

Educational Experiences and Challenges:

Dyslexia in British Columbia

November 9, 2023



Dyslexia BC
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Dyslexia BC gratefully acknowledges that this report was researched and written on the shared traditional and unceded territories of the ǫ́íćǎ́ý (Katzie), kʷíkʷə́łəm (Kwikwetlem), qíqéyt (Qayqayt), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Stó:lō and sálílwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations.

We are grateful to advocate and be in relation with people across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of British Columbia.

Thank you to everyone who provided input and spent time providing feedback. Dyslexia BC embraces collaboration and engagement, and appreciates you sharing time, insights, experiences and comments.

Dyslexia BC is also grateful to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, Trustees, Administrators and Educators for taking the time to read this report and consider its findings; Dyslexia BC welcomes ongoing dialogue and engagement with you all.

This report was authored by Cathy McMillan, B.Sc. Parent, Founding Member and Chairperson of Dyslexia BC. Cathy lives with dyslexia and is a tireless advocate for children, youth and families in British Columbia.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dyslexia BC's "Educational Experiences and Challenges: Dyslexia in British Columbia" offers insights into the experiences of families and individuals living with dyslexia based on three surveys conducted in 2019, 2021, 2022, and personal accounts from 2023.

The report focuses on survey respondents' experiences with diagnoses, educational choices, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), financial implications, access to services, and challenges related to post-secondary education and employment are addressed. Through careful analysis, key themes have been identified, including barriers to diagnosis, the need for improved services and remediation, and the financial and emotional toll on affected families.

The report highlights critical events that have a significant impact on individuals with dyslexia. These events include a 2019 arbitration decision, efforts to include learning disabilities in the definition of disability, the "Right to Read Inquiry" 2022, from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and the absence of support for learning disabilities in the BC government pilot family connection centres in 2023.

The report also summarizes recent advocacy, policy discussions, legislative changes, and calls for action to provide legislation, policy and resources create a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with dyslexia in the province. This includes recent recognition of dyslexia initiatives in British Columbia's Education Mandate, written by Honourable Premier Eby on December 7, 2022. Other examples include the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) and the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) motions to advocate for measures to improve resources and equity for dyslexia in each district in the province including kindergarten screening, implementation of the science of reading in all classrooms, and specialized literacy centres. The evaluation of policy and personal stories lead to the following recommendations:

- Increased education funding to support children with learning disabilities
- Early screening and intervention
- Increased awareness of and education in dyslexia and other disabilities among educators
- Evidence-based reading instruction

Through "Educational Experiences and Challenges: Dyslexia in British Columbia," Dyslexia BC's objective is to bring a voice to BC's dyslexic children, youth and their families. The data can be a catalyst for proactive change in BC, addressing the everyday challenges faced by individuals with dyslexia and ensuring equitable access for services. The report will be shared with government officials to shed light on these issues and advocate for the necessary changes in policy and legislation.

RECENT CHANGES EFFECTING DYSLEXIC LEARNERS IN BC

An evolving landscape of legislation, policy, and government decisions continues to shape how learning disabilities are recognized, included and resourced in British Columbia. Four recent critical events affect dyslexic learners in BC.

BCPSEA Reference No. A-16-2019; Arbitrator Jackson, August 28, 2019

This arbitration case, which concerns Special Education designations and class composition provisions in the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) collective agreement, has significant impacts for children with a learning disability or dyslexia, especially those with a Q category designation.

The decision effectively downsized the Q Category from including all students with learning disabilities to just those who could be classified with severe LD (formerly known as J Category). The impacts of the arbitration are concerning. Without a designation with clearly outlined supports, students with LD may not receive access to needed services. The downsizing of the LD category and lack of clear guidelines for implementation leaves unanswered questions about the existence of a Category Q for students with learning disabilities and creates uncertainty about the future of support within the BC education system.

Accessible British Columbia Act (2021)

The Accessible British Columbia Act was enacted in June 2021. The Act failed to include learning disabilities in the definition of disability despite being defined and recognized in the federal Accessible Canada Act. Dyslexia BC advocated for the inclusion of LDs in the definitions of the provincial Act. Dyslexia and other learning disabilities were referenced in the appendix, but Dyslexia BC remains concerned that the lack of a specific reference in the Act may be confusing and create additional barriers for people who struggle with reading.



The Right to Read Inquiry report, Ontario Human Rights Commission (February 2022)

The Right to Read Inquiry report, released by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in February 2022, highlights the urgent need for significant changes in Ontario's education system and ultimately the rest of Canada. These changes include early screening for reading difficulties beginning in kindergarten and implementing instructional strategies based in the science of reading for all students. However, there are several causes for concern.

The report places a strong emphasis on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework that allows for multiple points of entry and expression in learning. The focus on UDL is worrying as it may not adequately address the level of remediation required for individuals with moderate to severe dyslexia. Furthermore, the report's recommendations are not binding, leaving implementation up to individual districts. The report provides no pathway for parents to request or seek more intensive remediation or diagnosis for their children.

Additionally, the report's perspective on second language acquisition may not sufficiently consider the difficulties experienced by students with dyslexia. Dr. Sally Shaywitz, Learning Development specialist at Yale University and the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, found that 99% of students with dyslexia will struggle in a second language. For this reason, it is essential that students with dyslexia have the ability to opt out of second language requirements. Allowing this opt-out option can provide more time and flexibility for accommodating and addressing the needs of a child with a learning disability. The report's failure to fully acknowledge the challenges faced by students with learning disabilities might prompt schools to disregard medical recommendations for exemption from second language courses.

The Pilot Family Connection Centres

In 2023, the provincial government began piloting "family connections centres," which provide multiple interventions and services for children with special needs. However, among the diverse services that are offered at these centres, they do not provide any screening, support, intervention, or remediation for learning disabilities. This omission highlights a systemic oversight in addressing the needs of individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.



RECENT HIGHLIGHTS IN DYSLEXIA ADVOCACY IN BC

Dyslexia BC advocates for legislation, policy changes, and funding to ensure that people with dyslexia receive equitable access to education, community, and employment. Recent actions include;

October 3, 2023 - Say Dyslexia at the BC Legislature - 8 BC residents of various ages and 1 reading specialist that works in BC, Alberta and Ontario spoke about why it will be important to have better access for individuals with Dyslexia in BC.

October 3, 2023 - Provincial Proclamation of Dyslexia Week received from the Honourable Rachna Singh's Office at the BC Legislature.

October 3, 2023 - Dyslexia BC presented a list of recommendations with the Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care.

Summer 2023 - Budget Report including recommendation 118 (Screening) for Dyslexia in Kindergarten and structured literacy for dyslexic students.

May 2023 - British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) passed a motion to advocate to the Ministry of Education to provide screening starting in Kindergarten and targeted funding for dyslexia.

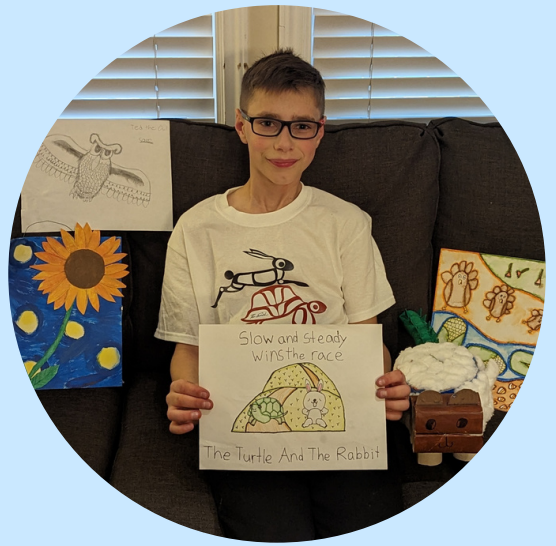
April 2023 - BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) passed two motions:

- to advocate to the Ministry of Education and Childcare to provide targeted funding and literacy centres in each District
- to advocate and change all literacy in all classrooms to structured literacy (including funding)

March 2023 - Elenore Sturko MLA (Education Critic for the opposition) spoke at length on "Dyslexia" Category Q, targeted funding for LD in the Legislature budget discussion.

December, 2022 - the Honourable Premier David Eby released the Education Mandate which included "dyslexia initiatives".





INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia is a genetic condition and is the most prevalent learning disability (LD), accounting for approximately 80% of all LD. It knows no cultural or economic boundaries. November, 2023 commemorates the 11th anniversary of the Moore Case, a landmark Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) decision on disability rights. The Moore Decision was issued on November 9, 2012, marking a pivotal moment in Canadian human rights history for individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Rick Moore, father of Jeffrey, was unable to access remedial services within the North Vancouver public school system for his son's severe dyslexia. Unfortunately, not much has changed for individuals and students with dyslexia in BC since 2012. Although the SSC decision stated that adequate special education is not “a dispensable luxury,” it is still extremely difficult for families to get support and early intervention for their children with learning disabilities. In BC, the accessibility of diagnosis, resources, and remedial services for dyslexia remains inequitable regardless of age. Dyslexia BC has been tirelessly advocating for years, striving to shed light on concepts that could lead to a more proactive approach in addressing dyslexia within the province.

This report presents an analysis of three surveys conducted by Dyslexia BC in 2019, 2021, and 2022, which aimed to gather information about individuals with learning disabilities in BC, specifically dyslexia, and primarily their experiences in K-12 and post-secondary education. While the 2019 report builds focus on educational choices of parents and caregivers with children of learning disabilities, the 2021 and 2022 surveys provided parents an opportunity to voice their and their children's in BC's school system. In September and October 2023 several stories were collected and are attached for reference. Not all respondents were parents, some were adults sharing their stories that have continued on into adulthood.

By comparing the key findings and themes from these surveys, we can gain insights into the inequitable landscape of education for individuals with learning disabilities in the province. Dyslexia BC will be submitting this report to the BC Government in hopes of shining a light on the inequality faced by individuals with dyslexia. Dyslexia BC is hoping to help BC move forward in trying to ensure people with dyslexia gain equitable access to school, community services and meaningful employment.



PARTICIPANTS

The 2019 survey accumulated 395 responses, the 2021 survey received 366 responses, and the 2022 survey received 215. In total, there were 976 responses across the three surveys. The survey participants in all three surveys consisted primarily of parents or guardians advocating for their children's needs, while a smaller subset identified as adults sharing their personal experiences with dyslexia. These responses represented the experiences of various age groups, encompassing K-12 and post-secondary students, adults navigating various learning disabilities beyond formal education, and even respondents engaging on behalf of their children aged 0-5, offering insights into early childhood experiences within the education system. A significant majority of survey participants, comprising approximately 70%, possessed official diagnoses, which encompassed conditions such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. However, a notable portion of respondents had not received formal diagnoses, suggesting the presence of potential unidentified learning difficulties and hinting at the complex landscape of diagnostic testing in the realm of learning disabilities. Furthermore, some participants shared experiences of comorbid disabilities, including ADHD, autism, anxiety, and depression, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by individuals with LD within the education system. It's important to note that the 2023 survey intake included 36 recent stories, which are attached in the Appendix. These stories were added to provide current data for readers to see examples of the participants' stories, proving a systemic pattern of inequity that needs to be reversed.

"He is now in grade 8 and has experienced so much school-based trauma as a result of exclusion and inequitable access to education supports in his young life, that his mental health has been impacted."
– Survey respondent



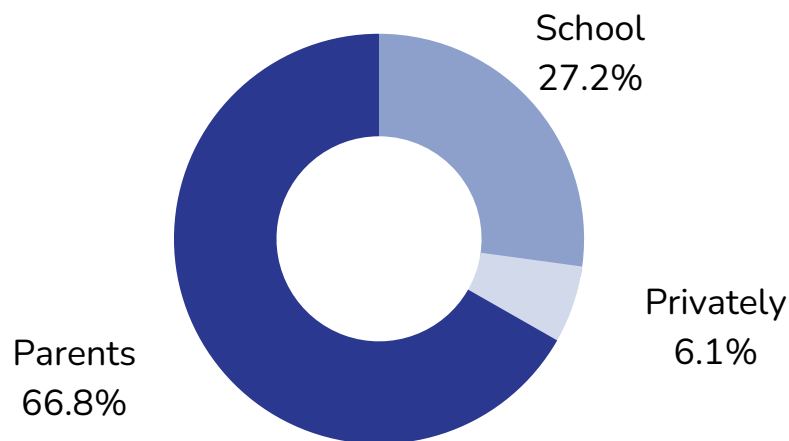
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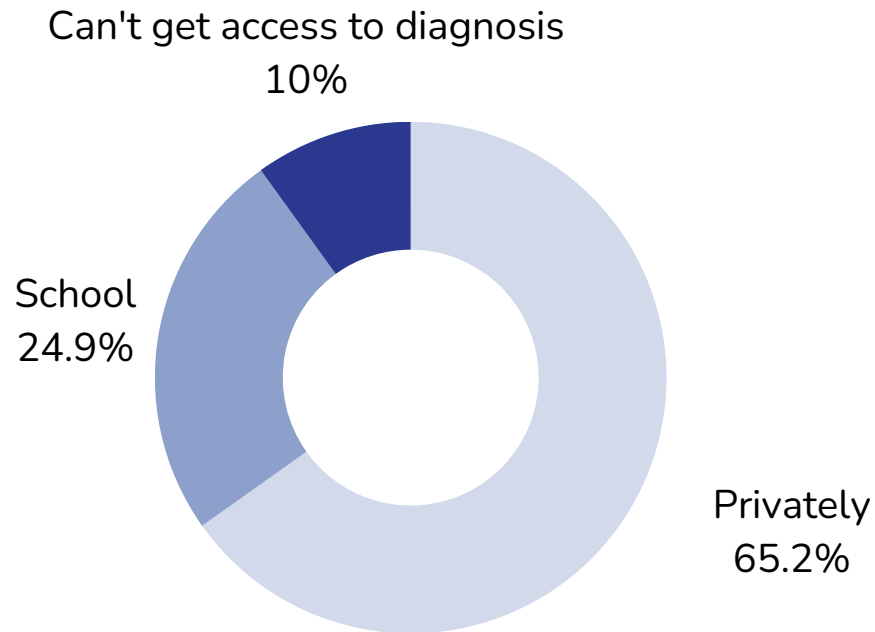
Recognizing the difference between noticing a learning disability and diagnosing one is vital because it signifies the initial awareness and the subsequent formal assessment that can lead to timely and appropriate support and interventions, such as early intervention procedures and proper access to formal services in education.

In 2019, the survey asked parents about who first noticed that their child had a learning disability. The results indicated that the majority of parents were the ones who first noticed the learning disability in their child. A small percentage reported that the school was the first to notice the learning disability. In 2022, another survey inquired about where children were diagnosed with a learning disability. In this survey, a majority of respondents reported that their children were diagnosed with a learning disability through private channels. Meanwhile, approximately a quarter of respondents' children were diagnosed through their schools.

Who initially flagged the learning disability

2019 results





Results found that the majority of students with learning disabilities are noticed first by parents and are diagnosed privately, outside of educational institutions. A significantly smaller portion of students have been diagnosed through school programs, highlighting the need to make improvements in the diagnosis process to advance the education system. Also noted is a significant group of students who can't get access to proper diagnostic services.

Gathering information about learning disorders can be a wearing task for parents and families due to various factors, including stigma, evolving diagnostic criteria, and limited access to resources. From 2021 survey results, approximately 88% of respondents reported having difficulties in obtaining information about learning disorders from their school districts. Additionally, 51% of respondents indicated they do not feel included and 34% feel somewhat included in special education opportunities within our school system. This highlights the pressing need for improved awareness and support for those affected by these conditions where it matters most; the school system and its supporting government bodies.



PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

Both the 2021 and 2022 surveys had asked participants to provide their story/experiences in relation to their diagnosis. There are several commonalities and important parallels in the stories and firsthand experiences provided by the respondents.

- Firstly, most stories touched on the importance of early intervention and screening for learning disabilities. One story describes how the child's "learning difficulties were noticed in preschool and kindergarten, but [the parents] were told that he would grow out of it". This is a common misconception that over time leads to frustration and a sense of being left behind. Many of the personal stories suggest that all children should be screened for learning disabilities in kindergarten, and that interventions should start as early as possible.
- Secondly, similarities in the stories describe the challenges that individuals with learning disabilities face in getting the support they need. One parent from the 2022 survey describes how they had to "spend thousands of dollars on tutoring programs that did not work and were denied access to a structured literacy program through the school district". This suggests that financial ability should not be a barrier to screening and diagnosis, and that more funding is needed for children with learning disabilities.
- Finally, other correlations emphasize the need for more education and awareness about learning disabilities among teachers and the public. Many of the stories describe how the child's learning difficulties were initially dismissed by teachers, and how the parents had to advocate for their child to get the needed support. Teachers need more professional development about dyslexia, which is the most common learning disability.



"School is really hard for me because teachers don't always provide proper support, even though they are supposed to. I feel like because I am not loud and disruptive I get forgotten about."



"We then started private tutoring sessions - twice a week for an hour. Within a month I heard my son reading street signs from the back seat of the car - I almost cried."

"Children shouldn't have to do school after school, it's wearing, they need to play."

"I am replying as a parent of a child who waited years to be assessed... Not every family has \$3250 to spend on a private assessment. Extremely disheartening."

Participants were also asked to respond to the question:

"If you could change one thing in the BC Education system for students or people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, what would it be?"

The following results were held in common:

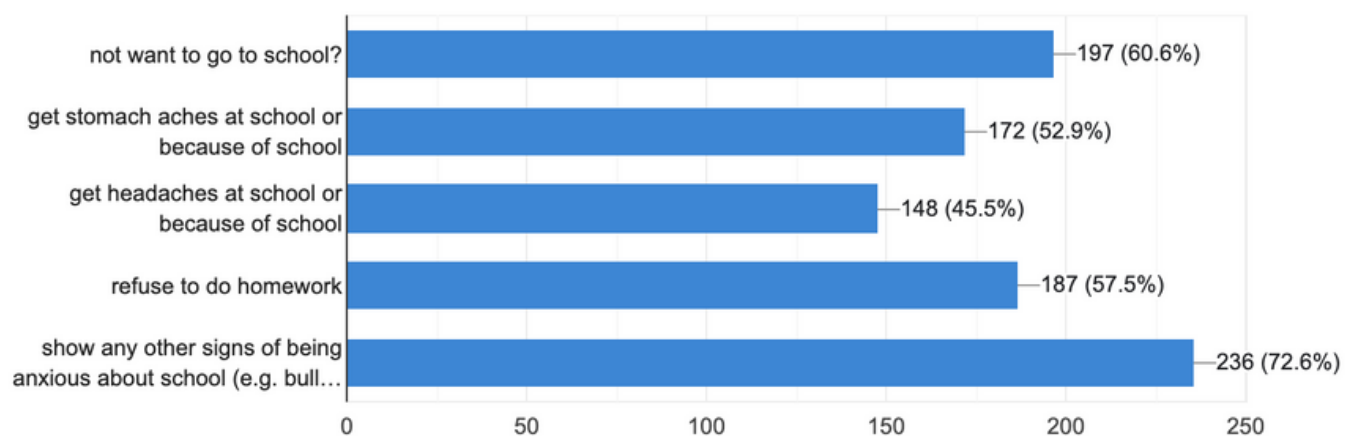
- Making the classroom and the way teachers teach more accessible overall
- Earlier diagnosis and free assessments
- Providing better training for teachers
- Implement kindergarten screening for phonemic awareness
- Grounding whole-class instruction in the Science of Reading
- Updating the curriculum to reflect scientific understanding of how children learn to read
- Eliminating outdated teaching methods and resources from the curriculum (e.g. Three cueing)
- Increasing school psychologist resources, including consultation with school teams.



SCHOOL REFUSAL

Children with learning disabilities sometimes face immense challenges when it comes to attending school. These students may refuse to go to school due to a range of factors, including the anxiety and frustration that can arise from struggling with their studies. For them, the classroom environment may feel intimidating or overwhelming, making it difficult to engage with the educational process. Additionally, the fear of being judged by peers or teachers can further exacerbate their reluctance to attend. It's crucial for parents, teachers, and schools to provide a supportive and accommodating learning environment where these children feel safe, valued, and empowered to overcome their challenges and participate in their education.

Indications of school refusal in children with learning disorders (2019)



EDUCATIONAL CHOICES

- 44.8% of the respondents reported that their children attended a school outside of their catchment area.
- Only 51% of students attending schools outside their catchment area received accommodation for their learning disabilities.
- 44.4% of respondents had to change schools to better cater to their children's needs, while 9.4% of respondents relocated due to their children's educational requirements.
- An outstanding 82.1% of participants expressed willingness to change schools or move if necessary.



INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS (IEPS)

In the 2019 survey, a notable 86.6% of respondents indicated that they have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place for their child. However, the data also reveals some concerning trends regarding the frequency of IEP updates.

- Only 35.1% of these IEPs are updated more than once a year, potentially suggesting that a significant portion of students may not be receiving timely adjustments to their educational plans.
- Even more concerning is the fact that 16.1% of respondents reported that their child's IEP is not updated at all annually, which raises questions about the effectiveness of support and the fulfillment of each child's evolving educational requirements.
- An alarming 36.4% of respondents reported that their child's IEP is not consistently followed, highlighting the urgent need for better adherence to these crucial plans.

This highlights the need for greater attention to the timely review and adaptation of IEPs to ensure that every child's learning needs are met effectively.

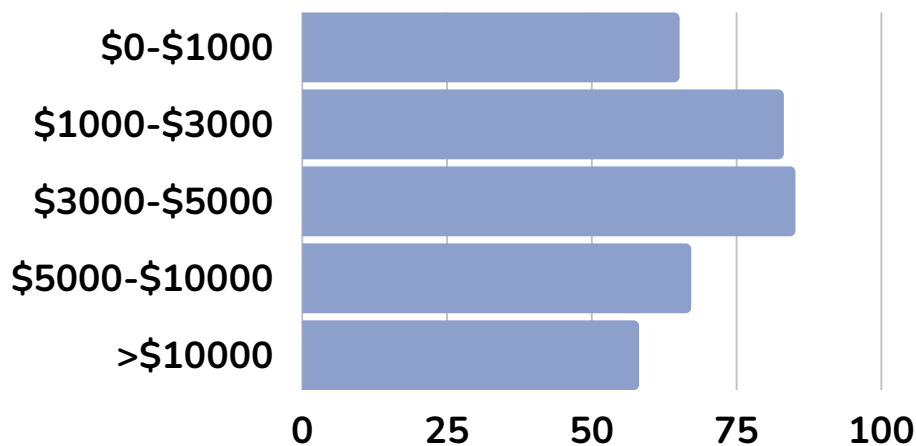
"Once diagnosed, my son was provided with an IEP, which is only somewhat successful, as not all teachers actually provide accommodations. The diagnosis also provided my son with a reason for why he was struggling. It had nothing to do with his intelligence! He became a happier person just having the diagnosis." (Survey Response, 2022)



FINANCIAL IMPACT

The 2019 and 2021 reports add a focus on the financial burden incurred by families seeking educational support as families are increasingly seeking assistance beyond the public school system, turning to avenues such as tutoring, private programs, computers/technology and online programs, and private schools to address their educational needs. These external supports are often expensive and add additional costs and barriers to learning. Notably, an astonishing 48.8% of families reported on 2019 spending over \$5,000 on tutoring alone. Additionally, 32% of respondents in 2021 reported having to enroll their child in private schools in order to receive better accommodations for their learning disorders. However, it's important to note that these additional educational services can have significant financial impacts on families, often requiring substantial investments in tuition, technology, and specialized support, thereby increasing the financial burden on households striving to provide the best education for their children. Below is a graphic representation of the costs families have spent in total on all services to accommodate their child over the span of one year.

Yearly expense for external accommodations paid by families (2021)



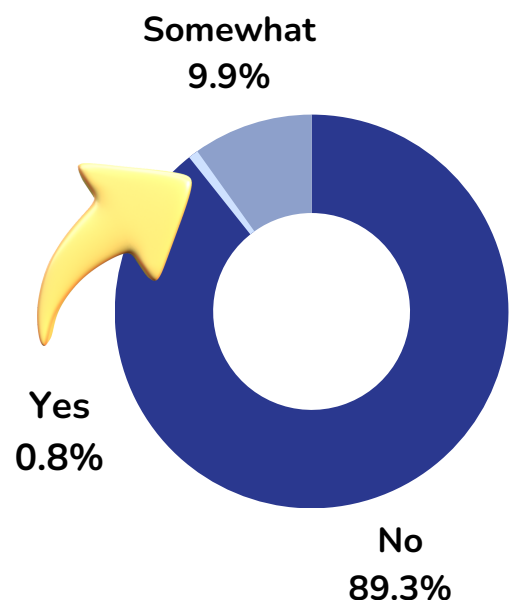
GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

In British Columbia, some government initiatives and programs in place are aimed at supporting individuals with learning disabilities, focused on improving educational opportunities and access to resources for those affected by learning disabilities. However, concerning the Disability Tax Credit, a significant portion of 2021 respondents (upwards of 70%) noted that medical professionals had advised against applying for it in cases of learning disabilities like dyslexia or provided no mention of the credit. Approximately 60% of respondents reported not receiving adequate support or resources from medical doctors or pediatricians to address their learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. These findings highlight the need for improved awareness and advocacy within government and medical institutions to provide support for individuals with learning disabilities in government initiatives within British Columbia.

Furthermore, a concerning amount (89%) of respondents expressed feelings of exclusion from government initiatives related to disabilities, while only a small portion felt somewhat included, and a mere 1% believed they were genuinely included. A visual representation of these results is included in the graph below.

In these surveys, parents of children with learning disabilities have expressed a range of needs and desires for government initiatives to better support their children's educational journey. These common findings include a strong call for early screening and diagnosis, particularly in kindergarten and the early elementary years. Responding to the demand of having properly trained teachers and medical professionals equipped to address learning disabilities in young learners will offer a more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to education. Many parents also emphasize the importance and need for more in-class learning tools, such as talk-to-text and computer resources, and access to specific reading methods, such as Orton-Gillingham.

Do families feel included in government initiatives towards disability? (2021)



CONCLUSION

The analysis of Dyslexia BC's 2019, 2021, and 2022 surveys reveals common themes and evolving trends in the experiences of individuals with learning disabilities in British Columbia's education system.

Firstly, all surveys highlight the importance of early screening and intervention for learning disabilities. Many respondents reported that their learning difficulties were not identified until later in their education, which suggests that all children should be screened for learning disabilities in kindergarten, and that interventions should start as early as possible.

Secondly, they emphasize the challenges individuals with learning disabilities face in accessing support and accommodations. Many respondents reported that their learning difficulties were initially dismissed by teachers, and that they had to advocate for themselves or their children to get the support they needed. It was also noted that assessments and tutoring programs can be expensive and difficult to access, and that schools often do not provide the necessary accommodations and resources. Also observed was that parents felt pressure as if the only option for their child to get access was to go to a private specialized school.

This suggests that more funding for public education is needed for children with learning disabilities and funding allocated to early assessment and intervention for families and students to have easier access to support.

Finally, the survey results call for more education and awareness about learning disabilities among teachers. Teachers need more professional development opportunities to gain a deeper understanding about dyslexia and other learning disabilities. Respondents suggested that the curriculum should be updated to reflect scientific understanding of how children learn to read, and that outdated teaching methods should be eliminated. By addressing these issues with legislation and policy, BC's Education sector can create a more positive, inclusive, and supportive education system for individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.



APPENDIX

Personal Stories (October 2023 only)

1 - My child is currently in Grade 5. After asking the school repeatedly about some red flags to us we finally had a teacher, in Grade 3, say that yes there were some concerns but that there were kids worse than she was and that the school wouldn't test her. He said she was a kid who would skate by and the school system would never question why she was having the problems she was. We paid \$500 for a level 2 assessment which raised some questions and led to us paying \$3500 for a private psych Ed where she was shown to be both gifted and dyslexic. Her teacher for Grade 4 made her self esteem plummet, would not follow the IEP, no one gave her any challenges and because the school would only give her 2 x weekly group intervention, if that as the special education teacher was constantly pulled to deal with other students, we paid for private tutoring at \$800/month. Due to all of this we put her into a private school at the cost of \$875/month and we have had to continue with the private tutoring. This is a child who is also gifted so she is now thriving in the private school where she is being challenged. The province says Every Child Matters, yes the

2 - We left the public school system after years of fighting for support. When we flagged his reading challenges, we were told he can't read because he's autistic. When our paediatrician wrote numerous letters asking for a psych ed assessment we were told he won't get one through the public system as he already brings in funding (autism designation). We went private and he was diagnosed with dyslexia. We were then told we can't teach him to read as we don't have the resources. Paid for a private OG tutor who made huge progress. Then asked school to connect with tutor so the learnings could be used at school. Made the request monthly starting in August - it took until after March break for the school to meet with her. And then just asked for her materials. Finally gave up fighting and put child in independent school. They immediately met with OG tutor, have created a plan to help with reading, have immediately implemented recommendations from psych ed (use of technology, scribe) which took months of fighting to get in public school (and only a couple were implemented). We've gone into huge debt paying for private assessment, private tutors and now private school education. But the other option - watch our child fall further and further behind, fighting for supports that don't exist. It's the hunger games with children stuck in the middle. y do and that includes our stealth dyslexic children too!



#3 - We spend over \$3000 to have our son assessed privately. He has an IEP for school but no remediation so we pay \$800.00 a month that we barely can afford. I would add more sessions because he truly does need it but we cannot afford it. Things need to change!

#4 - We have the resources to pull this off, many families do not. How many children who can't afford support are being told that they are "not academically capable" and drop out of school? What is the long term cost of this to our community, government and society?

#5 - We discover our son has dyslexia because we were able to pay for a private assessment (3000 dollars) when he was on Grade 2. If not, the SD waiting list was too long and we were advised that the district won't test him before grade 5. The school doesn't have trained staff to deliver effective and appropriate Reading programs for kids with severe dyslexia. We had to pay 2 years of tutoring, three times a week (one session average rates goes between 90-120 dollars). We can't afford tutoring anymore or private schools. My child has a right to learn to read at his public school, he is in grade 5 and reading at a kindergarten level.

#6 - Two of my children, ages 12 and 14, have dyslexia and my 14 year old also has dyscalculia. We have spent many thousands of dollars on psych ed assessments and tutoring as my children are all in public school where there was really no support in terms of identifying their learning differences or addressing those differences, until we were able to get my younger child into a remedial program in the Vancouver School District. We were lucky to get into that program, as space is very limited. The program, in its current form, doesn't have enough capacity and isn't long enough for each child (children are now limited to a single year) to make a real difference. As a result of the lack of support in the public school system, we applied for both children to go to Fraser Academy in February of 2020. They were not accepted.

#7 - My son is in grade 4 in FI. In kindergarten I asked his teacher if he may have a LD because he didn't seem to understand rhyming and wasn't grasping the alphabet. Every year my son struggled with reading, writing, spelling and delayed speech. In grade 3 his school said his progress is slow and to look at getting a psyc Ed test. We did and indeed he was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and speech delay. If we had waited for the school to test him he would have been in grade 5 or he wouldn't have been tested. We knew something was wrong every year and every year we were told to wait and see. We now pay \$2000/month for private OG tutoring and speech therapy. He is progressing. The school said they would meet with him for reading support 3/week for 15mins. It is now almost November and my son hasn't seen any extra support in his school yet this year! Without his diagnoses or private tutors' my son would never learn to read.



#8 - My son has always struggled in school. I knew at a young age he was was different. The school refused to do testing. I was told: He is young for his age. He is a boy. They are slower learners. I finally paid \$3500 for testing and yes he is dyslexic. He is getting OG tutoring but I can only afford one session a week. It has been several years and would do at least one more session (one hour) a week if we could afford it.

#9 - We had to withdraw my son from XXXX Secondary School at the end of his grade 8 year to transfer him to a private specialized school as the support he received was woefully insufficient. I had to request that his LAC teacher give him a reading test and at the end of the year was told he was grade 4-6 reading level. We had to remind his teachers to accommodate him as per his Individual Educational Plan for the first term parent teacher conference. We could not in good conscious allow him to return to drown in his grade 9 year. Throughout elementary school, he has struggled to keep up and we have done our best as parents to assist him. We have met many caring teachers along the way who have done their best to help him. He had a psycho-educational assessment done in Grade 3 and eventually we found out he was dyslexic when he was referred to the Literacy Centre at XXXXX Elementary School. However, within two weeks, the teachers had him reading and his confidence soared! Unfortunately it was only offered for one term and when he returned to his home school, he just went back to struggling academically. We looked for tutors unsuccessfully (all booked up) and the one we did manage to find was a retired special education teacher who volunteered her time. She had to discontinue helping him because of Covid. The summer school offered through public education system was useless to him as the teachers were not trained to help him. Then we paid \$4000.00 to send him to summer school academic intensive at LDS learning centre this past summer. They assessed him before and after his course and it gave us an accurate assessment of his progress. We have spent our savings to help him be successful in his education. We are fortunate enough to be able to do this but frankly I'm not sure how long we can keep it up with rising inflation, housing costs, etc. I watched a news item on Global News with the Education Minister Rachna Singh saying that every child has equal access to a good education in our public high schools and I know this is simply not true! My son is a wonderful, bright, athletic child with no behavioural issues at all, but has struggled because of his dyslexia. I'm not sure how we long we can afford to keep him in a private school, driving him out of catchment and back while we continue to work. If our public school system was giving adequate resources to students with dyslexia, then parents all over wouldn't be paying for these private schools.

#10 - Currently paying over \$300 a month and thats on the reduced payment plan (over \$600 at full cost) for specialized tutoring during school hours, because in 4 years since diagnosis the school has done nothing to support my kid in reading and writting. The school says no funding, no support staff, no anything, and teachers have no training. One year comments on the report card for parents to sign and return to school included, student has trouble with spelling and sentence struture needs more practice. I added school needs more education on dyslexia.



#11 - My son has had issues with speech, reading, writing and spelling his whole life. We had him working with SLPs from the time he was 4 until he aged out in the school system. Every year report card or teacher interviews told us the same thing, he's easily distracted and is quite delayed in reading, writing and spelling. Every elementary school year I asked the question if they feel we need to act on it and I was told that he is still developing so they are not concerned. They are only concerned if he stalls out. In grade 8 his French teacher reached out concerned and said she thought he showed signs of dyslexia and he should be tested. This is when it first dawned on me there was more of an issue and it all seemed to line up. She was going to put his name forward and so we waited to hear something. She recommended he stop taking French and focus on English moving forward. In grade 9, report cards were not alarming. He was developing still and of course easily distracted but I thought maybe he was ok and didn't need intervention. No teachers reached out to me this year. Fast forward to this year, grade 10. He is failing all courses BAD. Like getting less than 20 percent bad. I started working with him at home and found out he understood nothing. Not a single thing in his classes. I started working with him nightly to keep him on track and passing. His last math unit test we spent about 10 hours studying and doing practice problems and he ended up with a 50 percent on that test. All of that work to just pass. I talked to the teacher to see where things went wrong and it was the word problems. She said he did well on multiple choice questions. Likely because he could check his answer to make sure it was one in the list. I talked to his three academic teacher to have him no longer take notes. Asked them to provide him with something for notes so he could follow along. The principal also took him out of his fourth course and gave him a support block. All 3 teacher thought he would benefit from extra support. I'm hopeful this may give him some one on one support during the day to salvage some of his school day. I'm being told he was not tested prior to now because he wasn't "bad enough". I'm floored that they feel a child in grade 10 that still gets B and D mixed up, two and tow, saw and was, 390 and 309, etc is not alarming to them. Not mention writing in huge letters with spelling mistakes so extensive you cannot make out what he is writing. To write any kind of paragraph or sentence formed answer to a question requires spelling out 80 percent of the words for him. He is given social studies assignments to read about other countries and terms that I can barely pronounce as a fluent reader. How on earth can it be expected that he can go off and read this alone. There are no red flags on his student profile. Every new teacher he has starts fresh with him. I'm annoyed and disappointed things got to this point. Why was the school not more proactive to get this sorted out sooner? How is he 15 years old and we don't have a diagnosis of what is wrong. And, what does this mean for our children who do not have a parent to advocate for them and sit with them for hours to help teach them one on one. I'm a full time working parent and spending 2 to 3 hours an evening working with him to help him understand enough to just pass is not acceptable to me. How do I get some help to keep him encouraged and successful and not burn me out after I have worked all day and only get access to him after he is tired from a day at school?



#12 - I'm a 43 year old mother of a dyslexic and ADHD daughter. And through her journey have learned that I am Undiagnosed Dyslexic for sure and quite sure ADHD as well. I struggled in school and had really hated being there. But I was quite, I'm not sure if my parents and teachers just thought I was lazy or didn't bother to diagnose me because I wasn't causing problems. However in high school I started skipping classes because I honestly wasn't learning anything being there. I felt stupid and bored. By grade 10 I was so far behind I stopped going all together. Luckily West Vancouver school district has an alternative program that was self paced and I did graduate. I tried going to college where my English teacher asked me if I had any diagnoses for LD and I panicked and dropped out. I have had school fear since then and have made my way though different self employed jobs. I don't even know where an adult can get a proper dyslexia diagnosis. I've tried filling out the DTC forms for my daughter but it's so long and you know ADHD and dyslexia means the pile of paperwork will probably sit on my counter another few months. It seems to me like the government is counting on that fact to not pay out. It's too complicated. A doctors note and 1 page should be sufficient.

#13 - My daughter, who is in French Immersion, slipped through the cracks for years. Her difficulties were chalked up to the delayed start learning English because of immersion. I am a teacher and knew something wasn't right. We started paying \$200 per month out of pocket for Orton Gillingham tutoring. Two year later, I got a job in learning support at my daughter's school. Once on the inside I pushed for a psych ed. She got one and was diagnosed with a severe learning disability with reading and writing (and a minor disability in math). Now that I'm on the inside, I see how terribly underfunded schools are. The school wants to help but are crippled by being understaffed. Most staffing goes toward "safety" which is trying to support dysregulated students. The district is saying that Q designations should be able to be supported in the classroom by classroom teachers. In theory this could work if all districts started to implement rigorous and structured science of reading curriculum from K on. But that is not happening and so learning disabilities aren't being discovered until too late. Early and intensive intervention is what is needed and it is not happening. And then, there isn't adequate staffing to run interventions with the students who need the intervention. I've heard some schools are doing zero academic intervention because of far too many safety concerns. With regards to my daughter, we continue to pay for tutoring and we pay out of pocket for apps and technology to help her with accessing materials so she can "read" what is being provided. I am constantly advocating for her to access education from a place that is accessible to her. I'm grateful that I understand the system and am able to advocate from within. But I feel sick thinking of all those students being left behind because they don't have an advocate. It shouldn't be this way. Our system needs to change to catch all of our learners and give them what they need to succeed without having to fight for it.



#14 - My youngest daughter (not dyslexic) is currently in grade 2 and so still learning to read. I have asked her teachers (she has 2 in her regular classroom), inclusive education teacher, and also at the district level why they keep sending home “levelled” and/or “guided” readers to practice with as they align with whole language instruction and not current best practice instruction methods based on the science of how kids learn to read. The practice readers are full of word/spelling patterns, and phonemes or syllables that she has not yet been instructed. Why does the BC curriculum support this method of instruction that sets kids up for failure from the start? I am so glad that I figured all this out on my own and removed my oldest child from the classroom to teach her how reading actually works. The school and district both do not recognize decodable readers as a funding priority. If my neurotypical child gets discouraged easily from these readers just imagine what a student with dyslexia might experience. All but 1 of the many primary teachers I have asked directly about open/closed syllable types have no idea what I am talking about and this simple “rule” actually explains most of the “rule breakers” that children encounter when first starting to read. They are continually encouraged to just guess if it doesn’t sound write. Could you imagine teaching kids basic addition and then giving them workbooks with long division questions mixed in with the addition questions to “practice with” and then when they can’t or don’t find the answer to those questions just tell them to continue guessing until they find the right answer, but not to actually provide them with instruction on how to do long division?

#15 - My daughter was diagnosed last year after I paid privately for a psych ed (\$2700). I was told by her teacher that she wouldn’t even be listed for testing until Grade 3 through the public system as it was ‘too early to test’. School was giving her 2 x a week for 15 mins of pullout reading support. By the end of Grade 1 after 2 years in public school she couldn’t say the alphabet. Her self esteem was eroding. We were fortunate enough to be able to enrol her in specialized private school (>\$40000 a year) where she now receives structured literacy and 1 on 1 daily Orton Gillingham intervention. The difference is night and day in her self esteem. She told me she ‘loves school now’. She is so proud of her learning and within 2 months now knows all her letters in cursive. We commute 4 hours a day, and the financial strain is significant, however, I know she would be failing in public school with the current supports available to her.

#16 - My 7 year old was recently diagnosed with dyslexia (through a private \$4000 assessment that we had to travel and spend several nights out of town to accommodate), and the schools are not able to support him properly. We are two months into the school year and we have not received any additional support from the school. We pay around \$500 a month in private tutoring, and having to miss work to accommodate the tutoring time. The stress this places the whole family under feels unnecessary, but it’s the only way to get my child what they need.



#17 - My child has had trouble reading since kindergarten, but the district kept telling us to "wait and see" if his reading issues would fix themselves. In grade 3 we managed to get a psych ed assessment, which showed that he had dyslexia and dysgraphia. This was followed by years of ineffective instruction (Reading Recovery). None of these approaches were based in the science of reading, and none of them worked. Now in high school, my child requires one-on-one support for completing his assignments. Unfortunately, the district has suddenly decided that EAs can no longer support kids with their academic work. I was told by the Principal of Student Support that the teachers need to implement UDL (universal design for learning) instead. But UDL does not help my child navigate his assignments. He is taking a full course load and his English and Socials classes both have almost 30 students with only one teacher. He needs extra support, but there is no additional support to help my child access the learning he is entitled to. Once again, we will have to hire a tutor to provide the educational support that the school should be providing. I believe that the district is using UDL instead of providing in person educational support as a way of saving money. They balance their budget at the expense of kids with learning disabilities.

#18 - Grade 1 - I have noticed something off, ask teachers, they told me it will pass, then COVID hit, my daughter had difficulty reading Grade 2 - teachers told she is fake reading and they don't know what to do about it Grade 3 - waiting for assessment, in the end paid ourselves. OT paid privately out of pocket. Grade 4 - teachers said no resources to help her to remediate only some accommodation can be provided. Basically, they have no resources to teacher her reading. Next year they said even less help will be available. I am as parent got traumatized by the system, lost hope and basically we are alone in this journey. Often ask myself, if school doesn't teach her to read, what's the point? Grade 5 - October 23rd and we are still not sure what kind of help she might get, but last year's message was - don't expect much. Feeling defeated and sad. I am not even talking emotional and mental health impacts on my daughter, quite devastating really.

#19 - We've obtained an official diagnosis, but it came at the price of \$4,000. We anticipate having to cover this cost once more in five years, as it's essential for our child to receive necessary accommodations in university. Regrettably, our journey to save for the initial assessment was prolonged due to the expenses of private counseling, necessitated by the trauma and anxiety stemming from our child being twice exceptional (gifted plus learning disabilities). Unfortunately, the public school system repeatedly advised us to lower our expectations for our child, citing that they weren't overly bright. On the flipside, they refused to provide any intervention or remediation because they weren't failing enough.



#20 - Our 8 year old daughter has struggled in school since kindergarten. We brought up our concerns with the classroom teacher every year but they were downplayed or ignored. I spoke to the support teacher (learning assistance teacher) when my daughter was in grade 1 about having a private psych ed done but she persuaded us to not do it as it would affect my daughter's self esteem. My daughter changed schools for grade 2 and we brought our concerns up again with the support teacher and she indicated that we could have a private psych ed done as our daughter would never get one at the school due to lack of resources. The support teacher also made it clear that even if she was diagnosed with dyslexia she would not be getting additional support at the school as the school would receive no additional funding for a dyslexia diagnosis. We did have a private psych ed done in the summer at a cost of \$3800 which diagnosed our daughter with severe dyslexia and recommended intensive OG tutoring. As we knew our daughter was not going to get the help she needed at her local public school we enrolled her in a private school to meet her educational needs at a great expense to our family.

#21 - It took Half a Million Dollars to educate my daughter who went to 9 different schools , 2 away from home , private tutors charge 65-95 an hour for kids with learning disabilities. Now 19 she is at a local University and we are having to advocate hard with the disability department of all people just to actually have the instructor honour her accommodations they have awarded. There is zero encouragement from the Educators in BC for students with learning differences to seek a career that they could actually shine and give back in as tge fixed mind set is the number one barrier. I heard the instructor for my child's Heath Care Aide class say to her 3 different times if you can't read and write then this is the career for you. Really ? This young adult wants to look after our seniors in a Care Home and the instructor equates dyslexia with not being able to read and write. It's mind blowing !

#22 - My daughter recently began university and we have been perplexed and extremely frustrated as to why dyslexics suddenly have access to technology grants (Appendix 8), supportive software (Read and Write, Natural Reader, etc), alternative format textbooks and more but do NOT have access to these aids in the K-12 system, we asked for read and write and were denied. We asked for alternative format textbook and did not receive that either. We also asked if she could audio record her science lessons and was told it's up to the teacher, he denied us. He also did not use any sort of textbook making homework an extreme struggle and requiring us to pay for tutoring because our dyslexic daughter had difficulty processing and remembering what was taught in class. Absolutely inexcusable to expect a student to struggle through k-12 when there are legitimate aids that could help reduce the impact of dyslexia. How demotivating, dehumanizing and shameful! All people (dyslexics included) deserve to be treated with kindness, respect and compassion despite their struggles and neurodiversities. Please, do better.



#23 - I have delivered four psychoeducational assessments paid for privately demonstrating a significant disability in reading and writing and have written my district asking who remediates dyslexia in the district and no one answers me. My child did not get an individualized program of reading instruction. The district said they have to help others who have no help. Tutoring is 2000 per month and my child doesn't have access to a teacher like other students receiving LST, they have access to people who do not have education degrees. It is incredibly difficult to find a writing tutor and we have had to source this from the USA increasing the costs. When I reach out to the school they tell me they have no idea where I can go to get my child help. This year there is no appropriate delivery of content in a digitized format my child now needs because my child never received early literacy intervention despite providing comprehensive psychoeducational evaluations explicitly detailing the need. It's almost November and my child is being scanned illegible documents as the districts idea of support. When I met with the District office to complain in person the director of instruction asked what my child wanted to become and I explained an engineer. They looked at me and said suggested my child take a trade instead. When asking for documents that can be read by a reader I am told it doesn't matter because it's not for grades. I inform them that it does matter because interacting with text in a meaningful that is tech friendly is remediative and to suggest supports are needed only when marks are applied is ableist and ignorant of the burden of struggle to the student.

#24 - My son now age 12 was diagnosed with dyslexia dysgraphia and dyscalculia ADHD and auditory processing issues at age 6 but his learning disabilities were recognized at kindergarten. I have been told multiple times by two different BC school districts there is no funding to offer supports to my son. Trying to advocate I'm considered a problem parent. I am disrespected and patronized in school meetings. We had to pull him from school in grade 4 as he was so emotionally distraught from his elementary school experiences he'd rather die than return to that school. We moved, changed districts, got counselling for him and still don't receive supports but prioritized his mental health before school every day . The government is failing these children and these are the students taking their lives because of it. Each September I struggle to get my son the same supports he had the year before and it typically takes until December or January for these to be implemented by the learning program. He has his own technologies pen reader chrome book rocking chair for support but he is denied to bring as it will identify him as different. He knows he's different. I have given up on the public school system in Victoria BC - wake up ! I can only hope he isn't homeless or dead by 16. The system is ancient and needs progress updating and technology for these kids.



#25 - As the parent of 4 children who have some of of all of these leaning disabilities, , dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, apraxia of speech and ADHD, I am very discouraged by our public education system in BC. We have paid for 2 private assessments to identify early, Advocated incredibly hard for an assessment for 1 child in grade 2 and the other child slipped through till grade 6. The School chosen remediation programs were ineffective and are not science based approaches. We have paid large amounts so our children could receive the supports with reading, writing, math and speech that they require. As a parent I have had to advocate tirelessly to ensure my children can access curriculum. We have met many excellent teachers and administrators on our journey, however, it seems that our current system of education meets the need of "standard" instead of the needs of every child as a baseline. I am excited by my districts change in supporting science based literacy approached now, this should be the only methods being used. Early identification for all children and science based approaches for all students across the province, not just wealthy families that can afford specialized schools. The current school model has created a discontent with my children, where they have been identified by their disabilities, except with no additional funding and limited support. BC can do better that this for children and families!

#26 - I have two children with dyslexia, neither have been able to learn to read in public school. I have paid privately for both to have psych Ed evals done, both children tested above 80% for intelligence, & yet still, they couldn't read. Each psych Ed eval cost us \$3400, the additional psychologist report diagnosing autism cost is \$2800, we are still waiting for a evaluation for adhd, which will be a additional cost. The school helps with nothing. They refused to provide testing, even though we requested it, claiming that our children didn't need it-both children got diagnosis's for everything we suspected-and those diagnosis accepted as correct by the school psychologist. My one child with both autism and dyslexia gets zero support. She is not allotted any EA time at all. District funding does not equal meaningful support for the child. The districts can spend that money where they choose, and they choose to not provide supports. My private tutoring per child is \$754.00 per month. I pay \$1508 per month just so my children can learn to read and write. That does not include speech therapy, even though one of my children is diagnosed with a speech disorder. The school provides zero SLP saying she's intelligible enough to deserve receiving SLP time from the overworked SLP school therapist. SLP costs \$160 per session, and my child received weekly sessions for two years until we simply couldn't afford it anymore. Making the choice to discontinue speech therapy was heartbreaking. Her peers struggle to understand what she says, yet she still receives nothing, sometimes I can't understand what she says, and yet still she receives nothing. Same child receives no counselling from school even though she has a diagnosis of anxiety. Parents are going deep into debt, trying to provide supports for their children. It shouldn't be like this, public schools need to teach reading in a way that is proven by science, that works for all children!!!!



#27 - I am a single parent who has x2 special needs learners who have funded designations with MOE. I have quit my job to be at home with my son who has never been supported at school appropriately. I was told her could attend secondary school for x1 hr a day and that I would have to get him there and then wait for him and then take him home. Our catchment school is about 45-60min each way on transit. My son can be very high functioning with the right supports and is actually gifted as well, but without being given access to the curriculum with proper supports he fails at in class learning. I have a daughter in grade 7 who is struggling specifically with literacy and math. Comprehension is so hard for her. She just sits in class lost all day with no supports and no one helping her. I am a trained OG tutor. I know how far my daughter is behind. I also had her literacy privately assessed in June of 2023 which highlighted some major learning deficits. I asked about an IEP this year and was denied and told we will work off of last years. When I asked about a psych Ed for her this year, I was told she was not eligible. When I enquired about the secondary literacy placement programs, I was told there were kids with higher needs than her. I was told that these kids needed the spots more and that she wasn't a candidate or good fit. I was told she was with in a grade of where she should be. Since the start of this school year she's been begging for help in class and being told she shouldn't need the support. She couldn't answer most of the questions on the FAS. She could literally only answer x1 math question. You cannot imagine how awful this has made her feel about herself. She feels she was setup to fail. She was made to believe that should be able to do it and that it shouldn't be that hard for her. This has put her into mental health crisis. She's not eating. She feels horribly about herself. She saw all of her classmates were able to understand questions and provide answers, while she didn't get any of the material. My daughter has always loved school despite her learning difficulties that has always been challenging for her. If she is supported then she loves being at school learning with her friends. She is so social. She has always loved going to school. Now she doesn't even want to hang out with friends or go out anymore. She doesn't want to do dance or music which she loves. No more beading or drawing. She is now taking about dropping out of highschool before it's even began. She says "what the point when I already know I'm going to fail". Most of this negativity has transpired from September through October of 2023. In less than x2 months my daughter confidence has been shattered, due to lack of support at school or any acknowledgment of her legitimate extra learning needs and concerns

#28- My son is in Grade 10 this year, in our district also his first year in high school. He has both dyslexia and dysgraphia. I received the draft copy his IEP and immediately felt sad and discouraged for him and angry at our education system. The only goal listed was that he will consistently self advocate for curriculum and environmental adaptations and suggested for him to do this is by writing a letter to his teachers.



#29 - My daughter is now, a young adult who works around her severe dyslexia. She ranks in the bottom 2% in reading skills compared to her contemporaries. Despite attending eight different schools and receiving guidance from numerous tutors and remedial programs, her reading difficulties persist. We felt compelled to enroll her in private schools, though they didn't fully address all her needs. We had to seek additional services alongside private education. Both private and public institutions treated us similarly and unfairly when we requested further remediation or introduced our own resources. We've invested over \$600,000 and sacrificed my wife's income to accommodate my daughter's educational needs. The challenges and advocacy related to her dyslexia extend into her higher education and professional life. We, as a family, earnestly hope that the BC government will genuinely recognize severe dyslexia, allocate funding, and provide resources to enable these gifted individuals to realize their full potential.

#30 - Our daughter in grade 6 has severe dyslexia, she was diagnosed in grade 3. She was attending a one hour, four day per week intervention through the school district but it was sporadic and not one on one. We started paying privately for one on one tutoring. She had an IEP but it was very minimal due to the fact that the school could not fulfill the accommodations that we felt she needed. We felt that her time in public school was not a good use of her learning time and as a result, we made the hard decision to home school her this year. We are teaching her in a style where she can learn and she is thriving. She is able to attend her reading tutoring during the day when she is fresh and ready to learn. This was a big sacrifice for our family with a decrease in income. Our public school system needs to be able to support all children despite their unique learning needs.

#31 - The district in which my now 16 year old son attends, has zero remedial reading programs. Zero help for students with dyslexia, and little understanding of how to help them succeed. My husband and I couldn't afford to send him to private school, but felt we had no choice but to send him to Orton Gillingham tutoring which we spent near \$50,000 over the years in which he attended. Though it was money well spent, we realize our retirement plans will be put off until we're both well into our late 60's. Something has to be done to help these kids!



#32 - My daughter had always fought me on reading homework. She started to fall behind in grade 2 and couldn't seem to catch up. She was listening and trying so we got a tutor one year. She is in grade 6 now, was diagnosed with dyslexia through a private firm in grade 5 otherwise we would have waited years. Through her diagnosis we got an IEP but in public school she wasn't getting help. They were working on it but I felt we should explore other options. We did a trial day at a school for dyslexic kids. She was so impressed that she wanted to change schools immediately. She was struggling in public school and constantly asking questions but feeling defeated. Also dealing with constant social problems. At the new school with smaller classes and the warm accepting atmosphere, she is able to thrive. They do one on one tutoring daily as well. For our family we had to make sacrifices because private school comes at a cost of at least \$22,000.00. I've applied for grants and applied for disability services to try to get some help but we are very behind financially. We don't go on family vacations, we skim down on extracurricular activities. It is worth every penny but families shouldn't have to do this for their child to be educated. I'm very grateful that we can manage and I really feel for families that don't have this option. I believe that this school will make the difference she will need to confidently carry on to post secondary school. My wish is that ALL schools could provide this kind of atmosphere, curriculum and support.

#33 - My 9 year old daughter was recently diagnosed with adhd, anxiety and suspected undiagnosed learning difference. She has been struggling in school since she started elementary school. She is unable to read or write. I have been voicing my concerns to the school since grade 1. No one took me seriously. I was told she will eventually get it or all covid kids are behind. She has continued to fall behind her peers in academics. This year my daughter's anxiety became so severe in regards to school, that it was making her physically ill. I pursued the school via the principal and finally action started to be taken. Her teacher confirmed the struggles she is having academically and emotionally. Unfortunately the school has chosen not to have a psychoeducational assessment performed, even though her psychiatrist and paediatrician have both written reports to the school insisting that a psychoeducational assessment needs to be done because she shows clear signs that she has a severe undiagnosed learning difference. We are now pursuing private assessment which is a costly endeavour, but necessary and not always an option for all families due to high cost. I've already been warned by numerous psychologists that even with a diagnosis we will most likely have to pursue private supports for our daughter, due to the lack of supports in the school. My questions and emails have gone unanswered by our school. They have not acknowledged medical reports given to them and they have not done anything to enact any of the supports my daughter's care team has suggested. I feel very let down by the institution. We put our trust in our educators to look out for the well being of our children and help them achieve academic success. I'm now beginning to see the bureaucracy within the institution and how it does not provide students the supports they need / access to learn. As a parent it is also incredibly complicated system to navigate and advocate for your child.



#**34** - My dyslexic child is 8, a native English speaker, attending French immersion. Never was literacy or math struggles or ADHD like symptoms brought up by school staff. We pursued a private psychoeducational assessment in grade 2 (\$3300). I do not see the global accommodations in his current IEP being implemented by the teacher. We pay for private, one-on-one OG tutoring twice per week (\$450/month).

#**35** - Our son has been on the district waiting list for a psych ed for a few years now. The school told us at one point that we should seek private because they only do a few a year and he isn't considered "urgent" or "a behaviour case". Unfortunately, we're 99% sure he is Dyslexic (we already have ADHD, Autism, Language processing, speech language and DCD/Dyspraxia) and can't afford an outside psych ed. All the signs are there. When we had our recent IEP meeting, I wanted to be proactive and asked our IST what strategies could be put in place to help our son. She said that they didn't want to do anything because he hasn't been officially diagnosed and don't want to do the wrong thing. I did email the school back and told them: /Start Thanks for the IEP meeting last week, my wife and I really appreciate your time. We had some time to think about things, specifically about the dyslexia piece and we can't wait for an appointment date at some point in the future with Sunnyhill and a psych ed, we will not take the waiting to fail model approach. At worst, it gives him reading strategies. At best, it improves his reading. He wins and every little bit helps. So whatever resources can be used for him, let's have that discussion. I'm looking up decodable books right now and seeing if I can get some success with that and build up some reading skills (I'm not trained obviously). /End This whole journey for us and our son has been extremely frustrating. We are fortunate to have wonderful teachers, but kids need help, our son needs help. My wife and I certainly are not qualified to teach these things but I guess we're going to learn.

#**36** - My child received public speech therapy prior to starting kindergarten. It was very clear his phonemic understanding was behind. This should have been a signal. He struggled in kindergarten and in grade one. He was told to look at the pictures, which took a lot of work to undo 2 years of incorrect instruction, because he was looking all over the pages for "clues" rather than understanding the actual process to reading.

37 - I believe my son is dyslexic. He is in grade 5 and has struggled with reading and writing since he started school. He gets reading support at school a few times a week but I think he needs more and I don't know where to start. We live in a smaller town, far from the Lower Mainland and don't have access to a lot of resources here. We looked into getting a Psychoeducational Assessment but that is out of reach for us financially and has left me feeling at a loss for how best to help him succeed. I really want my son to feel confident and not fall further behind in school which will become harder and harder the older he gets.



#38 - We decided to send our daughter to private school for grade 3. The final straw in deciding to send her is that she said "What's wrong with my Brain, why do I have to go to tutoring all the time?"

We knew when she was 3 she had dyslexia and we also knew that she was very bright. The school principal discouraged us at every chance to get her tested but we did by grade 2. The private psycho educational assessment recommended only a couple of things. Orton Gillingham Tutoring, that our daughter needed an IEP and as much reading intervention as possible. They also recommended the learning disability association as a resource. We couldn't get the IEP at school, the principal said our daughter was way better off than most kids. The Orton Gillingham was expensive and was ok...but did not bring up our daughter's reading levels (she is still in the 2nd % of reading ability), the learning disabilities association really didn't have the resources needed for severe dyslexia and I don't really think she ever got the reading remediation she deserved from the private school. The private school did give her more confidence because she was with other students that struggled with the same issues. It was also easier to get the accommodations she needed, compared to my son who is also dyslexic and went through the public system.

We paid thousands of dollars to help our daughter and it was really hard to get the DTC, the psychologist would not help us and we got denied on our first application because of the psychologist.

People with dyslexia in BC need to have better access to resources, diagnosis and early intervention.

#39 - My 14 year old daughter in grade has severe school anxiety. It started in kindergarten when she(very socially aware) realized she didn't understand what the other kids were doing. By grade 2 she was worried she was "too stupid"to pass grade 3. I was told to wait for the school assessment probably in grade 4-5, because she would probably catch up. That is when I paid for our first assessment \$3000 (diagnosed with dyslexia and red flagged for ADHD)and started tutoring for her. \$6000 a year at the time. She continued tutoring and did improve however school her school anxiety continued to worsen. She received no extra help for math and pull out were far and few between and she was only handed an iPad for that time for literacy. I pulled her out and home schooled her for grade 6. With 5 tutoring sessions a week in math and literacy. She is very social and missed being with peers so she returned to public school for grade 7. We were advised to have her re assessed for high school on our dollar. This time it cost \$3500. Grade 8 went as poorly as grade 8 could possibly go. Suicidal thoughts, skipping, vaping. All behavior dealing with the fact that her IEP was not being honored at all in her year of high school. She didn't have an LSP block or anything. I had to take it to the district. We are still paying for therapy at \$700 a month to deal with school trauma.



#40 - This story is by a person over 50 who is being made by WCB to go back to school, he has no dyslexia diagnosis and has no where to go to get a diagnosis or financial help

When I was a little boy, my interest is just helping my dad and my mom. I had to go to school in grade one and was so scared that my mom left me. I have to run after her. My teacher was behind me. and will bring me back to school and will put me to sit in front of the class because she thought I would run again. She didn't realize that I ran because I was scared. I remembered being scared that whole day. Everything seems like a blur. I couldn't understand how to do anything and couldn't focus at all. I just want to go home I was very young and then moving forward into the years grade one I failed, so I had to redo it and back to grade one again, and I felt so bad because all my friends that I had made went ahead to grade 2. Then later they decided to put me in grade 2, and partly through grade 2 they decided to put me in a school that was very far away for kids to have trouble learning. They tried to teach me in different ways so but still couldn't grasp it. And they taught me some hands on ways to help me learn like some art, making pottery, making different things making stick houses. It was not easy all through my elementary had to take a school bus so far away from my family town and years later high school same thing big high school to small classrooms different parts of the school for people like me. That was shame. You still didn't understand I tried, and I tried doing it through it learning, reading more on my own by looking at the signs what they meant outside while driving on the school bus but it was too hard so start working at helper in a construction site I could learn the trade so I started working construction sites doing the labour work at my very young age. I got a job at a mattress factory for a little while and then last back into the construction for different construction companies, then I came to Vancouver British Columbia when I was 21. I was a helper working with Drywall. It was hard but it kept me on moving through then, I had an opportunity to go back to school at VCC. I want to try to learn how to write and read English and learn more and understand math it was 1999, they gave me an award for perseverance, because even though I didn't move ahead, I kept on going every day, and never gave up. I became a journeyman and I loved my job because I'm making a descent income. My job is gratifying. Then accident happened and no idea at my age of 53. It was a bad accident at work and it's almost 4 years ago where my life completely changed. I was unable to work because of my injuries at work. My shoulder my foot and my back has been damaged badly so WCB decided to put me back to school to take a course to become a dispatcher, I'm in the beginning of it struggling so hard for getting this course to become a dispatcher. And my Counsellor asked me to take some tests online to see if I had dyslexia, out of a test of 10 questions. If you answered seven of them right word and likely had dyslexia I answered all 10 questions right that I had dyslexia so it said to go talk to a doctor and see a psychiatrist to get diagnose doctor told me it's like \$5000 to see a psychologist so I start looking around to see if there's an option For someone or someplace that would help me to do that. Because I can't afford to pay that much to get diagnose even though it's very important. My doctor wrote to WCB telling them that I needed assessment. They never answered me but they told me that my online teacher can teach me. They don't understand that I have a difficulty of learning and it causes me even more



stress. What I felt is they don't want to pay me if I don't go to school and they want me to give up so they don't have to pay me seems like. But I have to survive and my family. It's very frustrating and depressing and makes me feel stupid that I have to go through all this again. All my appointments are screwed up now, like my physiotherapist, my doctors appointments, and my counselling. I'm writing this by the help of my wife but my wife is not there all the time as she has to work. I can also get a help by talking to Siri into my writing and spelling and the words are not always right. And then I lose my train of thoughts. Today is early Monday at 3:30am morning, woke up with anxiety and pain. I just wish I had somebody to help and listen to my story and help me for my battle to WCB. I don't like what I'm going through because I know that I'm a hard worker but I have no choice because I'm unable to do what I used to do before.

Thank you for taking the time reading my story and really appreciate your time and your help.

41 - My child is in fourth year University and will be graduating this December. She was accepted to University with a language exemption due to having a language based learning disability, Dyslexia. We then found out this June that she did not have enough credits to graduate due to the language exemption, which was not correctly documented by the University upon her acceptance. Due to the language exemption not properly being documented she did not have the correct accommodations and was going to be forced to either take an additional language or 6 credits of substitute classes. The school met us with hostility and little compassion over this matter and they chose not to see our side. My daughter was made to feel small and as if she was a student without a disability. It was not until mid September, part way through the school year, that my daughter would receive her language accommodation. What this looked like is the school approving courses my daughter had taken towards her language credit and making her take a course this semester that they deemed appropriate. The disability department failed to represent my child and take responsibility for the lack of communication, and they in tern put the blame on my daughter. This is a matter that could have been avoided if the Disability Department was looking out for their students and initiating correct communication.

#**42** - We recently moved so we sent our children to new schools. We were excited about the fresh start and new opportunities. I'm only going to focus on the issues about my daughter in this story, who has been diagnosed with specific learning disorders, including dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder.

Three months into the new school year we finally realized that something was amiss. Our daughter didn't have access to her Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Which provided a crucial support system she had depended on in her previous school and my understanding was that she was entitled to it. We were transparent about our child's learning challenges and mental well-being, hoping for a smooth transition, and had written many emails in correspondence with the



district months before her arrival to the new school.

Previously, our daughter had been exempt from 2nd language classes based on the recommendations of her psychologist, and given the severity of her learning disabilities. However, the new school had different plans. Our daughter was unexpectedly placed in a French class, which is a challenging situation for her, both emotionally and academically.

We were concerned about the missing IEP, so we approached the school administrators for answers. To our dismay, we were told that some students in the class faced more significant challenges, and our situation shouldn't be a cause for worry.

The school claimed to use Universal Design for Learning, and offering the same support to all students, including those with learning disabilities, effectively suggesting that students like our daughter don't need IEPs.

It is deflating to not get the resources that your child needs and to have to make up for the difference on our own time and money!

#43 - My son is an only child, and he is currently 21 years old. He has been diagnosed with a language-based learning disability and ADD. About a year ago, when he was 20, he tried to self-harm by cutting himself due to his mental health struggles and low self-esteem.

When he was in grade one, he would hide under the desk because he was so overwhelmed by what the teacher was saying and found it so difficult to understand. I was called into the school and told that he was a "behaviour problem" because he refused to sit at his desk like all the other kids and he frequently just sat under his desk and covered his head.

Things went from bad to worse, and he would often be restrained during school. He was overwhelmed with people (teachers and staff) trying to talk to him, and he could not process all the information. He just couldn't understand all the words that were coming at him from all directions, including his parents.

When he was in Grade 2, I paid for a psychologist to do a psychological education assessment, and it was determined that he had a language-based learning disability and ADD. Even with this diagnosis, the school district fought against giving him the support he needed, and they refused to give him the "Q" learning designation. Eventually, I had to raise my concerns up to the Superintendent, and finally, he received the designation and the IEP that he needed.

Over the years, my son still struggled in school even with an IEP. We were told by a teacher in middle school that he didn't think ADD was real and would refuse to follow the IEP. When our son graduated in 2020, we were so thrilled and proud. It was such an accomplishment for a child that had so many obstacles in front of him.

Now I see an adult that struggles with post-secondary education. He has little self-confidence when it comes to his abilities to complete any type of program, even when it's something he is interested in. He does not want to ask for assistance even though we updated his assessment (and the conclusion was the same – he has a language-based learning disability and ADD). I think



he is embarrassed for other peers to know that he struggles.

.I often wonder that if he had a diagnosis and support early on, whether this would have changed his confidence level as an adult. Because of the traumatic events in his early education years, I think that he will always feel like he is different (which he is not since most kids have difficulties with the school system as it exists now).

We know two other families (friends of ours) each with a child around the same age as our son, also with diagnosed learning disabilities. Both families decided to remove their child from the public school system to get the help they needed. Both kids are now thriving in post-secondary education.

My husband and I regret not making the same choice.I think that early testing and intervention would have made a significant difference in his life. I wish I'd known then what I do now – I feel like I would have fought harder in the beginning.

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