

July 19, 2021

Hon. Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education

Re: Movement of responsibility of child care to Ministry of Education

The Inclusive Education Partners Group (IEPG) is a network of provincial organizations that come together around their interest to raise awareness, support and improve inclusive education in our province. We ground our understanding of inclusive education within [Article 24](#) of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities according to which all children have the right to the support they need to access education on the basis of equal opportunity. This network includes organizations that consider inclusive education from a variety of perspectives including non-profit provincial and community organizations, post-secondary programs, unions, and service providers.

Because of our collective knowledge about how children with disabilities and diverse learning needs that require additional support experience education in our province, the announcement of the movement of child care from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education has motivated us to present our thoughts. Our goal is to highlight aspects that need to be carefully considered in the planning of this change to ensure the needs of these children are included in the design.

We have initially identified three themes and some related questions based on our members' knowledge.

1. Representation

Families with young children with disabilities and diverse learning needs that require additional support face significant barriers in accessing child care.

- Who will represent the interests of these children in the planning and implementation of inclusive child care and education?
- Are current and upcoming pilots ensuring the inclusion of these children so that there is a better understanding of needs to inform the expansion?

- How will relationships with families be incorporated and facilitated in this model to ensure meaningful consultation and collaboration for the development of plans and their implementation?
- How will access to Seamless Childcare spots be equitable, and how will students with disabilities and diverse learning needs access childcare if it is not offered within their school catchment area?

2. Model of Inclusive Child Care

Community partners have already expressed that the provincial funding has only committed 16% percent of the funding promised to achieve high quality, affordable child care in BC.¹ Whatever the model looks like, if it isn't adequately funded it will be harder to ensure that it's inclusive.

- How will the Special Education Policy Manual apply?
- What is the model guiding Seamless Childcare and how is it connected to the Inclusive Childcare Framework, the BC Childcare Plan, and the \$10.00/day child care model?
 - Will this model be a provincial model, or a regional model led by the School Districts, and would there be provincial standards to guide School Districts?
 - Will the position on waitlists for Supported Child Development Programs be maintained and will transition-related information be shared between Districts if the family moves?
 - How will this model address the need for before/after school care of youth 12 years or older with disabilities and diverse learning needs that require additional support?
- The most formative years of language development are 0-5 years. How will child care settings and the early learning framework ensure there are language-rich environments that will support language development? How will this be assessed, implemented, and evaluated?
- How are the needs of children who require specifically trained supports and consultation being equitably identified, and addressed in childcare settings? For example, deafblind Intervenors, ASL Interpreters, Interventionists, and other specially trained professionals and paraprofessionals.
- How will this model address the early identification of learning and support needs?

¹ https://www.10aday.ca/campaign_updates

- How will the new models ensure that child care settings and frameworks are culturally responsive and trauma informed to the needs of Indigenous communities and diverse cultural groups?
- Will the current relationship between government and early intervention agencies and organizations change?
 - Will the level of support vary from district to district for these agencies?
 - Who will these agencies be expected to answer to?
- Within this model, how will the transition to kindergarten be implemented and supported for children, including those who are not transitioning from a Child Development Centre or any other group child care?
- How will dedicated funding for childcare be included within operational grants, including additional inclusive education funding for the child care setting and training or professional development?

3. Roles and responsibilities

Children with disabilities and diverse learning needs that require additional support need additional skilled staff to be available at child care centres to meet their support needs. Often, families are left with restricted access to child care, added barriers, and higher costs because of lack of available adequately trained staff and lack of funding.

- How will additional education/training needs be addressed for Early Childhood Educators, Educational Assistants, and Teachers regarding children with additional support needs?
- How are the roles, responsibilities and relationships defined and coordinated in classrooms?
 - What is the potential role of before and after school care providers in School Based Teams?
 - Will Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) be working at the same level as Education Assistants (EAs)?
 - When will Standards of Practice for EAs be brought in to make the roles and responsibilities of ECEs and EAs more transparent and equitable?
 - How will time be provided for collaborative planning among all school based staff?
- How are roles, responsibilities and relationships defined and coordinated in out-of-school settings?

In closing, access to inclusive child care within the Early Learning Framework and before/after school care within the Seamless Childcare Framework means that children with disabilities and diverse learning needs that require additional support will have a

supported spot. This will allow them to be part of the community, just as they will also become part of the learning community as they transition to their K-12 education.

We acknowledge that all changes will involve the development of policy and sufficient funding to support full implementation.

We respectfully request that the Inclusive Education Partners Group (IEPG) be invited into the developmental process to learn from the experiences of the pilots currently underway and offer expertise on the specific needs of children with disabilities and diverse learning needs that require additional support. The themes and their related questions are designed to elicit curiosity and conversation. We can provide insights on the challenges and potential pathways to facilitate the success of this major initiative with the goal of creating truly inclusive communities.

We look forward to hearing from you and receiving an invitation for further dialogue. For further correspondence please contact our Chair, Angela Clancy, Executive Director of the Family Support Institute at aclancy@fsibc.com or at 778-822-8374.

Respectfully submitted by,

BCEdAccess Society
British Columbia Teachers' Federation
Canadian Deafblind Association – BC Chapter
Family Network for Deaf Children
Family Support Institute of BC
The Gifted Children's Association of BC
Inclusion BC

cc: Hon. Minister of Children and Family Development, Mitzi Dean
Hon. Minister of State for Child Care, Katrina Chen