

April 2, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing this letter today to share the Family Support Institute of British Columbia's (FSI) support for BCSTA's motion for the Ministry of Education to call on school districts to alter their reporting on seclusion/isolation rooms by June 2022, enhance consultation with BCSTA regarding potential renovations and repurposing of seclusion/isolation rooms, and requiring school district staff to provide regular reporting to their boards regarding any use of seclusion and restraint in their district's schools.

The motion reads as follows:

BCSTA motion

15. Inclusive Schools and Safety SUBMITTED BY: SD35 (Langley) BE IT RESOLVED:

That BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Education to: (a) require each school district to identify and report to the board of education and the ministry on the number of seclusion/isolation rooms in each district by June 2022; (b) consult with BCSTA regarding the potential renovation and/or repurposing of these seclusion/isolation rooms; and, (c) require school district staff to provide bi-annual reports to their board regarding the use of seclusion and restraint in the district's schools.

Rationale:

Although many school districts have policies and procedures regarding seclusion and restraint, additional work is needed to ensure that the manner in which neurodiverse students are treated in schools is safe and respectful. It is important for boards and the Ministry of Education to have access to more information about the seclusion/isolation rooms so we can work together on this matter. Boards would also benefit from receiving regular reports regarding incidents of the use of seclusion and restraint in schools to better understand what is happening in schools.

Reference:

- *Ministry of Education Provincial Guidelines – Physical Restraint and Seclusion in School Settings*

This is an action motion and does not change or contradict any existing Foundational or Policy Statement.

The Family Support Institute of British Columbia (FSI) supports families who have family members with disabilities and mental health challenges. FSI is unique in Canada and is the only grass roots, family-to-family support organization. FSI believes that families are the best resource to support one another, and the strongest voice for their family members. FSI supports all families, with children of all ages, disabilities, and concurrent conditions. FSI's supports are free to any family. FSI maintains a network of over 300 peer volunteers who proudly support others by sharing experiences, acting as guides or emotional connections, mentoring, advocating with, attending meetings, or being a facilitator. FSI has diverse experience, wisdom and expertise and applies culturally safe, trauma-informed and family-centered practices to all supports we offer.

The FSIBC has been a longstanding advocate for halting the use of restraint and seclusion with children in BC schools for years. It is well known that this practice causes harm and trauma to those that are exposed to their use. It is also known there are other, more positive ways to support children and youth that can and will be more proactive, supportive and personalized to their behavioral and mental health needs.

We would like to point out what we mean when we say “seclusion” and “restraint”.

- **Restraint:** The use of physical procedures by one or more individuals or mechanical devices to limit freedom of movement. Example: Holding an individual in an immobile position for a time.
- **Seclusion :** Placement in an isolated area for an extended time and prevention from leaving the area.

Any rooms being built or used in schools for students who are dysregulated, needing some quiet time or struggling, should be created as an “opt in – opt out” space for all students in the school. The rooms, if necessary, should be sensory friendly, accessible for everyone, and have appropriate entry and exit points for all students using the space. Most importantly, meaningful consultation with professionals who have expertise in the area of children living with behavior challenges, positive behavior supports, dysregulation and/or self regulation should be a minimum before any plans are put into motion for the development of these spaces.

When we have buildings that are designed for the inclusion of all kids, yet there are rooms being built for just “some”, and those rooms additionally are being built to prevent those “some” from leaving, or are used as a means of “managing” behavior, it is a sign that our school systems can and should do more to support children to prevail and be successful. These rooms, in the way they are being used, cause harm and can leave long lasting damage for children when used as a means of punishment or containment.

Through the support calls that FSI receives each year we can report that many families have called reporting seclusion and restraint in other BC Schools as well. We know there are other ways to support children and youth in more progressive, supportive and less intrusive and restrictive ways. We support the motion being put forward. If there are going to be spaces that are used in any manner such as “sensory rooms”, or anything of a similar nature, FSI support supports them being readily available to all students in an open, transparent and an ongoing and regularly monitored fashion with clearly set regulations guiding their use.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions at (778)822-8374 or email aclancy@fsibc.com.


Sincerely,




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