

November 26, 2023

Good Evening TIE-BC Members,

I wanted to inform you of a meeting I attended on November 7th, along with LATA's Vice President Danielle Neer, SAGE BC's Vice President Trish Harper, BCTF President Clint Johnston, and BCTF Staff Grahame Rainey. We met with Ministry of Education and Child Care staff, including: Scott Beddall - Executive Director, Education Programs and Policy; Jennifer Halbert - Director, Inclusive Education Branch; Angie Calleberg - Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning and Education Programs Division; Melanie Stewart - Associate Deputy Minister; Dulcy Anderson - Ministerial Advisor to the Minister of Education and Child Care; and Nick Poeschek - Director of Curriculum Classroom Assessment and Reporting to discuss various topics related to Inclusive Education.

Danielle Neer, Trish Harper and I first gave an account of what has been happening on the ground as non-enrolling specialist teachers in the field of inclusive education. From the teacher shortages resulting in being pulled to cover classrooms and the lack of qualified EAs, to the never-ending paperwork and all things leading to the burnout of our colleagues, the members from the Ministry of Education and Child Care got an earful of what has been happening within our schools. After we finished sharing, all three of us felt as though our message had been heard by those around the table. They were grateful to get a good clear understanding of how things were going across the province for our members.

After our sharing time, the Ministry of Education and Child Care staff then shared with us a few things that have been going on in their world to help support teachers around the province.

1. The addition of a new Provincial School Outreach Team
 - a. This is a joint initiative between the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Ministry of Child and Family Development and would be similar to programs like POPARD but with a focus on students who have non-specific designations.
 - b. This team would work like a school-based team to support small rural districts that do not have access to the services needed for their students.
 - c. It would include a multi-disciplinary team including:
 - i. OT
 - ii. PT
 - iii. LART
 - iv. ELL
 - v. SLP
 - vi. School Psych.
 - d. This program will be hosted in the North Vancouver School District and is being led by Vince White.
 - e. It is on a 3-year initiative and they are looking to add 2-3 more teams in the coming years.
2. Accessible BC Regulations and Standards
 - a. They will be working with the Accessibility Directorate and BC CASE to access resources to support the districts' meeting of requirements.
 - b. They are also facilitating sector feedback to inform the Accessible BC Standards - there will be public engagement with this process upcoming.

3. Inclusive Ed Supports - Initial Focus Areas:
 - a. Needs-based support planning tools (these would replace the ISPPs, which are outdated and poorly worded)
 - b. Modernizing language in the Policy Document
 - c. IEPs
 - d. Roles and Responsibilities of the different positions within Inclusive Education
 - e. Meaningful consultation
4. Alignment between the reporting orders and IEPs
 - a. We had an in-depth conversation around this topic that included:
 - i. Report cards for students on IEPs
 - ii. Questions around MyEd BC
 - iii. Timing re: IEP requirements vs. reporting periods - There are conversations happening on this topic between Nick Poeschek and Jennifer Halbert's teams
 - iv. Universal supports in classrooms vs. on provincial assessments and the need for documented evidence of use
 - v. FAQs and a possible 1-pager that might be useful for teachers
5. Next steps:
 - a. Coming up with a draft timeline for meaningful consultation
 - i. BCTF wants to be involved in everything that was discussed during this meeting
 - ii. There would need to be a call-out to teachers to form these different groups (6 weeks would be an ideal timeframe - groups would possibly begin after Christmas)
 - b. Follow-up meeting around reporting order/guidelines with the group present for this meeting

While I personally feel that there is a lot of work to be done, I feel that this meeting was a good first step. I believe that we are finally going to be getting some meaningful conversations going to support teachers and students around the province, but as we are moving into an election year, how much will actually get done before we have to start over with possibly a new team? Please watch for the advertisement of these working groups if this is something that interests you. They will be found in the BCTF newsletters that are sent out regularly. I will also keep you posted on any future meetings I am invited to attend on behalf of TIE-BC.

~Sarah Brooks
TIE-BC President