

## 4.23 SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

### **Purpose:**

To outline Bella Bella Community School's policy regarding special education

### **Scope:**

All Board Member, administrators, teachers, parents and students.

### **Policy:**

The School Act requires that school boards make available educational programs to all school age persons resident in the district. This entitlement stands as an important inclusionary statement for all students. In addition, a Ministerial Order requires the integration of students with special needs with students who do not have special needs in most instances.

### **Inclusion and Integration**

The principle of inclusion adopted in British Columbia schools supports equitable access to learning by all students and the opportunity for all students to pursue their goals in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and interaction.

Integration is one way to achieve inclusion. Integration encourages students with special needs to participate and interact fully with other students in schools and to develop friendships. Integration involves placing students with special needs in classrooms with their age and grade peers, then providing them with the necessary support, accommodations and adaptations-determined on an individual basis-to enable them to be successful.

This does not mean that students with special needs must spend 100 per cent of every day in school class placements with their age and grade peers. The goal is to meet their educational needs and the educational needs of all students. The emphasis on educating students with special needs in school classrooms with their age and grade peers does not preclude the appropriate use of resource rooms, self-contained classes, community-based training or other specialized settings.

### **Alternatives to the Integrated Classroom**

Students with special needs should only be placed in settings other than a school classroom with age and grade peers when the school board has made all reasonable efforts to integrate the student, and it is clear that a combination of education in such classes and supplementary support cannot meet their educational or social needs, or when there is clear evidence that partial or full placement in another setting is the only option after considering their educational needs or the educational needs of others. Evidence could include frequent and significant disruption of the learning environment despite appropriate classroom interventions, or the probability of physical harm to the student or others.

If alternatives to school classes with their age and grade peers are necessary for the above reasons for some students with special needs, then placement in alternate settings should be done as part of a plan that is regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with parents and school-based teams (if applicable) with a view to returning these students to school classrooms as soon as it is feasible.

## **Planning Appropriate Educational Programs**

### **Integrated Planning**

Some students with special needs may require programs and services not usually provided to other students. Schools and school districts should organize themselves to provide educational programs and services to students with special needs. This includes planning with other ministries and community agencies where necessary.

At the school level, teachers whose classrooms include students with special needs should have timely access to support. All schools should have formal problem-solving units, such as school-based teams, to plan and co-ordinate available support services for these students and to assist teachers in developing effective strategies.

### **Identification and Assessment**

Early identification is an essential first step in successful program planning for students with special needs. Ideally, identification begins before children enter school, when parents and health or other community personnel identify the students' special needs and begin planning to meet those needs. In such instances, schools should make use of available information by incorporating it into educational planning activities.

Students whose special needs are less readily evident are often not identified until they enter the school system. Thorough assessment of students' strengths and needs is essential for developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Assessment practices should be designed to ensure timely identification by personnel trained in the assessment of specific special needs.

More specialized assessment is required for a few learners whose special needs are more complex. At this level, specialized personnel appropriately trained to carry out more complex assessments (for example, school psychologists) should be available to support schools in the assessment and planning process.

Where assessments indicate that students need additional assistance, such assistance will be planned based on both the careful assessment of those needs and the availability of resources.

### **Individual Education Plans**

School personnel, after collaboration with parents and outside agencies, are responsible for establishing goals for children that take into account the children's special needs and strengths. The results of planning are documented in Individual Education Plans. Students identified as having special needs must have IEPs unless:

- the student with special needs requires minor adaptations to educational materials, or instructional or assessment methods;
- the expected learning outcomes established by the applicable educational program guide have not been modified for the student with special needs; and
- the student with special needs is receiving, in a school year, 15 hours or less remedial instruction, by a person other than the classroom teacher in order for the student to meet the expected learning outcomes.

The IEPs should be implemented, reviewed and updated at least annually.

IEPs:

- are written records of planning conducted by students, parents/guardians, school personnel and other service providers.
- provide coherent, short-term and long-range plans for student learning and service needs.
- provide administrators with evidence of individualized planning.
- are useful tools in planning the transition of students with special needs from one setting to another.
- help in determining how well students are meeting their goals, and form the basis of reporting students' progress.

Though planning occurs collaboratively, principals should ensure that all students with special needs are assigned case managers to co-ordinate the development, documentation and implementation of their IEPs.

*APPROVED by BBCSS*