

1.7 Parent Information for Special Education Designations and Inclusion of Students with Disabilities and Diverse Abilities

School District No.8 (Kootenay Lake) promotes learning and well-being for all students including those with diverse learning needs and works to build staff capacity for all students. SD8 provides resources and strategies 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 (MECC), and the process for determining inclusive education supports in SD8.

How Does a Student Receive a Special Education Designation?

The Ministry's [Special Education Policy Manual](#) describes the expectations of the MECC to fully include students with disabilities or diverse abilities and promote student graduation.

The MECC expects that districts create an inclusive education system where "students with disabilities or diverse abilities 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 MECC's direction to school districts is to "provide a student who has disabilities or diverse abilities with an educational program in a classroom where the student is integrated with other students who do not have disabilities or diverse abilities, unless the educational needs of the student with disabilities or diverse abilities or other students indicate that the educational program for the student with disabilities or diverse abilities 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 (IEP).

Each student with a MECC special needs designation has an annually updated IEP that provides information about the student's strengths, interests, stretches and needs, and guides school and district staff in working with 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 disabilities or diverse abilities are supported in classrooms in a variety of ways. In its fundamental competency-based approach, [BC's curriculum](#) has built-in adaptations for all students including those with disabilities or diverse abilities. All students learn about big ideas and to develop their curricular competencies and core competencies.



The IEP for students with disabilities or diverse abilities describes supplemental strategies to promote this development and describes possible supports that students may access. In the classroom for example, these 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 assist student function, and other accommodations based on the student's learning profile.

For students with designated special needs, IEPs provide the classroom teacher and school inclusion support teacher (IST) 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, ISTs in schools, the school counsellor, the school principal, district inclusive education specialist staff, the involved education assistants (EA), the student, and the 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 developed within the student's classroom.

How Does the MECC Fund School Districts?

The MECC 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, Indigenous 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 enable the full operation of the school district.

Districts who have students with an approved MECC special needs designation may receive supplemental funding from the MECC, depending on the student's Ministry designation. This supplemental funding to districts is described by the MECC in [K-12 Funding - Disabilities or diverse abilities](#). 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 & B)**- Includes students with multiple needs who are physically dependent or deafblind.



- **Level 2 (Categories C-G)** - Includes students with moderate/profound intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or chronic health impairments, visual impairments, autism spectrum disorders, or students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Level 3 (Category H)** - Includes students requiring intensive behaviour interventions or students with serious mental illnesses.

Regardless of district funding from the MECC, students are assisted according to their presented needs, through classroom teacher adaptations to curriculum and learning environments, assistive technology, in school staff resources, and in some cases, district staff resources.

School districts are audited to ensure that special education files align to MECC 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 disabilities or diverse abilities 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 Assisted in the School?

The classroom teacher is the primary adult and is responsible for designing programs for students with disabilities or diverse abilities 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 help 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](#) (RSBC 1996) and the attendant [School Regulation Section 4](#), which prescribe that "the teacher responsible for a student with disabilities or diverse abilities is responsible for designing, supervising and assessing the educational program for that student". EAs may be an additional resource for classrooms with students with disabilities or diverse abilities. Not every classroom in a school has an EA. EAs are assigned, scheduled, and supervised by the school principal.

In some cases, students with disabilities or diverse abilities may also benefit from specialized additional staff assigned to the classroom in the form of the ISTs and/or an EA to assist the classroom teacher and to promote the achievement of IEP goals for a student with designated disabilities or diverse abilities.

School principals have a significant role in assisting students with disabilities or diverse abilities, including "ensuring that a SBT is operational in the school and facilitating the collaborative efforts of the team members in meeting the disabilities or diverse abilities of students".



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

In some classrooms with students with disabilities or diverse abilities, EAs have been assigned to provide universal strategies (to all groups of students) and potentially to provide more specific essential strategies (for some students with specific needs). These strategies are determined in the IEP and are directed by the classroom teacher, the principal, and the IST.

The District undertakes a comprehensive process each year to provide an allocation for staffing levels that may include EAs and/or youth and family workers (YFW).

What is the Human Resource Allocation Process?

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

The district distributes allocations to schools for specialized teachers (ISTs and district itinerants), EAs and YFWs in the spring of each year so that these staff members are ideally in place by September of the upcoming school year. These staff members may be adjusted throughout the year if there is a change to student enrollment at the school and according to collective agreements. Staff throughout the district promote 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 assistance, 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](#),
- the [BCTF/CUPE joint paper on the Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Education Assistants](#)
- [BC Ministry of Education and Child Care Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#) .