



1.3.1 Parent Information for Special Education Designations and Inclusive Support

SD8 promotes learning and well-being for all students including those with diverse learning needs and works to build staff capacity to support all students. SD8 provides resources and supports to help the few students who require intensive interventions.

This information provides an overview of the process for student special needs category designation with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and the process for determining inclusive education supports in School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake).

How Does a Student Receive a Special Education Designation?

The BC Ministry of Education and Child Care with regard to determination of special needs designations for students. The Ministry's [Special Education Policy Manual](#) describes the expectations of the Ministry of Education and Child Care to fully include students with special needs and support student graduation.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care expects that districts create an inclusive education system where "students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners". In the inclusive system, "all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs".

The Ministry of Education and Child Care's direction to school districts is to "provide a student who has special needs with an educational program in a classroom where the student is integrated with other students who do not have special needs, unless the educational needs of the student with special needs or other students indicate that the educational program for the student with special needs should be provided otherwise".

How Does a Student Receive an Individual Education Plan?

Students who are designated with an identified special need as per the Ministry's [Special Education Policy Manual](#) may receive an Individual Education Plan.

Each student with a Ministry of Education and Child Care special needs designation has an annually updated Individual Education Plan (IEP) that provides information about the student's strengths, interests, stretches and needs, and guides school and district staff in supporting the student. As the Ministry notes, "some students require small adaptations and minimum levels of support; other students with more complex needs may require detailed planning. The IEP will reflect the complexity of the student's need".

Students with special needs are supported in classrooms in a variety of ways. In its fundamental competency-based approach, [BC's curriculum](#) has built-in supports for all students including those with special needs. All students are supported to learn about big ideas and to develop their curricular competencies and core competencies.



The IEP for students with special needs describes supplemental strategies to support this development and describes possible supports that students may access. In the classroom for example, these supports may include materials adapted by the teacher, adapted assessment strategies, learning environment changes, seating changes, augmentative technology, software and hardware in the classroom, tools that support student function, and other accommodations based on the student's learning profile.

For students with designated special needs, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) provide the classroom teacher and school Inclusion Support Teacher with information and strategies they can use to create meaningful and effective learning opportunities tailored to students' needs. The IEP document is a collaborative effort amongst classroom teachers, Inclusion Support teachers in schools, the school counsellor, the school principal, District Inclusive Education specialist staff, the involved Education Assistants, the student, and student's family. In addition to collaboration amongst the team above, some IEPs draw recommendations for accommodations from psycho-educational testing reports generated from the District Psychologist. On a yearly basis, the IEP is updated at the school to reflect the student's growing strengths, interests, stretches, and needs and how these will be supported within the student's classroom.

How Does the Ministry of Education and Child Care Fund School Districts?

The Ministry of Education and Child Care provides specific funding for school districts based on their unique geographical and demographic factors. These are called "operating funds". Each year the school district provides information to the Ministry about projected enrolment for the upcoming year. In addition to being funded for the number of students, the location of the district, and the programs that the school district operates etc., the Ministry seeks information on the demographics of students including students with identified special educational needs, Aboriginal ancestry, English language learners and other demographic factors. Once the specific features of the school district are determined, the Ministry grants operating funds to districts to support the full operation of the school district.

Districts who have students with an approved Ministry of Education and Child Care special needs designation may receive supplemental funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, depending on the student's Ministry designation. This supplemental funding to districts is described by the Ministry of Education and Child Care in [K-12 Funding - Special Needs](#). The district is not provided supplemental funding for all special education designations. Designation categories K-R are included as part of regular operational funds only.

Unique student funding is determined by the number of students who meet criteria as Level 1, 2 or 3 unique needs, in Categories A-H. These funds are not allocated to individual students; rather, they form a portion of the district's operating funds.

Unique funding is provided in the following categories:



- **Level 1 (Category A 8: B)**- Includes students with multiple needs who are Physically Dependent or Deaf Blind.
- **Level 2 (Categories C-G)** - Includes students with Moderate/Profound Intellectual Disabilities, with Physical Disabilities or Chronic Health Impairments, with Visual Impairments, with Autism Spectrum Disorder, or students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- **Level 3 (Category H)** - Includes students requiring Intensive Behaviour Interventions or students with Serious Mental Illness.

Regardless of district funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, students are supported according to their presented needs, through classroom teacher adaptations to curriculum and learning environments, assistive technology, in school staff support and/or resources, and in some cases, district staff support and/or resources.

School districts are audited to ensure that special education files align to Ministry of Education and Child Care criteria. Inclusive Education works with school staff starting in February each year. According to the [Ministry of Education and Child Care Special Education Category Checklists](#), staff at schools must submit complete information to Inclusive Education for each student for whom a special needs designation is being sought. The principal at each school must verify that the information submitted is complete, accurate, and meets the Ministry category checklist.

How are Students Supported in the School?

The classroom teacher is the primary support and is responsible for designing programs for students with special needs and for implementing the strategies described in the IEP. Teachers design learning experiences that provide students with access to the learning environment and to the curriculum, and support students to demonstrate learning in ways best suited to them.

The teacher's role is described in Sections 17(1) and (2) of the [School Act](#) and the attendant [School Regulation Section 4](#), which prescribe that "the teacher responsible for a student with special needs is responsible for designing, supervising and assessing the educational program for that student". Education Assistants may be an additional resource for classrooms with students with special needs. Not every classroom in a school has an EA. EAs are assigned, scheduled, and supervised by the school principal.

In some cases, students with special needs may also benefit from specialized additional staff assigned to the classroom in the form of the Inclusion Support teacher and/or an education assistant to support the classroom teacher and to support the achievement of IEP goals for a student with designated special needs.



School principals have a significant role in supporting students with special needs, including "ensuring that a school-based team is operational in the school and facilitating the collaborative efforts of the team members in meeting the special needs of students".

The school team is the supports students with special needs. Students and school teams are supported where required, by the District's Inclusive Education Department. This support is in a variety of areas, such as the review and approval of files toward a Ministry of Education and Child Care designation, the review and confirmation of school levels of support for students, the allocation of resources requested by schools, specialized consultation in strategies to support students, the provision of specialized resources, supports and/or interventions for students, and in the provision of professional learning, training and mentoring for staff. Inclusive Education staff also work closely with parents, outside agencies, and other government agency supports (such as [Community Living BC](#)).

There are many forms of support provided to students with special needs in SD8, including teaching strategies, environmental changes to the classroom and seating, technological resources (such as Google Read and Write), structural changes such as break times, and adaptations to classroom materials (such as one-point rubrics, different access points for curriculum, etc).

In some classrooms with students with special needs, Education Assistants have been assigned to provide universal supports (to all/groups of students) and potentially to provide more specific essential supports (for some students with specific needs). Essential supports draw information from the student's IEP and are directed by the classroom teacher, the principal, and the Inclusion Support teacher.

In order to support schools with the provision of additional resources for each student with special needs through the IEP and other information, the parameters from the Ministry of Education and Child Care regarding audit criteria for each designation, the Board of Education's budget determinations, and timelines that guide our work, the District undertakes a comprehensive process each year to provide an allocation for staffing levels that may include Education Assistants and/or Youth and Family Workers.

What is the School Support and Human Resource Allocation Process?

The process to allocate supports to schools begins with determining enrolment projections in February of each year for the following year.



The classroom teacher, school Inclusion Support teacher, and school principal jointly determine through the School-Based Team, the type of support needed at the school in order to support the inclusion of all students with special needs. These supports, as previously indicated, include a variety of possible supports or resources such as classroom environment changes, adaptations by the teacher for learning activities, access to assistive technology, School Inclusion Support teacher time in the classroom, learning resources, teacher training, and so on. These needs are communicated to the district ensure that allocation reflect the needs of the school, while working within available resources.

The district distributes allocations to schools for specialized teacher and education assistant staffing in the spring of each year so that these supports are ideally in place by September of the upcoming school year. These may be adjusted throughout the year is there is a change to student enrollment at the school. Staff throughout the district support full inclusion of students with their peers and in their classrooms in order that students may achieve their IEP goals and ultimately, graduate with dignity, purpose, and options.

Where Can I Find Additional Information?

Further background information describing inclusion, IEPs, student supports and roles and responsibilities of staff is included in the linked documents: [Inclusion in School District 8](#), the [School District 8 Parent/Guardian Guide to Inclusive Education](#), and the [BCTF/CUPE joint paper on the Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Education Assistants](#), [BC Ministry of Education and Child Care's Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#).