



January 27, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Hon. Rachna Singh– Provincial Minister of Education and Childcare

Dear Minister Singh:

Re: Request for Direct Funding for Learning Disabled Students, and Additional Early Literacy Screening Interventions and Resources

At its public meeting on January 17th, 2023, the Chilliwack Board of Education passed the following motion: That the Board of Education request, in writing, that the Ministry of Education and Child Care allocate direct funding to the special needs category Q so that students with learning disabilities can have better access to resources, and fund additional early literacy screening interventions and resources.

School districts receive a basic allocation of funds to support the learning needs of all students - including those who are identified in the Learning Disabled category. This creates challenges as we work to ensure that every learning disabled student receives timely, targeted, scaffolded intervention and supports to thrive as learners in our school community. It is also key to recognize that at-risk learners have been impacted with education gaps brought on by pandemic-related school closures in the past two and a half years, and that the supplementary grant does not fully support learning needs to be addressed for low incidence disabilities.

A learning disability is a neurological disorder that affects a person's ability to process and understand information. As per the [Learning Disabilities Association of Canada](#), "Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information."

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of oral language, written language, reading and mathematics. Although learning disabilities occur in very young children, the disorders are usually not recognized until the child reaches school age. For success, students with learning disabilities require early identification and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, and the community as articulated in the [Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. BC Ministry of Education](#) (page 50).

The Chilliwack School District utilizes a series of early screeners starting in kindergarten (Letter Identification, Phonological Awareness Screen, Fine Motor, Word Inventory or Hearing & Recording Sounds etc.) to ensure educators can



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specifically provide timely targeted intervention to support a language rich classroom environment. The District also focuses on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by creating learning conditions that promote learner engagement and success. UDL refers to the implementation of systems, environments, materials, and technologies that provide access to the curriculum for the widest range of learners with the greatest diversity of abilities within the classroom.

The Board of Education has diligently invested resources in our early learning collaboration project for the past years that utilizes a comprehensive balanced literacy approach that combines differentiated instructional strategies to meet individual student needs as they develop reading and writing skills. Despite the collective responsibility and the best efforts of staff, some students with Learning Disabilities (e.g. Dyslexia, ADHD, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia) continue to have impacts on their social, emotional, and mental health wellness in schools as they struggle to keep pace with reading acquisition.

We strongly believe our collective responsibility is to create safe and inclusive learning spaces where all students can be supported to thrive, aligned with the Ministry of Education and Child Care [Policy for Student Success](#) where B.C. schools must do everything possible to prepare all students for their future.

Thank you for your consideration. The Chilliwack Board of Education looks forward to your timely response to the concerns articulated above as we collectively make strides to enhance supports for students in our school community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W Reichelt".

Willow Reichelt
Chair – Board of Education
Chilliwack School District #33

CC: MLA: Dan Coulter
MLA: Kelli Paddon
Premier: Honourable David Eby