



PROVIDING EQUITABLE AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DURING A PANDEMIC

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About Me and the Research Project

- ▶ 17 years as Secondary Special Education Teacher/Coordinator
- ▶ 15 years as a District Administrator of Student Support Services
- ▶ Retired from K-12 Public Education and joined VIU as coordinator/professor in the MEd in Special Education Program

- ▶ The Leadership Aspect during COVID Interested me
- ▶ I have witnessed districts/school make it through tough times – but not recorded
- ▶ I wanted to record this leadership experience
- ▶ A partnership with BCCAISE

Response Rate

- ▶ **Of the 60 districts,**
 - ▶ 25 district administrators with special education responsibilities completed the survey, for a response rate of 42 percent
 - ▶ 17 superintendents completed the survey, for a response rate of 42 percent

Limitations

- ▶ This study has a small sample size and therefore does not capture the entirety of existing perceptions and experiences.
- ▶ To compensate for the smaller sample size, the research was expanded by offering participation through focus groups and interviews.

Focus Groups

- ▶ Vancouver Island Region - **9 districts represented**
- ▶ Kootenay Region - **4 districts represented**
- ▶ Lower Mainland Region - **5 districts represented**
- ▶ Northern Region - **6 districts represented**
- ▶ Okanogan Region - **7 districts represented**
- ▶ Provincial Outreach Programs (POPs) - **6 programs represented**

Interviews

- ▶ the Executive Director of the Ministry of Education (Learning Division),
- ▶ the President of the BC Council of Administrators of Inclusive Supports in Education (BCCAISE),
- ▶ the President and Executive Director of the British Columbia Principal and Vice Principal's
- ▶ Association (BCPVPA), and
- ▶ the President of the British Columbia School Trustee's Association (BCSTA).

Roles Raising Issues with PPE

OT/PT – more in person service = enhanced PPE

SLP – direct service delivery = enhanced PPE

TDHH – PPE was exclusionary

Support Staff - needed training in the use of PPE

Types of Issues

- ▶ Locating appropriate PPE for the task
- ▶ Working 1-1 with students
- ▶ Bringing students together
- ▶ Cohort Model
- ▶ Limited peer –to-peer interaction and support
- ▶ Demands on support staff and therefore reduced number of students able to receive support in a day
- ▶ All staff training on safety protocols and appropriate use of PPE

Service Levels from POPs

- ▶ 6 largest programs represented
- ▶ Consensus from all six was that:
 - ▶ Service Level to districts (teams) was reduced
 - ▶ School closures
 - ▶ Couldn't locate students
 - ▶ Staff couldn't travel
 - ▶ Districts worried that they wouldn't get the service requested and it would time out
 - ▶ Reallocated Funds
 - ▶ Provide staff support / inservice
 - ▶ Creation of Materials

Leadership Challenges

- ▶ the Provincial Resource Programs (PRPs) being unable to provide an appropriate amount of service but the timeframe being counted as a “service year” regardless,
- ▶ the ability to provide interpreters/supports to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired, providing the only programs and services when community agencies closed,
- ▶ increasing numbers of students showing signs of mental health issues,
- ▶ requests from parents for service from a hospital/homebound teacher when there was no such district position,
- ▶ concerns about a district’s commitment to inclusive education when their virtual learning programs are not inclusive,
- ▶ potential funding loss due to designation criteria for H designations being adversely affected by
- ▶ the loss of community agency supports (funding criteria requires that an appropriate community-based service be in place prior to September 30 of the school year),
- ▶ concerns around what to do about students who have nursing care plans when the nurses have been redeployed because of the pandemic, and
- ▶ concerns for the children entering kindergarten when they did not receive preschool supports.

Sharing of Materials & Resources

- ▶ Yes – sharing of videos or other materials with BC CAISE around visual/auditory accessibility
- ▶ Yes - for TDHHs to share this info back to their administrators/districts

Considerations Post-Pandemic

- ▶ STAFF
 - ▶ FIPPA
 - ▶ District SLPs to Conduct Hearing Screenings
 - ▶ Reallocation of Support Staff
- ▶ Virtual Delivery
 - ▶ Therapy
 - ▶ Outreach

Considerations Post-Pandemic

- ▶ Professional Development
 - ▶ Virtual Delivery
 - ▶ Teachers need to better understand a Tiered Model, UDL and DI
 - ▶ Bolstering Tier 1 in the classroom
 - ▶ Ongoing training in the use of technology for virtual instruction / therapy
 - ▶ Specifically training for support teachers and EAs (Other support staff)
- ▶ Service Delivery
 - ▶ Community Agency Collaboration
 - ▶ More integrated service delivery in schools

Considerations Post-Pandemic

- ▶ Guidelines and Protocols
 - ▶ For the provision of virtual therapy
 - ▶ Itinerant Support Staff working in multiple schools
 - ▶ FIPPA
 - ▶ Internet Accessibility
 - ▶ Communication with students and families

