



July 24, 2023

Ref: 290468

Doug McPhee, Chair
Board of Education
School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Email: doug.mcphee@sd5.bc.ca

Dear Doug McPhee:

Your letter of May 31, 2023, addressed to the Honourable David Eby, Premier, regarding neurodiversity training for educators, early childhood educators, and educational assistants, has been sent to me and as Minister of Education and Child Care, I am pleased to respond.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care agrees that schools need to be inclusive environments for students and staff. British Columbia promotes an inclusive education system in which all students are fully participating members of a community of learners. British Columbia educators strive to ensure that all learners are supported to participate in school, develop their individual potential, and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need for a successful personal future.

As you know the Ministry of Education and Child Care sets the K-12 provincial curriculum standard which outlines what students in BC are expected to be able to know, do, and understand. However, the Ministry does not set the standard for teacher education programs or for the professional learning of teachers or educational assistants. The curriculum of teacher education programs is set by the universities offering teaching certification programs. Teacher education programs do typically include coursework and training in inclusion and topics relating to neurodiversity. However, any further requests or enhancements to the neurodiversity training teachers receive would need to be addressed with each university.

Once teachers are in the field, professional development opportunities are guided by the collective agreements established between the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and school districts, allowing teachers to pursue opportunities of their choosing to support the growth of their professional practice. Locally elected boards of education and districts, like the Southeast Kootenay School Board, have the authority to design and offer professional learning opportunities for all staff in the district, including neurodiversity training. Once again, any requests or enhancements to the neurodiversity training school district staff receive would need to be addressed locally by each school district.

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Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) are certified through the Early Childhood Educator Registry (ECER). The ECER assesses and recommends post-secondary early childhood education programs in British Columbia. The current Standards of Practice and Occupational Competencies are being updated to support inclusion as a pillar as reflected in the ChildCareBC plan. Additionally, professional development opportunities for ECEs include learning about neurodiversity although these courses are not specifically prescribed but selected by each educator. Finally, ECEs are able to take post-basic training which includes neurodiversity education as part of the "Special Needs Educator" certificate.

Again, thank you for writing, and for your continued commitment to inclusive learning spaces in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Singh', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Rachna Singh
Minister

pc: Honourable David Eby, Premier
Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills