

# Providing Equitable and Accessible Educational Programs During a Pandemic: Where Leadership Structures Meet Instructional Practice

**Please Note:** This research project is mid-way and this poster represents a preliminary review of survey data. There is much more work to be done as you will see in the Research Timeline and Progress to Date section.

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## Research Questions

This research project is specific to the delivery of equitable and accessible educational programs to students with disabilities or diverse abilities during a pandemic. Specific research questions focused on:

- Barriers in organizational, policy, and/or procedural
- School district structures and/or frameworks that best provide support for diverse learners
- Changes that need to be made to better provide support to students with disabilities or diverse abilities

## Methodology

- A mixed methods methodology was utilized
- Participants comprised two groups of administrators in BC school districts
  - Superintendents (60)
  - District Administrators of Special Education (60)
- Research Components
  - Surveys (2)
  - Focus Groups (5)
  - Interviews (5)

## Abstract

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has amplified differences among learners and presented many unique challenges to the leadership of British Columbia's 60 K-12 public school districts. The urgency to respond to the pandemic has led to school closures, complex reopening procedures, and the necessity for new safety protocols, all of which have taken priority leaving little time to contemplate equitable and accessible instructional delivery for all students.

School district leadership is complex and central to enabling the school principal to do their work (Leithwood, Handford, & Airini, 2018). The health issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have necessarily derailed change efforts in school districts; however, it does provide the opportunity to gain a new perspective

regarding school district leadership structures and frameworks that best provide for the needs of all learners. A survey of available literature indicates significant gaps regarding those leadership structures and frameworks that pertain specifically to instructional delivery to students who have special learning needs during a pandemic; however, there are many recommendations that focus on the need for equitable and accessible educational programs for all students (BC Ed., 2020; OECD, 2012).

Never before has the relationship between a pandemic crisis and the delivery of educational programs been so closely connected to the organization and leadership of a school district. Outcomes will impact leadership competencies of district leaders as well as the school district structures and frameworks.

## Background

The BC Ministry of Education resource titled, *Diversity in BC schools: A framework* (2008) states that Boards of Education and school district leaders have the responsibility to address student diversity in both the educational and operational aspects of schooling (p. 23). District leaders, according to the resource, should examine Board of Education structures and frameworks to determine how comprehensively the diverse needs of students are being addressed. In doing this assessment, they should also identify areas for improvement. Such an assessment has not been done during COVID-19. With the substantial changes to the educational landscape from COVID-19, this assessment is critically needed. This research sets out to fill that gap by using pre-existing assessment frameworks to identify how the pandemic has impacted the equity of education delivery, and what is being done about it.

## Research Timeline & Progress to Date

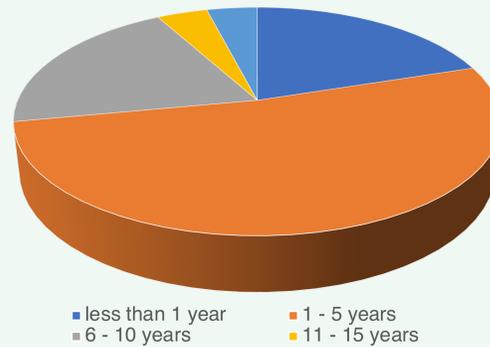
Milestone	Expected completion time	Actual completion time
Survey Creation	November / December 2020	December 2020
REB	January 2021	January 2021
Survey Completion	February 28, 2021	March 31, 2021
Focus Groups	April - May 2021	
Interviews	April - May 2021	
Research Assistant	May - August 2021	Ad is out
Draft Report	August 2021	

## Data Analysis

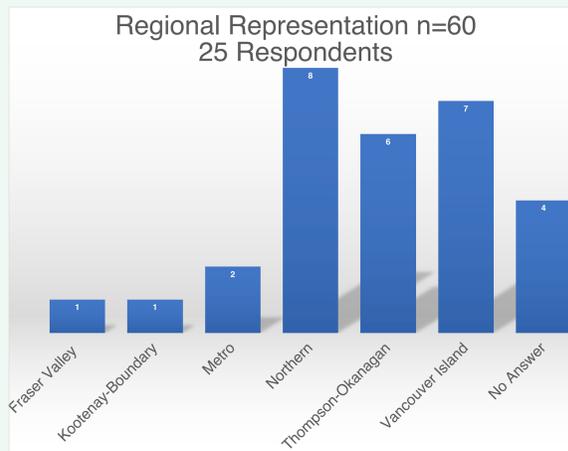
Data from the surveys will be added to an Excel spreadsheet. The research lead will combine themes and outcomes with information from the literature and integrate those into recommendations that will answer the research questions. The recommendations will be presented by the research team at a meeting with the research users (BCCAISE Executive, BCCASE Regional Chairs, and Ministry of Education Representative(s)) for discussion and evaluation. This group will provide additional validation by functioning as a quasi-focus group, providing data through discussion of themes and recommendations; the research users will have no access to raw data.

All information gathered in the course of this project will be coded for privacy and any individual identifying data will be removed from survey responses by the research assistants prior to the research lead and co-lead having access to the data.

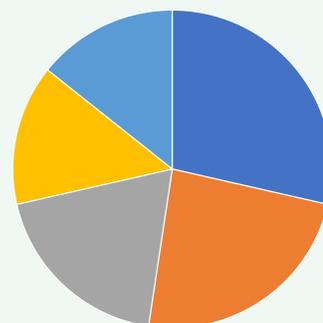
**School District Administrator Responsible for Special Education Services Years in their Position**



## Locations of school district administrators in special education who responded to the survey:

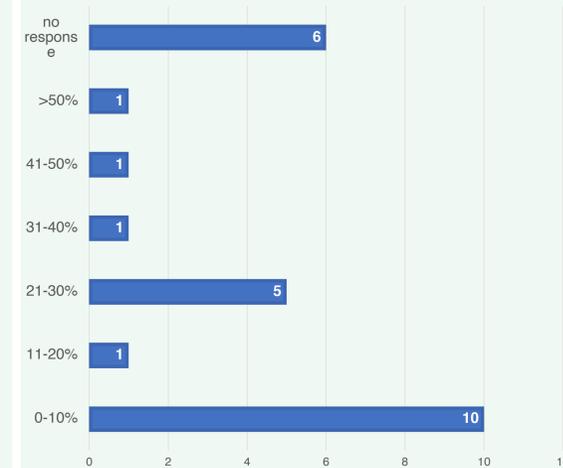


## District Structures that Best Support Learners

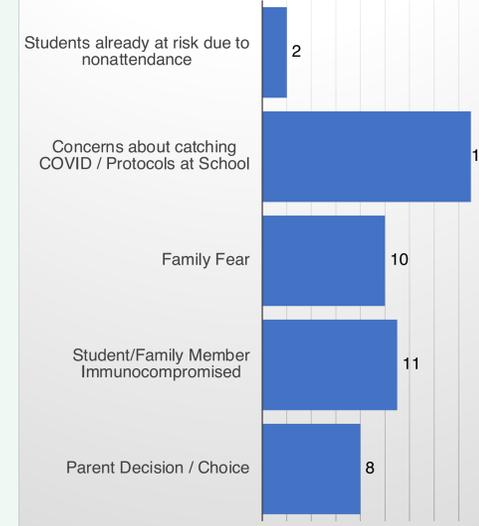


- Multi-Tiered System of Support
- Differentiated Instruction
- Universal Design for Learning
- Regular Itinerant Meetings
- Regular Communication Structure with Agencies

## % of Students Needs who did not Return to School when Schools Reopened Spring 2020 (# of Districts)



## Rationale as to Why Students Didn't Return to School in Spring 2020



NEW FOCUS FOR INSERVICE AND PRO-D 2020-2021

Teaching Virtually → Technology → Assessment



PRELIMINARY OUTCOME

Align the structures with teaching remotely...

All District Leaders were Asked to List the Top Competencies Required of Someone in a District Leadership Position.

This chart displays the Top Six Competencies as identified by Superintendents and by District Administrators who are Responsible for Leading Support Service Delivery in their Districts.

Superintendents	District Administrators
Sp. Ed. Background	Good Communicator
Commitment to Inclusion	Sp. Ed. Background
Compassionate	Compassionate
Good Communicator	Systems Thinker
Flexibility	Flexibility
Empathetic	Empathetic