years.

No resolution
to barriers to
access

Nursing Support Services/Physical care

The delegated and direct care model between Health and Education and Child Care has changed, and children were being excluded if they need delegation of nursing tasks to ensure they could safely attend school. Examples include administering seizure rescue medications, tube feeding and other care tasks.

Increasing
reports

Kindergarten Exclusions

Kindergarten and grade 1 are the top grades reporting exclusions. Most of these relate to extended gradual entry and shortened school days. Indigenous and/or Black students in Kindergarten have been excluded disproportionately to their overall representation in the province.

On the rise

Exclusions lasting over 4 months

Data shows the duration of exclusions is increasing. The impact on children and families is profound, compromising economic stability, leading to isolation, and depriving children of essential developmental opportunities.

Exclusion may be becoming 'normalized', with these long term exclusions an accepted method of managing a system under pressure.

Restraint and Seclusion

Nearly 18% of survey respondents indicate that their disabled child was secluded and/or restrained at school. This represents a significant portion of respondents and indicates a serious concern that needs to be addressed urgently.

Restraint and seclusion are practices where students, particularly those with disabilities, are physically restrained and/or isolated in a separate space, either once or repeatedly. Students subjected to these practices generally experience psychological trauma, manifesting as anxiety, depression, or PTSD/c-PTSD, and may also sustain physical injuries ranging from minor bruises to more serious harm. The academic progress of these students can be significantly impacted, trust in education staff is invariably harmed, and students often become socially isolated and develop a negative self-image and decreasing self-esteem.

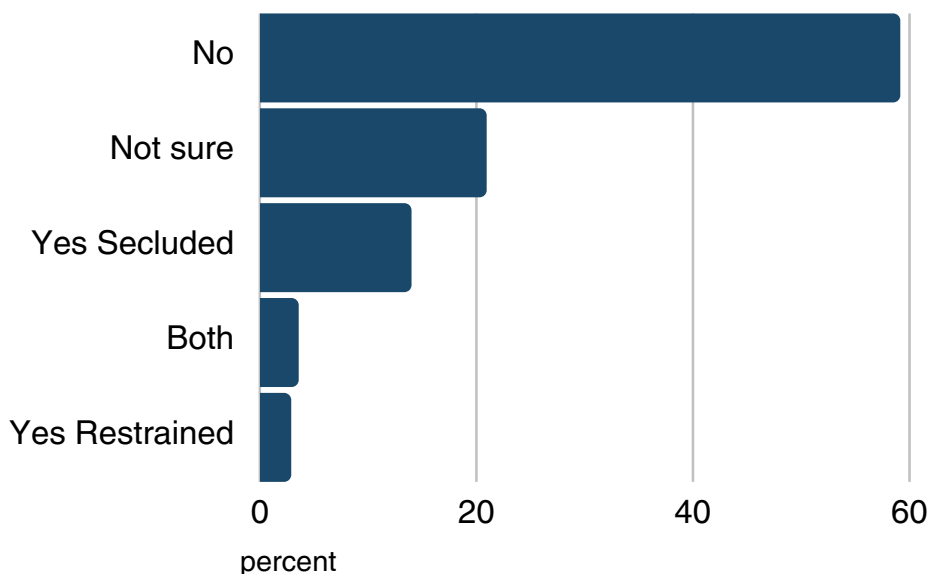
We hear from those reporting that their advocacy about these practices can result in negative consequences for their child and family, ranging from new hostility from staff, to staff citing unsafe work (meaning their child cannot attend school for a time while they develop a safety plan) to schools calling police or RCMP, and initiating what the family feels are unwarranted child protection complaints with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Families of these students experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, and may also experience psychological trauma, with some also developing anxiety disorders. Relationships with school and district staff can be irreparably broken, making it difficult to find the path back to inclusion for the student. The multifaceted challenges involved can alter family dynamics, with strained relationships and increased conflict.

While we advocate for a complete ban on these practices, at the very least there should be significantly greater accountability around them, including a review of the provincial policy guidance and each individual school district policy, with emphasis on reporting.

We would also like to see a more general discussion in the education community about the treatment of students with disabilities, as families see every day in schools the othering of these children and youth by students and staff alike. Proactive training is needed, with a focus on prevention rather than reaction, and more general anti-ableism and anti-racism training as these are also clear factors according to data and qualitative responses from respondents.

Restraint and Seclusion



84

Number of reports of students restrained and/or secluded

Quotes from students who reported being secluded and/or restrained:

Q31 - Tell us about how you were excluded.

"I couldn't be upset. I had to go to a room. A dark room and the door was shut. I was scared. If I cried they said "do you need to go to your room". I didn't want to go to school because I didn't want to go to the room. I would try and run and hide. I told them I didn't like and didn't want to go in. It made me feel like I was a bad person and didn't deserve to have anything good. I should be thrown away." 10 year old physically disabled student, Vancouver Island

"I didn't want to go to school anymore because I would keep getting bullied. No one cares about me. They want me to get hurt." - 8 year old autistic student, central BC.

Q33 - What do you hope will happen now?

"I never have to go back again and I never get shut in a room." 7 year old student with ADHD, central coast

"I want to stay in [new teacher's] class, I like to go outside and play with my friends, I don't want to go in the room again.." - 5 year old student waiting for assessment, northern BC

20%

Over 20% of respondents say they're not sure whether their child was restrained and/or secluded.

Nursing Support/physical care

Nursing support services in schools have generally been aimed at helping students with complex health needs to fully participate in school, and to equitably access their education. These services might include planning and support for students with medical needs, training for school staff on medical procedures, and direct support from a nurse or healthcare assistant. Some physical care/support plans are developed with families (e.g. some seizure management, or less complex diabetic care plans). These plans provide school teams key information in terms of caring for a student but are not assigned under the delegation of a nurse (a formal way of the nurse assigning duties under the authority of their nursing license), which is what happens with Nursing Support Services (NSS) in schools.

Over the last couple of years, NSS has been realigning their practice with their policies, resulting in some shocks for families who were unable to send their children to school because the delegation to school staff had not been enacted.

One example was with seizure care in schools - if a student had not needed to use their rescue medication at school for a year, delegated care was no longer available and they could not keep their rescue medication at school. The outcry from parents was strong and advocacy brought about a reversal of this decision by early October of 2022. Still, the exclusions that happened because of this and other delegation issues meant that many kids did not start school at the same time as their peers as schools scrambled to find a different solution, with several students not able to attend school for a month or more.

While not reported on this survey, nursing support has not been provided to child care centres since 2016, resulting in significant inequity and violation of children's rights.

Nursing Support/physical care

Lack of Nursing Support Services and trained, qualified staff for physical/medical disability support needs

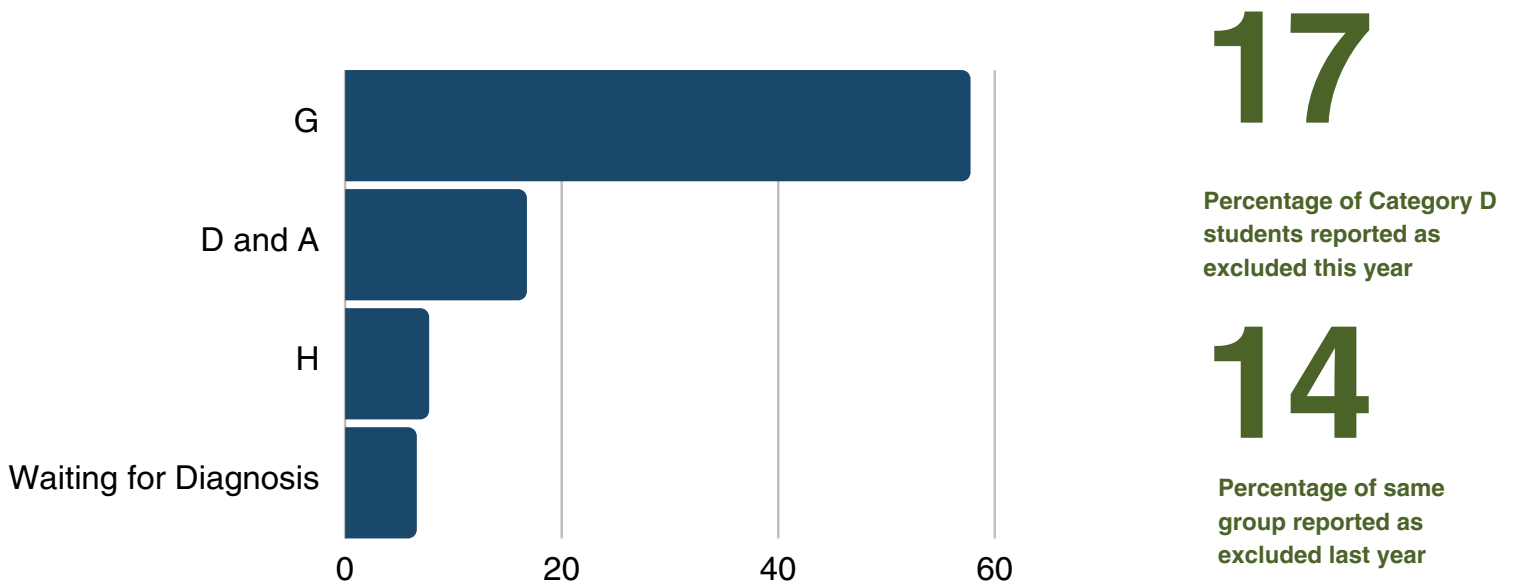
This year, many of the 'other' responses indicated exclusions due to physical and/or medical support needs not being met.

“Child was asked to stay home unless parent could come to school to provide personal care and g-tube feedings.”

“Cannot attend at all. Too high needs for EA but not approved by NSS”

Q5 - Ministry Designation

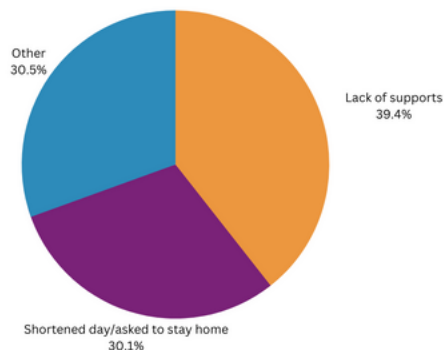
Data shows the top 4 categories of designations reported this year, in percentages



It's notable that Physically Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (D) is the second-highest reported category again, and we are reporting the combined figures of D and A (Physically Dependent, multiple needs). Autism (G) is always highest, but category D and A were both quite low until the last couple of years. Some of this will be related to the COVID-19 pandemic but this year especially it's clear from the comments by respondents that Nursing Support Services changes and general lack of trained staff to support physical care needs is a major factor

Exclusions Over 4 months

Q22 - How was your child/youth excluded from school?



Disabled students who do not receive adequate support for learning is a chronic issue in K-12 education in BC, the highest reported way that students are excluded, and one that goes largely unaddressed, especially among students who don't show their distress through potentially disruptive physical or vocal reactions.

Either way, these students often show lower academic achievement and delayed progress, which can turn into skill gaps over time. This lack of support and related lack of progress can also cause emotional and psychological distress, which can show up as decreased self-esteem, heightened anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Students may become withdrawn, and avoid participating in class, school activities, and school itself. This social isolation can lead to self-harming behaviours, and even suicidal ideation in some cases.

Being asked to stay home, being sent home, or being asked to attend only partial days is the second-most common response to this question, and the reason we started this Tracker to begin with, after the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) identified this issue in their 2017 survey.

<https://bccpac.bc.ca/upload/2017/11/2017-11-03-Full-Day-Summaryresults.pdf>

Missing a lot of school can have significant adverse effects on disabled students, impacting both their personal development and academic progress. These include:

- Academic regression
- Slowed social development
- Reduced self-esteem and worsening mental health
- Loss of routine
- Decreased opportunities for physical activity
- Delayed development of essential communication and self-advocacy skills

For families the repercussions are equally distressing:

- Increased stress and anxiety
- Financial strain related to impacts on work, and additional support costs
- Decreased access to essential resources and supports typically accessed at school
- Pressure on relationships with other family members

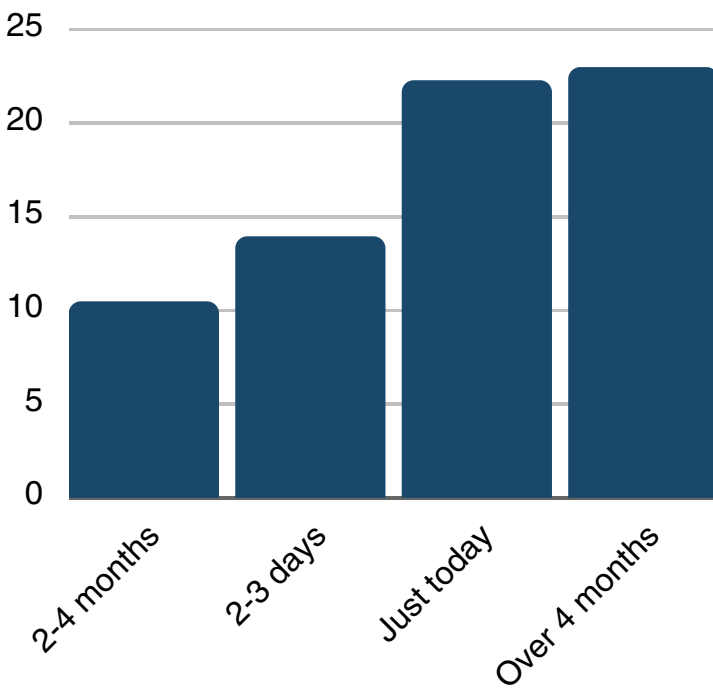
Studies show these challenges can end up limiting opportunities for further education and employment for the students, decreasing motivation for learning, increasing the risk of dropping out of school, and adding a heightened risk of incarceration.

Exclusions Over 4 Months

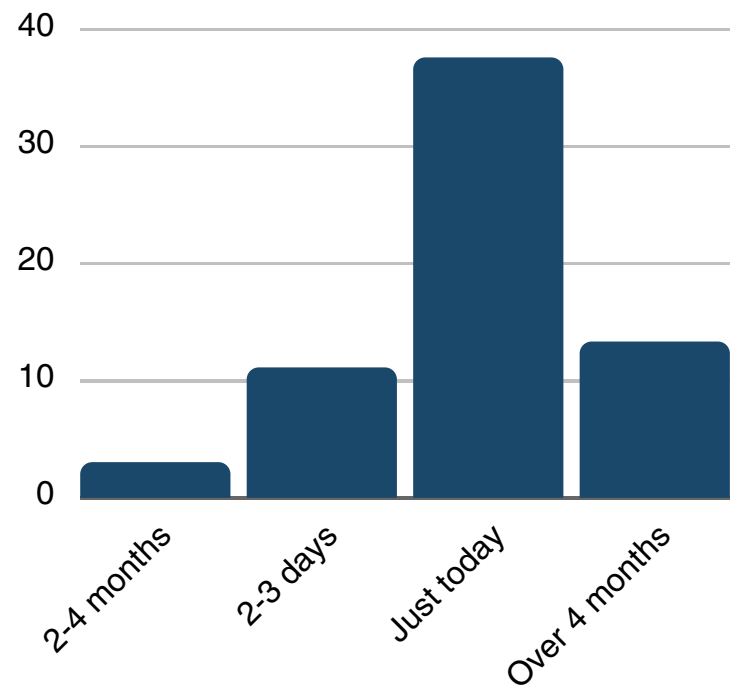
How long was the exclusion?

Shown by percentage of respondents

2022-23



2021-22



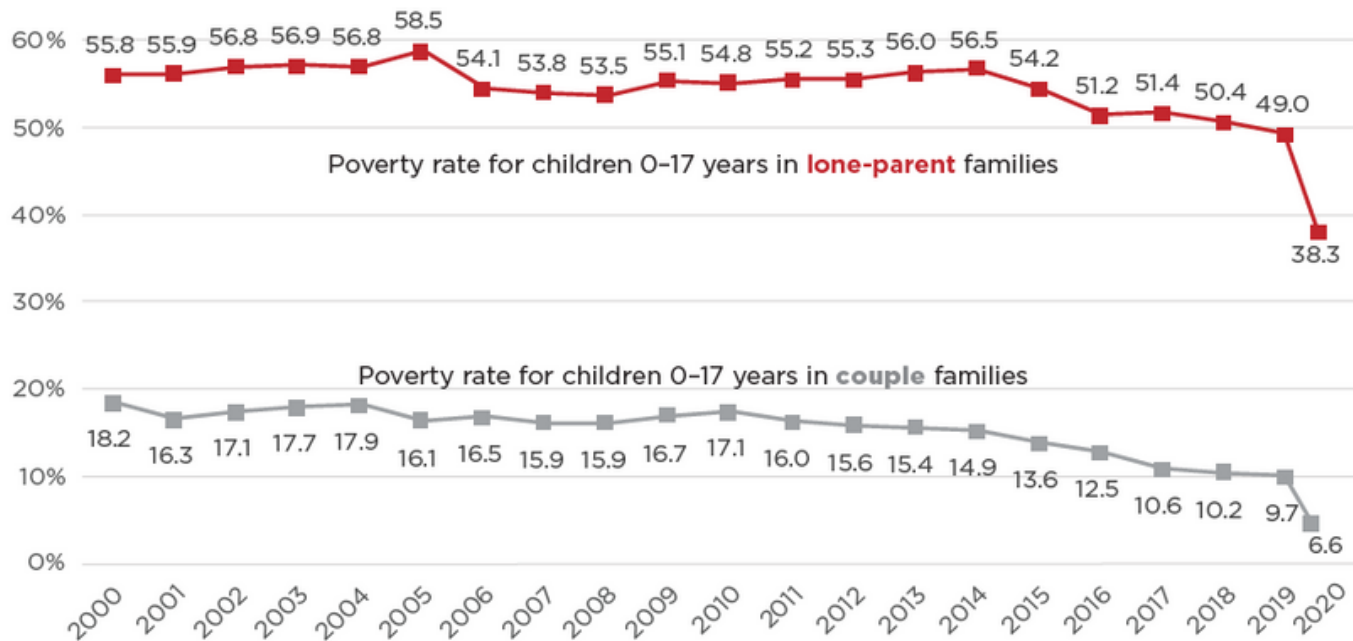
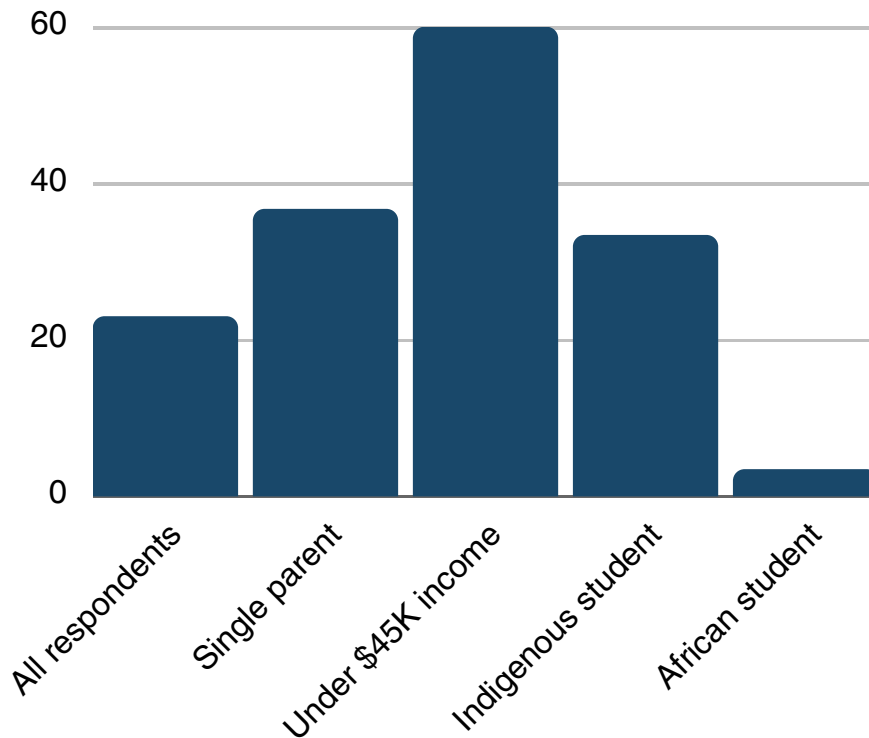
The pattern of exclusion has drastically changed. Reported exclusions of multiple months has increased dramatically.

173%

Increase in reported exclusions lasting over 4 months this year, compared to last year

Exclusions over 4 months by demographics

Shown by percentage of respondents



Source: Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0018-01, 2020

Kindergarten Exclusions

Exclusion from school through extended gradual entry, shortened school days, and frequent requests to stay home can have a profound impact on disabled Kindergarten students and their families.

Kindergarten is a critical time for laying the foundation of basic skills in reading, writing, and math. Exclusion from school can result in delayed academic progress as students miss out on valuable learning opportunities.

At this age, children are also developing essential social skills. Being excluded can hinder the development of these skills, as they have fewer opportunities to interact with peers and form friendships.

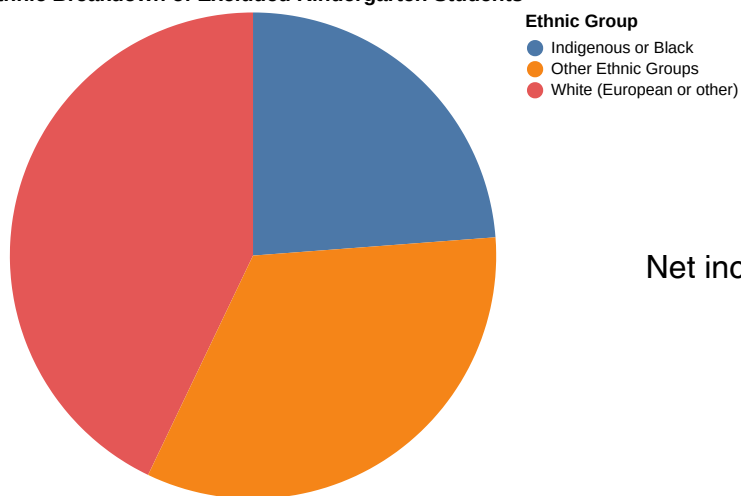
All of this can lead to feelings of rejection and can contribute to lower self-esteem, as disabled students internalize messages that they are different, less capable than their peers, and unwelcome at school. This can lead to some students starting to respond with unwanted behaviours, as a result of frustration and lack of engagement with school. Because they are not present, they miss out on the modeling and reinforcement of positive behaviours in the classroom.

These exclusions starting so early also impacts families and often starts them down the path of many of the issues we mentioned in the exclusions over 4 months. It also affects parents and guardians in many of the same ways as their children, in particular around lacking a sense of belonging, and feeling unwelcome at the school and in the school community.

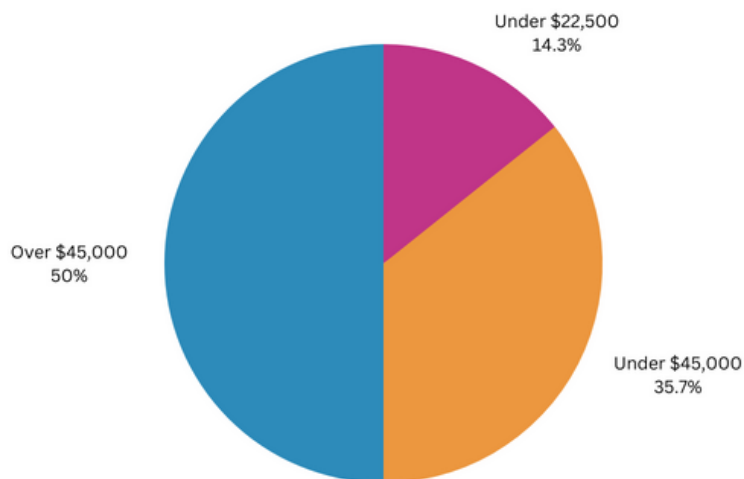
The need to constantly stay on top of things in a battle to advocate for their child's right to an inclusive education is both emotionally and physically draining. We see this reflected in so many comments on the Exclusion Tracker and every day in our online parent/guardian community.

Kindergarten Exclusions

Ethnic Breakdown of Excluded Kindergarten Students



Net income of family of excluded Kindergarten students



Kindergarten and grade 1 were the most excluded grades at 12% each, or 24% of all reports.

Most of these were gradual entry lasting longer than that of other students, and shortened school days.

23.8% of excluded K students were Indigenous and/or Black
50% of excluded K students' family income was below 45K, 14.3% of those families' income was below 22.5K

Recommendations

According to KidsRightsIndex.org, in 2020 Canada's rank as a country for a Child Rights Environment was **138th**. We have recommendations for Canada, the province of British Columbia, and individual school districts and independent school authorities to reduce and prevent the exclusion of students with disabilities, a violation of the human right to equitable access to education.

1

School Districts

Under the Accessible BC Act, each school district and independent school authority must have an Accessibility Plan in place by September 1. This is the perfect place to address some of the root causes of exclusion. Places districts can engage in this work include:

1. Policy and Legal Compliance
2. Training and Awareness
3. Inclusive Curriculum and Support Services
4. Collaborative Approach (with families and students)
5. Accessible Infrastructure and Monitoring

2

Provincial Government

The Ministry of Education and Child Care has it in their mandate to address support for students with disabilities. The BC government has the jurisdiction to ensure equitable access to education for students with disabilities in the following areas:

1. Legislation and Policy Making
2. Funding Allocation
3. Curriculum, research and innovation
4. Training, standards and professional development
5. Infrastructure and Facilities
6. Monitoring and Accountability
7. Interministerial, cross-government, community Engagement and Collaboration

3

Government of Canada

The federal government has a role to play in ensuring equitable access to education for disabled students, in these areas:

1. National Guidelines and Standards
2. Funding and Grants
3. Research and Development
4. Inter-Provincial Collaboration
5. Advocacy and Awareness
6. Monitoring and Reporting

In Their own words

Parents, guardians and children and youth tell us about their experiences.

A majority of the day he is not in class wandering the halls or outside alone because he needs a break constantly. Or when in class teachers will suggest him to go have a break. No one knows how to keep him in class.

There was no support for her in any classes. As a result, they just failed her without ownership of lack of support.

I am told for the entire school year ahead, my child has to be picked up at lunch hour - everyday, if not sooner

My son had surgery and instead of helping him catch up they would just keep him in a corner without one on one intervention so he started to disrupt the class and they started to put him alone in the hallway. Also they said he can't enjoy any after school Activities since grade 1 because of his designation. He has been bullied and got to the point of him saying he wanted to harm himself. The adults yell at him and talk about him like he isn't there.

we cannot work due to the fact that we have to be the ones providing support for her.

We are homeless due to the lack of support

“I didn't want to go to school anymore because I would keep getting bullied. No one cares about me. They want me to get hurt.” - 8 year old autistic student, central BC

“I get yelled at all the time, even by grownups. I know I did some wrong things but they always blame me even when it wasn't me. Then I get sad and scared. I used to have a helper, even in Gr1. Why can't I have a helper?” - 9 year old autistic student, central coast, BC

“I missed the year end waterslides event and a walk to the ice cream shop because I got mad” - 7 year old student with ADHD, lower mainland BC

“I am glad to graduate grade 7 so I don't have to do this again, I'm bigger now. I hope I make friends at my grade 8 school.” 12 year old autistic student, lower mainland, BC

Looking Forward

What's ahead for the BCEdAccess Exclusion Tracker?

We have learned that the questions we are asking are complex and there are too many of them. A review of what data we are collecting and its purpose is under way. One of the things we plan to do is to make it easy to submit a quick response by creating a simpler approach to the questions we ask and to break the survey into pieces so that the critical data is collected first and folks can add more later if they choose to, and the other piece will be to reduce the total number of questions down to the data we find we're most able to use effectively to tell the stories of exclusion.

Streamlining year-over-year reporting is another critical component, facilitating a seamless transition and comparison of data across different time frames. This approach will allow for the identification of trends and potential areas of improvement.

The introduction of a Child Care Exclusion Tracker is a significant expansion of our efforts, extending the scope of our research efforts beyond K-12 education settings to encompass early child care environments. The roots of exclusion can start in those spaces and set a pattern that carries on into K-12.

We also plan to engage in deeper research into specific patterns emerging from the data .

We are grateful to the students and their families who have trusted us with their stories and we're committed to using their words to bring change.

Contact

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