Inclusive Education in Alberta Classrooms and Schools

The Alberta Teachers' Association

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Contents

Preface

Inclusion is founded on beliefs, values and ethos that promote equitable opportunities for all learners in Alberta, and on approaches that ensure, to the greatest degree possible, that the full potential of every student is realized. The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes inclusion as a broad and complex construct, and therefore it is critical that collaborative planning take place at the provincial, jurisdiction and school levels to build understanding and support for the vision of inclusive education and to create short-, medium- and long-term implementation plans to guide this important work.

In May 2013, the Annual Representative Assembly of the Alberta Teachers' Association established the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools to facilitate a comprehensive overview of the state of inclusive education in Alberta classrooms and schools. The work of the panel and the research conducted in support of its mission inspired much discussion within the education system. The report of the Blue Ribbon Panel set out 38 recommendations, engaging various stakeholders with the objective of improving the delivery and realization of inclusive education. Since the release of this report, however, teachers' ability to respond to the challenge to create truly inclusive learning opportunities has suffered as demands imposed upon them have continued to increase, even as the time available for preparation and collaboration has diminished, classroom complexity escalated and class sizes increased.

After the passage of five years, in 2018, the Association's Annual Representative Assembly called for the original report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools to be revisited. The associated research activities have guided the development of Association resources supporting the implementation of the Teaching Quality Standard and Leadership Quality Standard related to inclusive education. A new resource series, Common Threads for Inclusive Education, was also created to assist teachers in cultivating a common understanding of inclusive education and to provide entry points for further learning in a variety of related areas, including professional growth, emotional and mental health, learning disabilities, and parent collaboration, among others.

The Association concurs with the characterization by Alberta Education of inclusive education as "a value-based approach to accepting responsibility for all students" (www.alberta.ca/inclusive-education.aspx#toc-0). Teachers go further in also recognizing that inclusive education is fundamentally different from earlier conceptions of special education in that it implies that all students, not just those with identified exceptionalities, will have equitable opportunities to be included within an inclusive learning environment. The goal of inclusive education is to improve achievement across all domains while instilling a sense of belonging that will help students to succeed within the larger community. The Association embraces the ideals of inclusion while

recognizing that the individual needs of students with exceptionalities must be appropriately supported in the most enabling environments, as determined by teachers in consultation with other professionals. Absent such support, inclusion becomes a pretext and excuse for abandonment.

Dennis Theobald
Executive Secretary

Key Findings from Alberta Teachers on the State of Inclusive Education in Classrooms and Schools

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), in collaboration with researchers from the University of Alberta, conducted a study to better understand the state of inclusive education in Alberta classrooms and schools. Data was collected from teachers and administrators in Alberta classrooms and schools to provide an update to previous data collected in 2014.

Increased sense of belonging and community for all

Many teachers feel that inclusive classrooms and schools increase acceptance of diversity, empathy and understanding for all students. Students learn the value of all individuals, acknowledging and respecting diverse learning needs within inclusive learning environments.

Kids all feel that they have a place to belong with their peers.

Growth of peer relationships for students who may not have had that opportunity.

Inclusion, when supported by class size and supports, can be very successful and rewarding.

Need for adequate funding and resources to meet students' diverse learning needs

Many teachers indicated that there are positive aspects to inclusive education; however, sufficient funding and resources are needed to make sure that inclusive classrooms and schools succeed. The diversity of students' learning needs, large class sizes, and lack of job-embedded planning time and specialized training are sources of challenge in inclusive education.

[I am] being made to feel like it is solely my responsibility to accommodate students with diverse learning needs and that it is my fault if they are not succeeding.

Increasing class size and classroom complexity continues

A majority of teachers feel dissatisfied with their classroom composition and the continuum of supports and services offered outside and within the school.

With so many students in one classroom it is difficult to meet everyone's needs at once.

There is not enough time to provide the attention that all students need.

4

More self-selected professional development and high quality inservicing opportunities

Teachers indicated most strongly that additional professional development is required to support students in the areas of mental health and complex needs. Additional priorities for professional development include

- differentiated instruction and assessment,

- trauma-informed care,

- English language learners, and

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

Require more time for collaborating and time required to implement supports needed for students

Many teachers indicated dissatisfaction with the opportunities for time to meet or collaborate with available supports and services within the school day.

Methodology and Methods

The Alberta Teachers' Association, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Alberta, conducted a study to better understand the state of inclusive education in Alberta classrooms and schools. Data was collected from teachers and administrators in Alberta classrooms and schools to provide an update to previous data collected in 2014. The information gathered will be used to help guide and inform the Association on supports, services and resources required for implementation and sustainability of inclusive education.

This study used a mixed-methods research approach to capture the experiences of Alberta teachers and administrators across the province.

1. An online survey took place during the fall of 2019, in which participants were randomly selected from a sampling of the active ATA membership (n=180).

2. Six focus groups, involving 48 people, took place in person during the spring of 2019 (four in-person focus groups) and the fall of 2019 (two in-person focus groups). Focus groups included members from across the province. Five of the six focus groups were conducted in English and one in French. Notes from the French-language focus group were translated into English for the analysis.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and teachers were free to skip questions or withdraw at any time until they clicked the submit button. The survey comprised a number of scale questions, in addition to several qualitative questions intended to gather more in-depth comments from respondents. Participation in the interviews and focus groups was also voluntary.

Researchers from the University of Alberta collected and analyzed the data. Descriptive statistics for all scale questions were computed. Additionally, a thematic qualitative analysis was performed on open-ended responses. Where appropriate, comparisons between previous research on inclusion, the *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools* (ATA 2014) and the results from this study were conducted.

LIMITATIONS

While these findings may be helpful in setting general directions and goals, some of the specific comments may not be applicable in other contexts. The size of the survey sample was adequate for identifying common themes and key findings. The data from 2019 is based on a smaller sample than the data from 2014; one of the challenges this poses is that the potential for error from the 2019 data is higher than in 2014 (that is, there is less certainty about the results). Given those limitation, however, the data from the survey and the focus groups complemented one another.

Survey Results

CLASS SIZE AND COMPOSITION

Participants were asked to provide an estimate of the overall number of students that they teach in a year. The average number of students that teachers taught over the course of a year was 77. Of these students, participants provided estimates of the number of students with various exceptionalities that they teach in a year. Overall, the most frequent student category identified was students with individualized program plans (IPPs) or instructional support plans (ISPs). IPPs/ISPs are required for all students on an adapted or modified program. On average, the number of students that teachers have with IPPs or ISPs was 43. The next highest category was English language learner (ELL) students, with teachers having, on average, 20 ELL students. See Figure 1 for a complete list of the estimated number of exceptionalities.

Figure 1. Student Exceptionalities
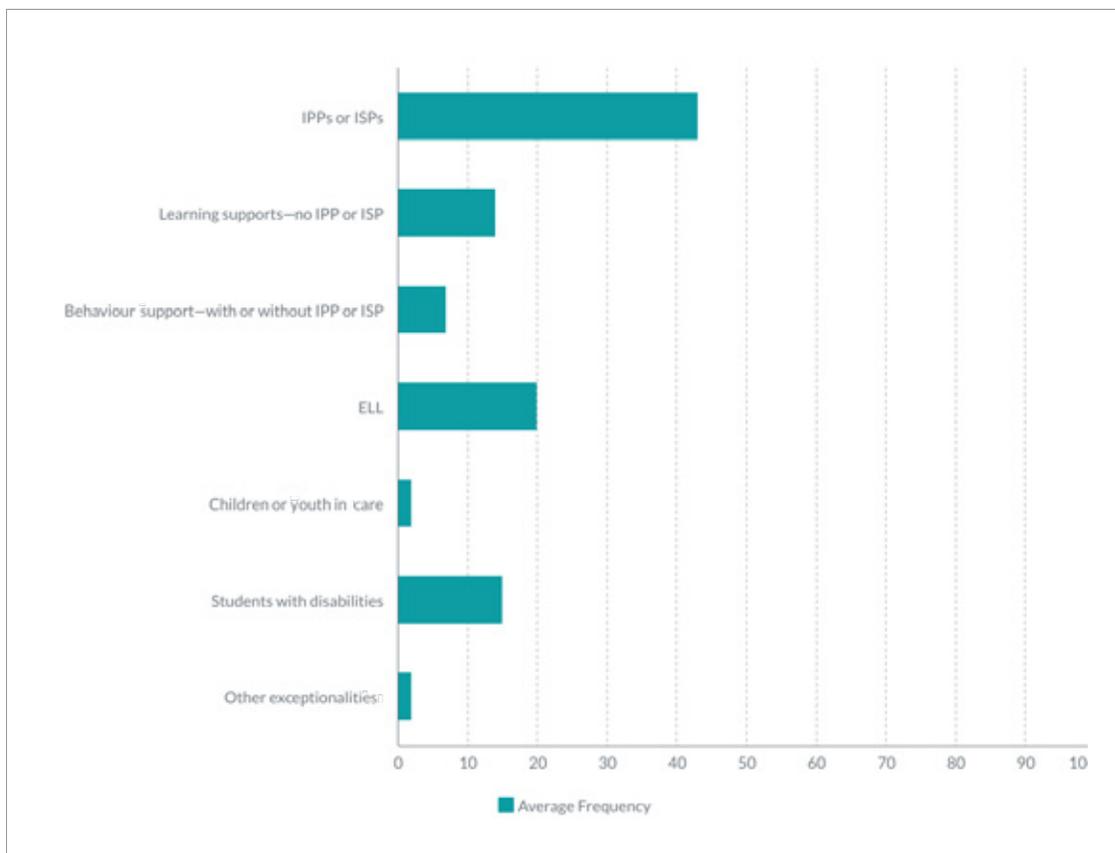
Individualized program plans (IPPs)/instructional support plans (ISPs) are required for all students who are on an adapted or modified program. "'Adapted programming' means programming that retains the learning outcomes of the program of studies and in which adjustments to the instructional process are provided to address the special education needs of the student. 'Modified programming' means programming in which the learning outcomes are significantly different from the provincial curriculum and are specifically selected to meet the student's special education needs" (Alberta Education 2007). More information is available at www.alberta.ca/instructional-supports.aspx.

Estimates of student exceptionalities were broken down by grade category (Grades 1–6, Grades 7–9 and Grades 10–12). When broken down by grade category, the proportions of student exceptionalities change. See Figures 2, 3 and 4 to see the numbers of each student exception by grade category.

Figure 2. Student Exceptionalities—Grades 1–6
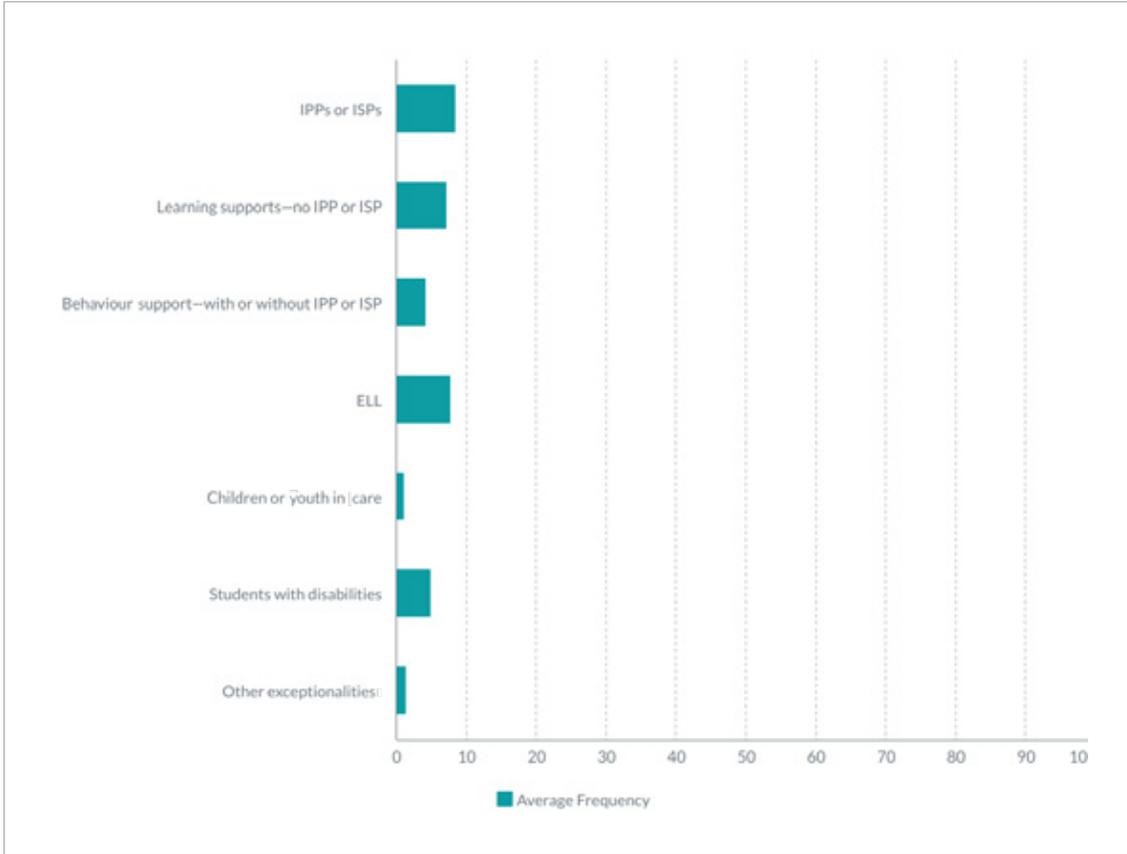
Figure 3. Student Exceptionalities—Grades 7–9
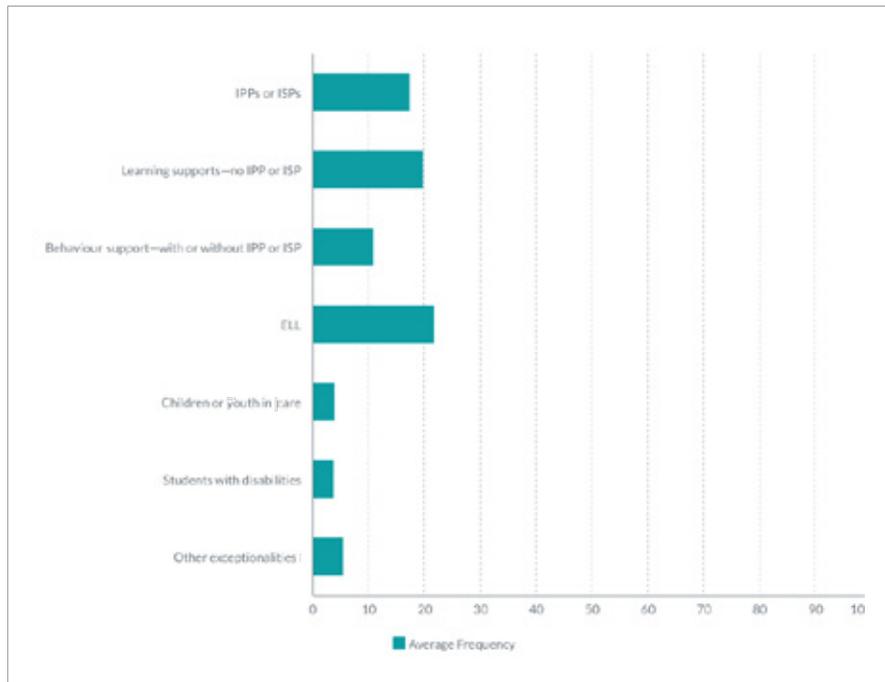
Figure 4. Student Exceptionalities—Grades 10–12
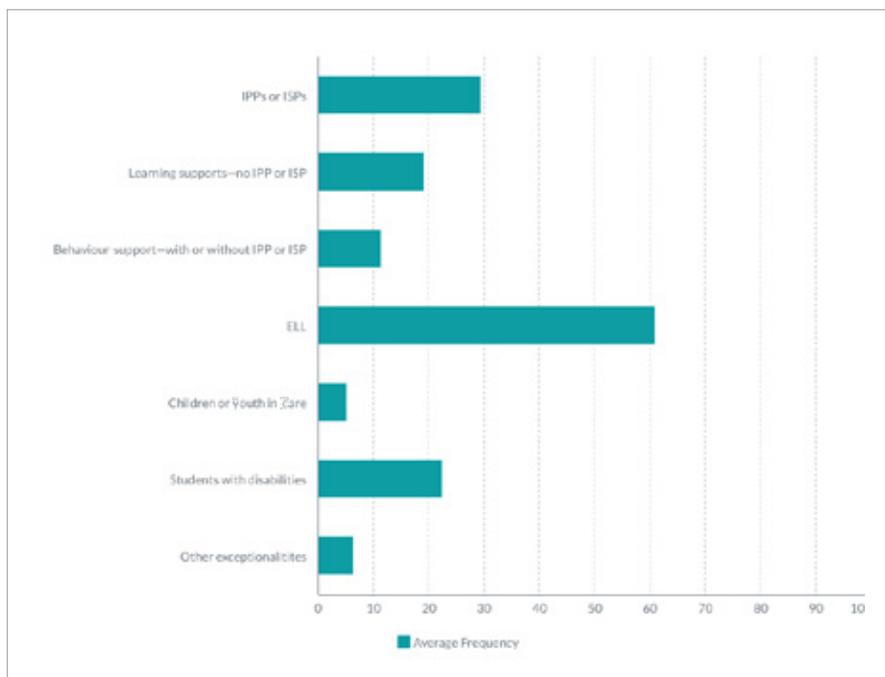
TEACHER SATISFACTION WITH CLASSROOM CHARACTERISTICS

Teachers were asked to indicate their satisfaction with classroom size and composition. Overall, teachers were dissatisfied with all aspects of classroom composition and supports. They were least satisfied with the continuum of supports and services offered outside the school and with school composition (See Figure 5 for a complete breakdown of teacher satisfaction). Teacher satisfaction was examined by school location to see whether there were any differences in satisfaction. After analyzing these differences, the only difference was that dissatisfaction was much greater in large urban schools (68 per cent dissatisfied) compared with small urban/suburban schools (50 per cent dissatisfied) and rural schools (30 per cent dissatisfied).

Figure 5. Satisfaction with Classroom Composition
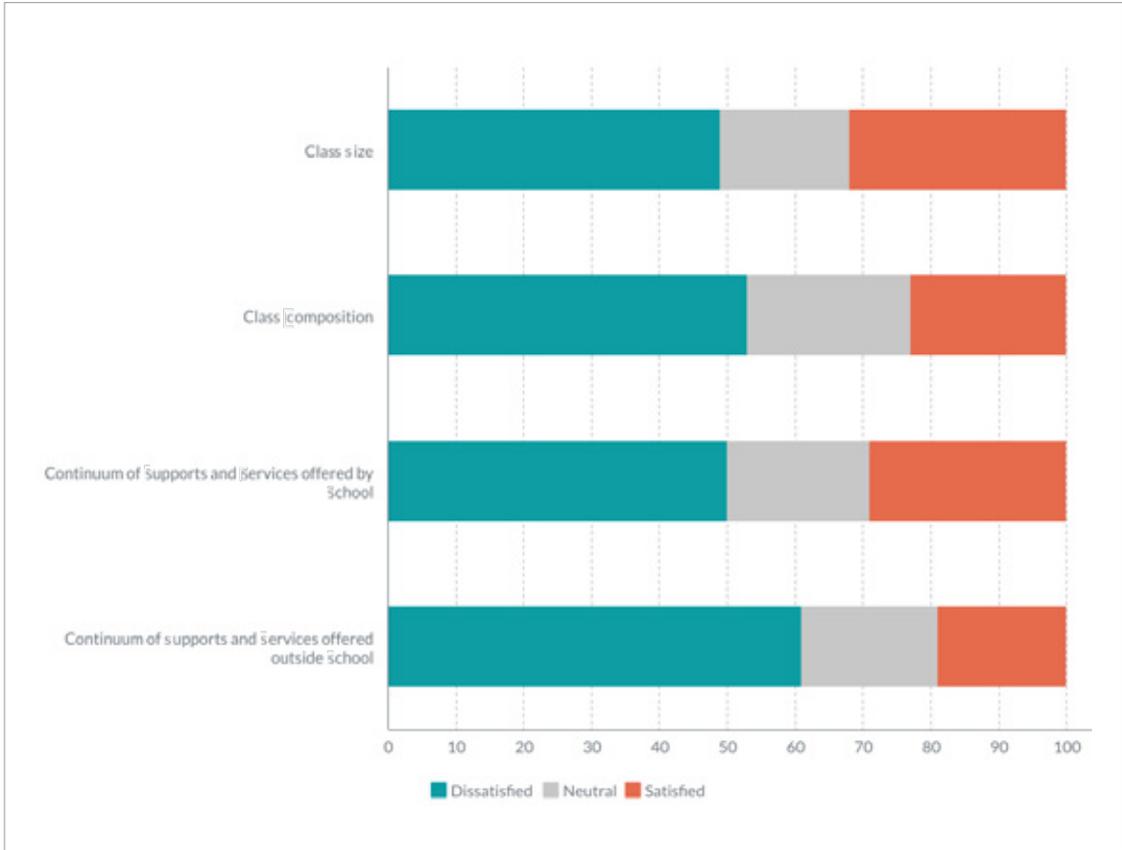
Data from 2014 and 2019 were compared to determine whether there have been changes in class size, class composition and teacher satisfaction. Class size has gone up, as has the number of children with IPPs/ISPs. There were no other changes between 2014 and 2019 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Changes Between 2014 and 2019
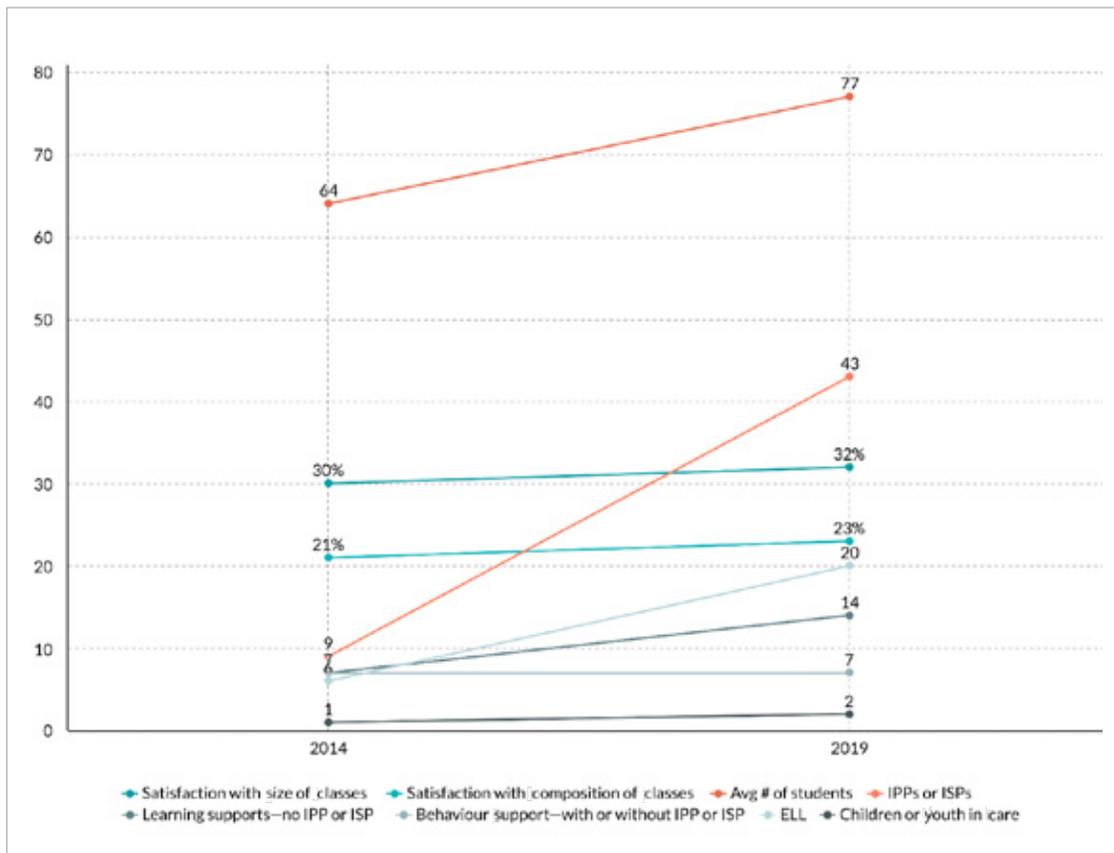
TEACHER PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Satisfaction with teacher preparation and professional development is mixed: 18 per cent are satisfied with opportunities for time to meet or collaborate with available supports and services within the school day, 25 per cent are satisfied with opportunities for inservice or training provided by the jurisdiction, and 38 per cent are satisfied with opportunities for self-directed professional development (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Satisfaction with Teacher Preparation and Professional Development
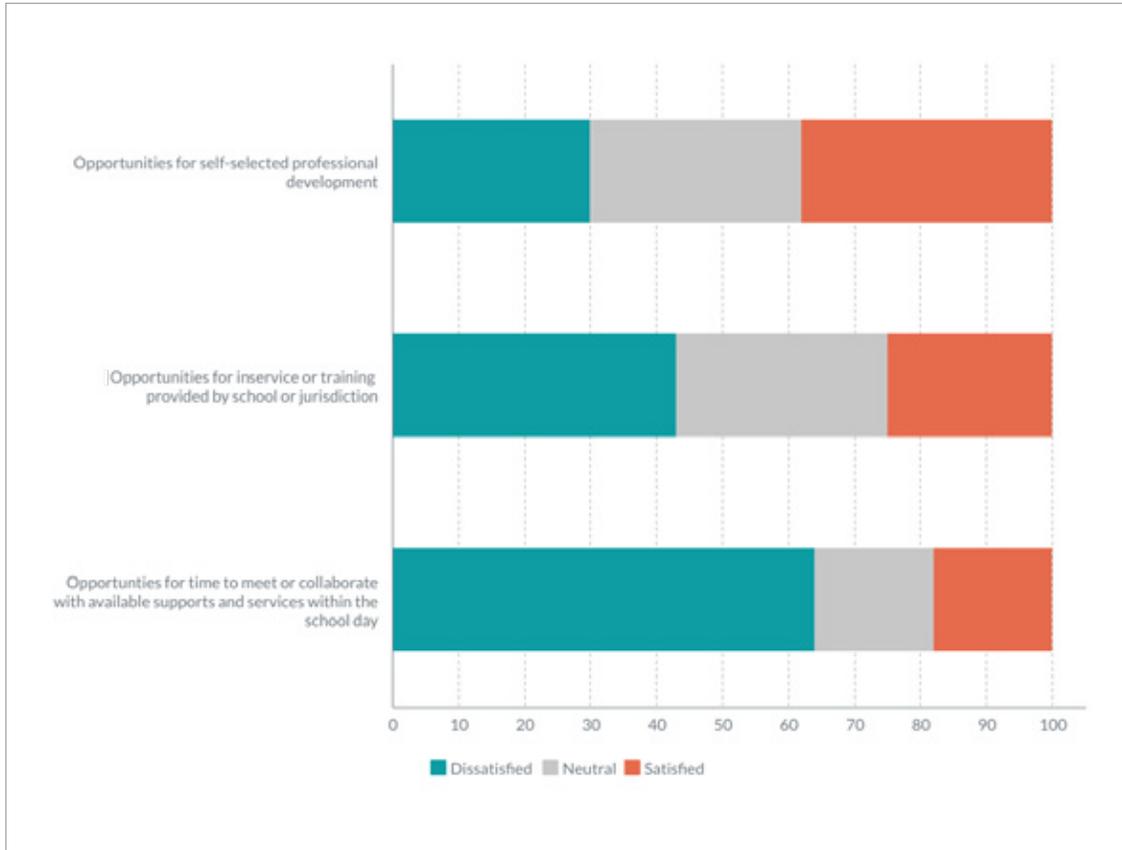
Participants were asked whether they agreed that additional professional development was needed in several areas. Participants agreed most strongly that they needed more time and that they need more professional development regarding students with mental health needs and students with complex needs. Figure 8 shows the complete list of teacher preparation and professional development needs that participants were asked about.

Figure 8. Additional Teacher Preparation and Professional Development
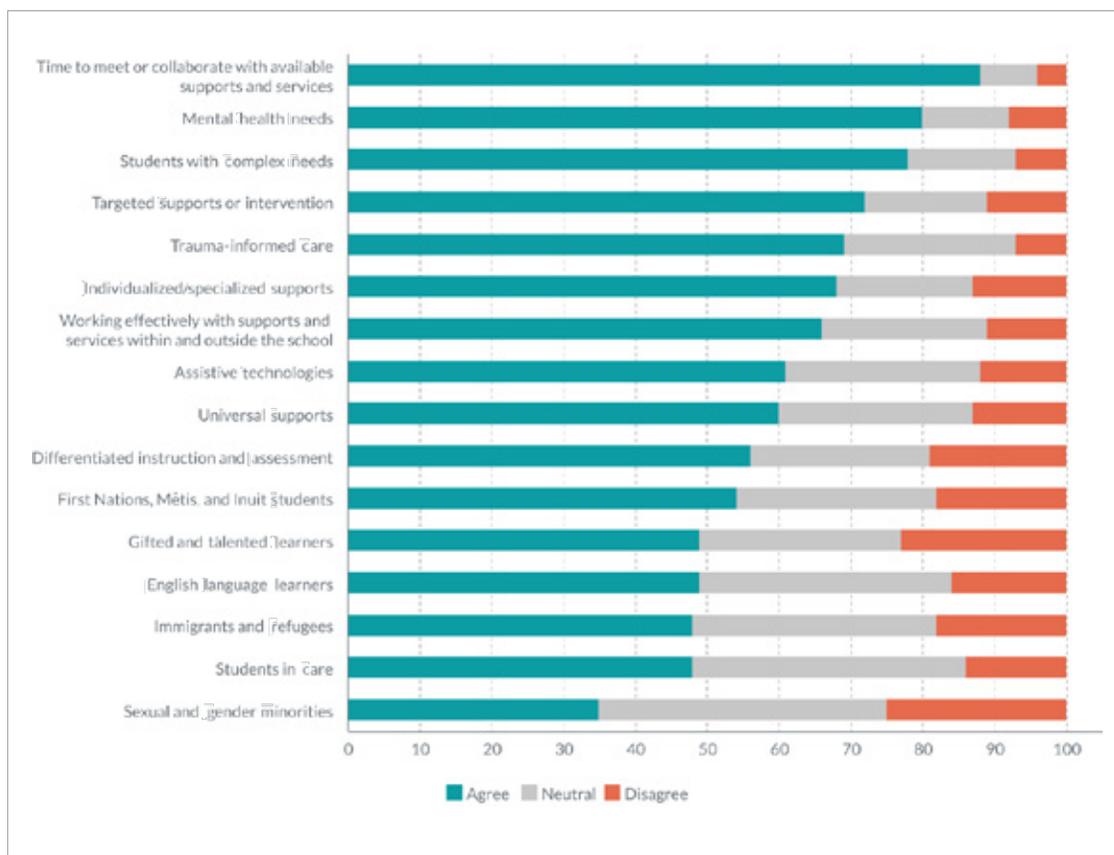
When asked to rank, in order of importance, their professional development needs, participants indicated that additional professional development regarding students with complex needs and students with mental health needs were the most needed (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Professional Development Priorities
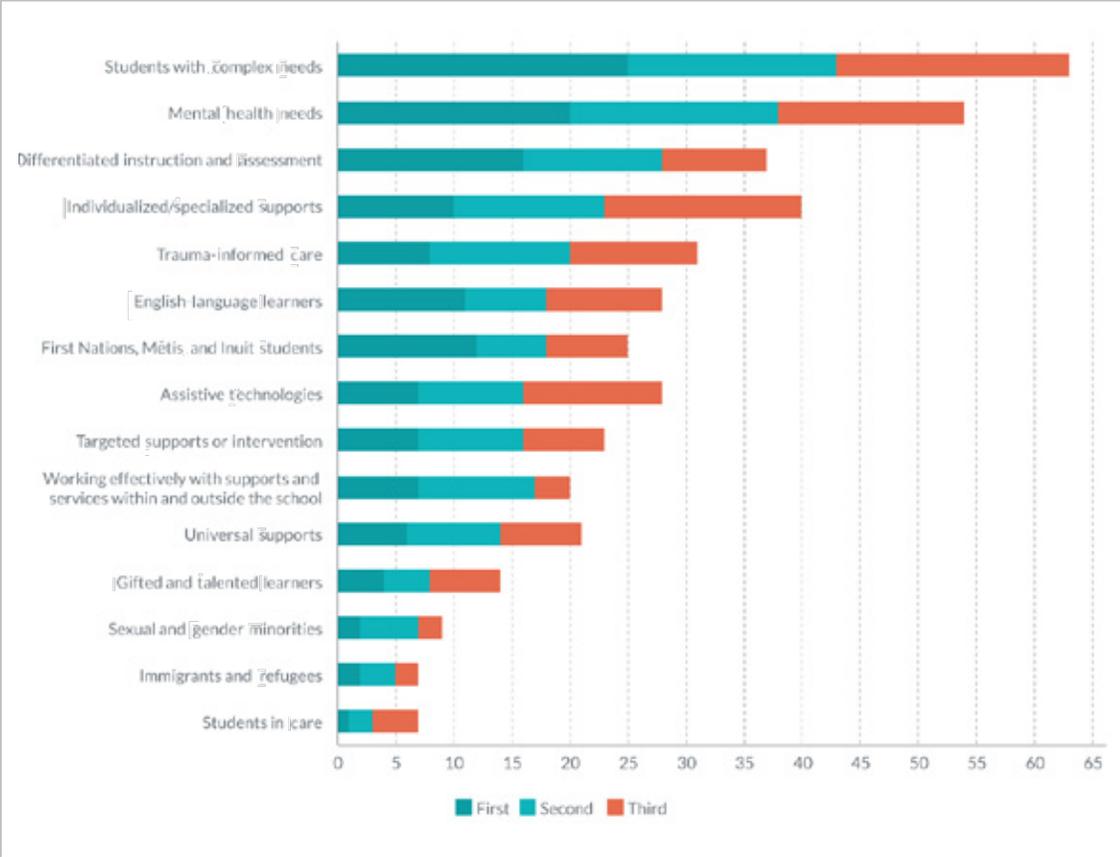
While a significant number of participants (39 per cent) indicate that they are satisfied with access to assistive technology and with access to professional supports from inside their school (37 per cent), satisfaction decreases when asked about several other types of supports. Some of the lowest satisfaction levels are in regard to access to community supports (15 per cent), support through a district-level inclusive education resource person (17 per cent), the size of their classes (13 per cent), and access to embedded preparation time to work on IPPs and/or ISPs (11 per cent) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Satisfaction with Access to Supports and Resources
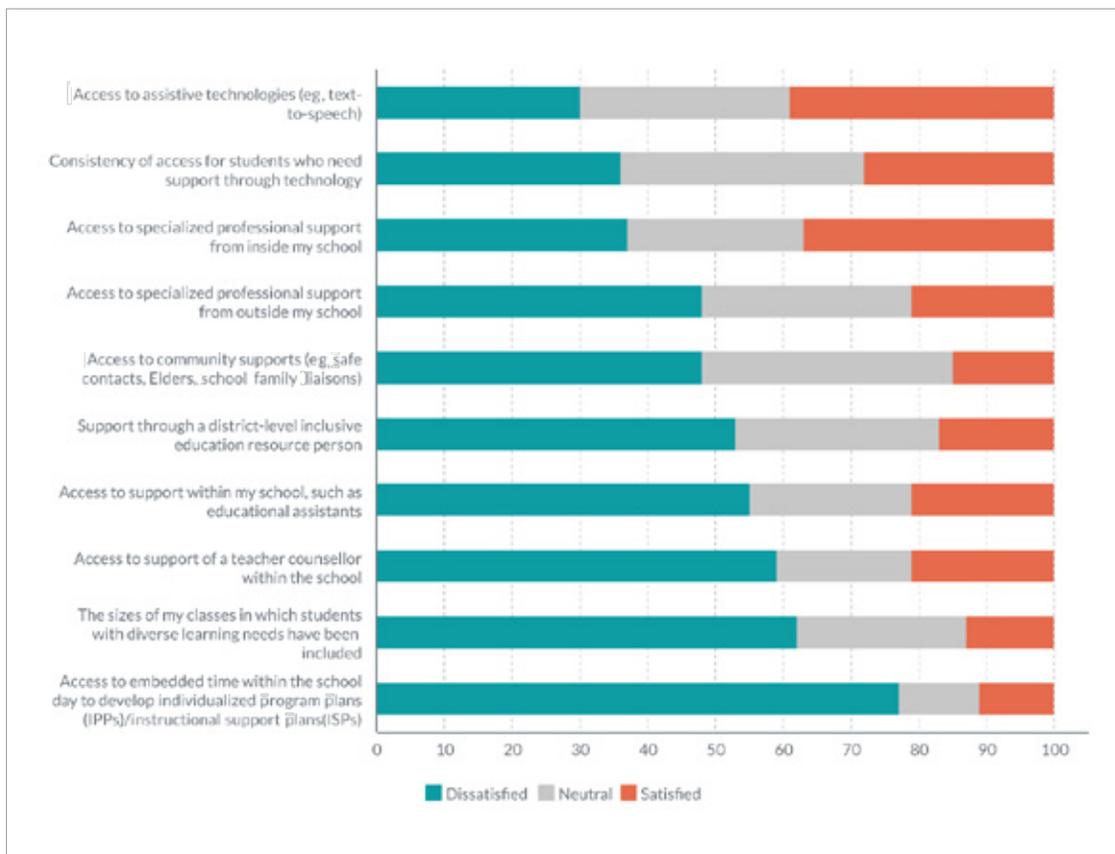
Data from 2014 and 2019 were compared to determine whether there have been changes in access to supports and services (see Figure 11). Access to assistive technologies has increased, including consistency of access for students who need support through technology. Compared to 2014, participants indicated an increase in access to specialized professional support within their school.

Figure 11. Changes in Satisfaction with Access to Supports and Resources 2014–19

- Access to specialized professional support from inside my school
- Access to specialized professional support from outside my school
- Access to support within my school, such as educational assistants
- Access to embedded time within the school day to develop individualized program plans (IPPs)/instructional support plans (ISPs)
- The sizes of my classes in which students with diverse learning needs have been included
- Support through a district-level inclusive education resource person
- Access to support of a teacher counsellor within the school
- Access to assistive technologies (eg, text-to-speech)
- Consistency of access for students who need support through technology

Participants reported whether they agreed that they had sufficient time, support and spaces. Participants agreed that they had spaces in their schools to help students feel safe and that there were alternative spaces for children with sensory, attention or behavioural challenges. Almost all participants agreed that they don't have sufficient time for various activities related to supporting inclusive education (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Agreement Regarding Time, Support and Spaces
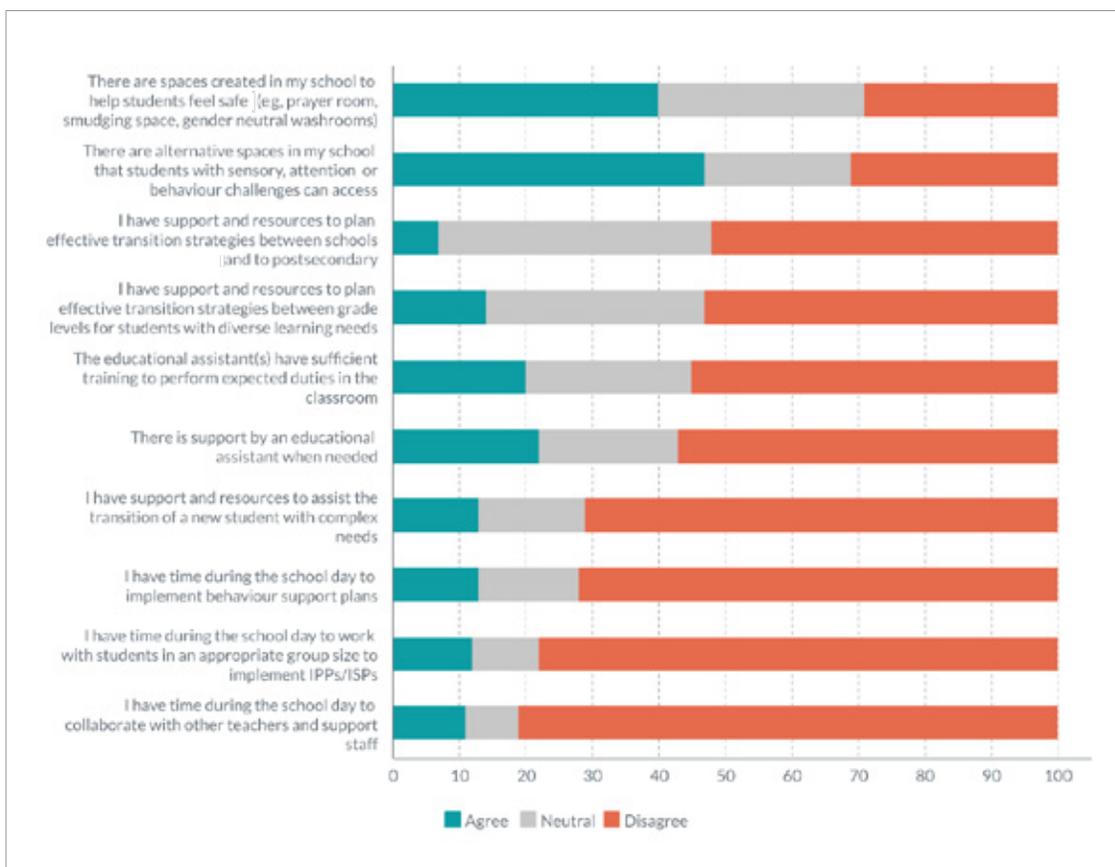
Respondents are somewhat satisfied with the support received from teaching assistants (48 per cent) as well as the training provided so teaching assistants can perform their expected duties (33 per cent). Satisfaction with time availability was quite low; most respondents are dissatisfied with the amount of time they have to implement IPPs (80 per cent), implement behaviour support plans (80 per cent), collaborate with other teachers to meet students' learning needs (88 per cent) and create behaviour support plans (89 per cent).

Changes between 2014 and 2019 on selected options were assessed in Figure 13; the only significant change from 2014 to 2019 is that in 2019, fewer participants agree that educational assistants have sufficient training.

Figure 13. Changes in Agreement Regarding Time, Support and Spaces 2014–19
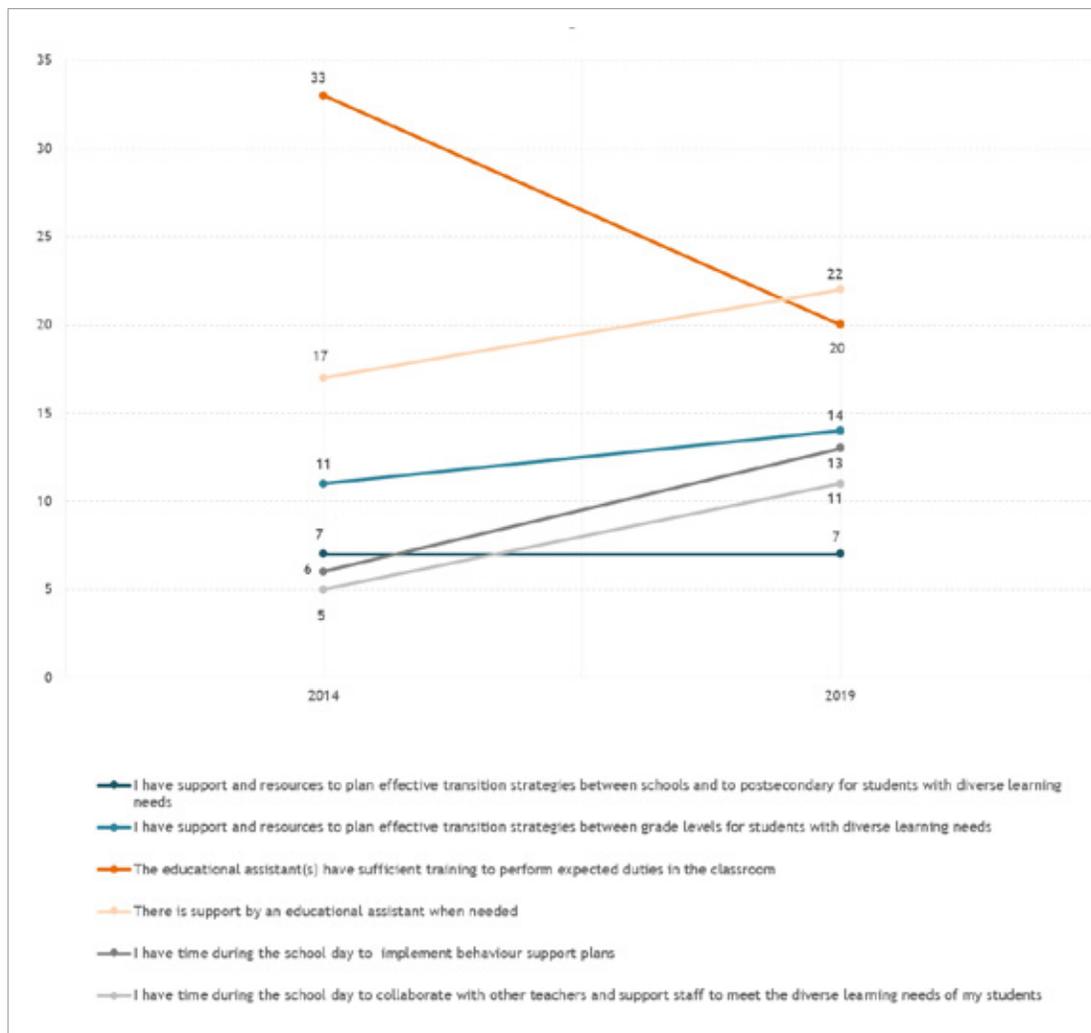
Focus Group Results

Focus groups were conducted in the spring and fall of 2019. Focus group participants were all members of the ATA. Each focus group met for about 60 to 90 minutes. Notes from the focus groups were used to conduct a thematic analysis. Several consistent themes emerged from the focus groups.

SUCCESSES

Participants indicated that there were positive outcomes associated with inclusive education. These include increased empathy and awareness that leads to all students positively interacting with each other in their communities. In addition, participants felt that inclusive education provided opportunities for social development and an exposure to peers that some children may have not had the opportunity to experience.

DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

One of the themes that emerged from all of the focus groups was a question of the definition of inclusive education. Several of the participants indicated that part of the problem that they saw was that inclusive education is sometimes believed to be that all children are in the same class regardless of their individual needs. These participants indicated that the definition of inclusive education should be that all students get the support that they need, whether that is in a classroom, school, online learning environment or other educational setting. There was a difference in perspective between participants from the Association's Council for Inclusive Education and classroom teachers. While those from the Council for Inclusive Education focused on what inclusion should look like, the classroom teachers were very clear that their experiences in the classroom did not meet this ideal. Rather, inclusive education for classroom teachers feels as though children are being put into the classroom without regard for what is best for them or for the other students. Classroom teachers expressed frustration that they were increasingly being asked to deal with behavioural and psychological issues in their classrooms that detracted from their capacity to devote time to the learning needs of all students in their care.

One of the things that all participants agreed with is that children need to be where they can be successful. Regardless of how inclusive education is defined, there needs to be sufficient resources to provide support for all students. Sometimes a mainstream classroom is not the best place for a child to achieve success, and this needs to be recognized.

CLASS SIZE

Another theme that emerged in all focus groups (and repeatedly within each focus group) was the issue of class size. Participants indicated that class sizes are too large. The large class sizes detract from the overall effectiveness of the learning environment. Participants indicated that whenever possible they tried to develop individualized approaches to learning for their students; however, as the class size increases, this becomes impractical. In addition, with the increase in the number of students who require additional supports in these large classes, participants expressed concerns that students who did not have exceptionalities were sometimes not receiving as much attention as needed.

LACK OF TRAINED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

An overall lack of trained educational assistants was one of the major challenges reported by participants who attended the focus groups. Participants mentioned that due to a lack of funding, there are not enough educational assistants available to provide support in the classroom on a full-time basis. Some participants also indicated that even when they do have access to educational assistants, these educational assistants do not always have the appropriate training and experience to be effective in the classroom.

THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN MUST BE CONSIDERED

While there is a genuine desire to help all children to reach their potential, the classroom is not currently resourced sufficiently to allow this to happen. Because of this, there appears to be a tension in the classroom regarding whose needs are the needs that should be met. For example, one theme that emerged was safety—including both physical and mental/emotional, both for the teacher and for all of the children in the classroom. More than one participant asked whether it was fair that children and they themselves should have to come to school afraid for their safety. When are the needs of all of the other children in the classroom considered when a child is placed in a classroom? Too often, teachers end up having to spend an inordinate amount of their time dealing with behaviour issues and classroom management rather than teaching.

20

Understanding Aggression(s) in Alberta School and School Communities, ATA 2020

In the 2018/19 school year, the Alberta Teachers' Association established an ad hoc committee to study aggression in Alberta public school settings, with a particular view to better understand the context of Alberta teachers and school leaders. This research report is the result of the work of this committee and presents a thorough examination of the complex issue of aggression toward teachers and school leaders. The report combines the findings of the research with the current literature to help clarify how aggression is experienced by teachers and school leaders and what policy mechanisms might be effective for managing incidents of aggression in the context of Alberta public schools. It is available at www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/ COOR-101-29%20Aggression%20in%20AB%20Schools.pdf.

Conclusion

Comparatively, the data gathered for the 2019 research report on inclusive education in Alberta classrooms and schools is similar to the data from the *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools* (ATA 2014). The similarities in data suggest that much work needs to be done to support students and teachers in inclusive education. All recommendations identified through the 2014 Blue Ribbon Panel report and key findings from the 2019 research on inclusive education need to be at the forefront to adequately support student success and achievement.

"There really are no supports. We pretend there are supports and leave it all up to the classroom teacher to figure out."

As indicated in the *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools* (ATA 2014), the definition of inclusive education must be better understood and is a crucial component in successful implementation of inclusive learning environments. While executive members of the Association's Council for Inclusive Education agree that inclusive education is about providing students with the resources and supports that they need, rather than just including all students in the same classroom regardless of their needs, the experience of classroom teachers seems to contradict this perspective.

"There really are no supports. We pretend there are supports and leave it all up to the classroom teacher to figure out."

While teachers recognize that there are many potential benefits to inclusive education, there is a significant level of frustration and concern, especially from classroom teachers. Concern about class sizes, the composition of classes and the lack of resources are common among most participants. A comparison of data from 2014 and 2019 indicates that class size and classroom complexity continue to increase. Comparatively, the average number of students that teachers taught over the course of a year increased from 64 in 2014 to 77 in 2019; the average number of students with individualized program plans (IPPs) or instructional support plans (ISPs) increased from 9 to 43.

Eighty per cent of teachers indicated that they are dissatisfied with the amount of time to implement individualized program plans (IPPs)/instructional support plans (ISPs), and 88 per cent are dissatisfied with the amount of time to collaborate with other teachers to meet students' learning needs. The only significant change from 2014 to 2019 is that in 2019 fewer participants agree that educational assistants have sufficient training.

Overall, teachers indicated dissatisfaction with the continuum of supports and services offered *outside the school*. The level of dissatisfaction was much greater in large urban schools (68 per cent dissatisfied) compared to small urban/suburban schools (50 per cent dissatisfied) and rural schools (30 per cent dissatisfied).

Fifty per cent of teachers indicated an overall satisfaction with the continuum of supports and services within their school and with access to technology supports for students. However, many teachers specifically indicated dissatisfaction with

- access to support of a teacher counsellor within the school,

- access to support within their school, such as educational assistants, and

- support through a district-level inclusive education resource person.

Teachers indicated that there are not enough educational assistants available to provide ongoing classroom support, due to a lack of funding. Forty-eight per cent are somewhat satisfied with the support received from educational assistants, and 33 per cent are somewhat satisfied with the training educational assistants are provided.

Prior to the release of the 2020/21 provincial budget, teachers were already struggling to meet the needs of students due to large class sizes, increasing complexity of student needs, and lack of resources and funding opportunities. The funding cuts to the Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) program and Program Unit Funding (PUF) will have a devastating and long-lasting negative impact on students and how teachers can support students. RCSD and PUF provided opportunities for collaboration among service providers and specialized supports and services that students didn't ordinarily have to access to, such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, family school liaison workers and addiction counsellors. Research indicates that if students don't receive the necessary supports and services they will continue to be underdeveloped and remain disadvantaged throughout their education experience.

The key findings of this research report outline the urgency for funding and advocacy to

- increase access to resources and supports for classrooms and schools within Alberta,

- decrease class size and classroom complexity, and

- provide time to collaborate with others and plan accordingly for student success.

References

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Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). 2014. *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA.

———. 2020. *Understanding Aggression(s) in Alberta School and School Communities*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA. Available at www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/ Research/COOR-101-29%20Aggression%20in%20AB%20Schools.pdf (accessed January 21, 2021).

Appendix A: Demographics

Overall, the combined survey sample is representative of the population of Alberta K–12 teachers and administrators within urban and rural school communities.

The distribution of response was spread throughout the province, with the majority of responses coming from Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer. The heat map in Figure 14 shows the distribution of responses.

Figure 14. Distribution of Responses
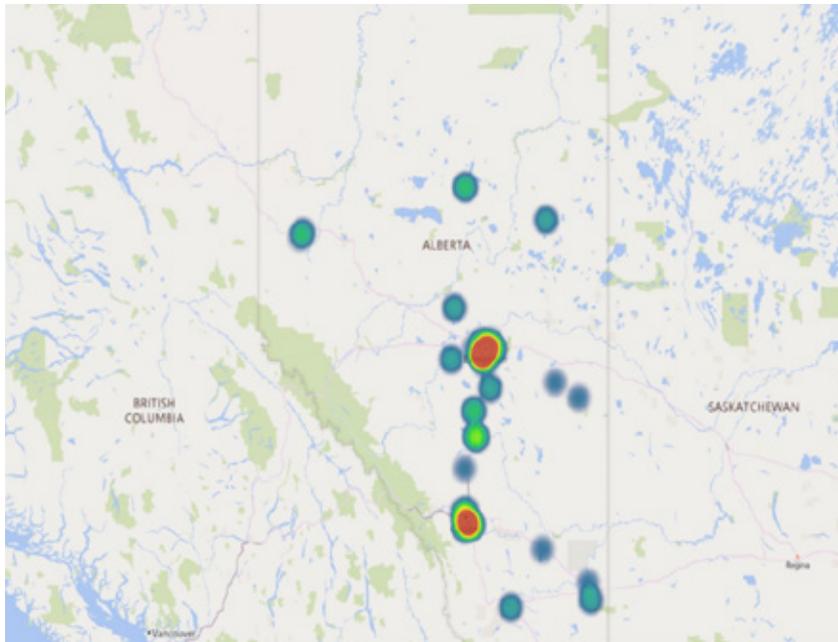
This pattern of responses is also shown in Figure 15, which shows the teachers' convention that respondents are part of. From Figure 15, the highest proportion of responses comes from Calgary City (25.8 per cent), Greater Edmonton (24.5 per cent), and North Central (21.4 per cent).

Figure 15. Which teachers' convention do you attend?
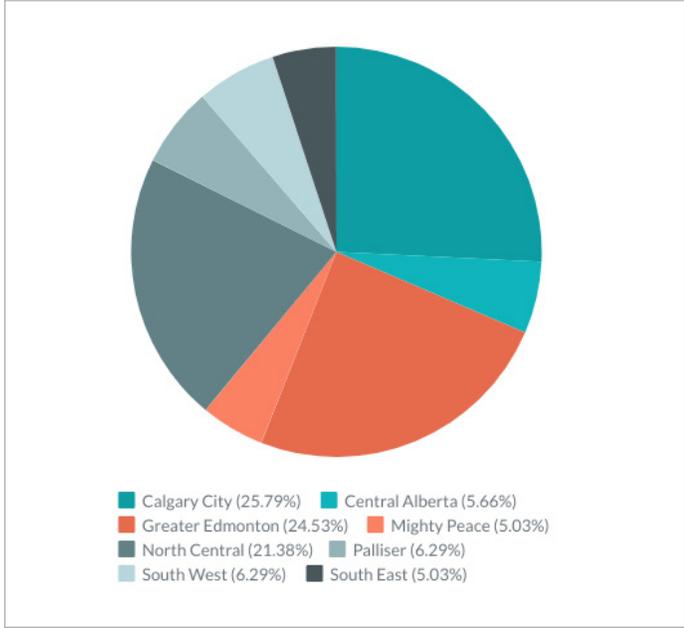
Most participants were experienced teachers. The modal category of teaching experience was 20–30 years of experience (28.1 per cent), followed by 15–19 years of experience (21.35 per cent) and 10–14 years of experience (19.1 per cent). See Figure 16 for a complete breakdown of teaching experience.

Figure 16. Including the current year, how many years of teaching experience do you have?
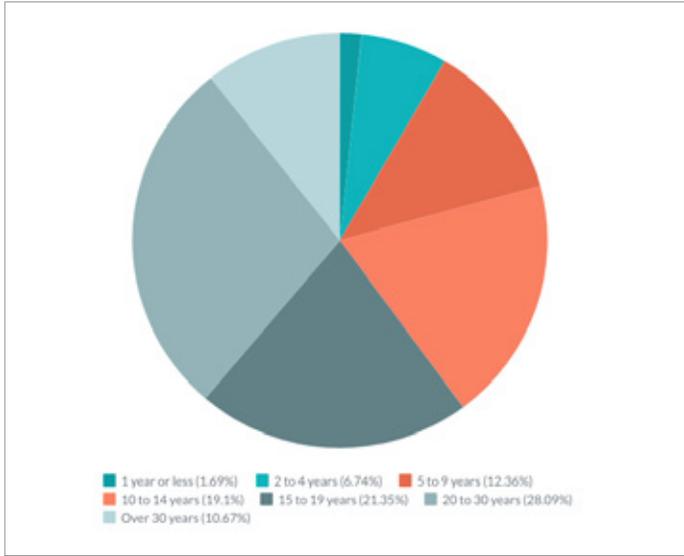
Respondents to the survey were mostly classroom teachers (81.13 per cent). There were also responses from school administration (2.5 per cent) and central office (8.2 per cent); see Figure 17 for the complete breakdown of the current assignment of respondents.

Figure 17. What grade (s) are you currently assigned to?
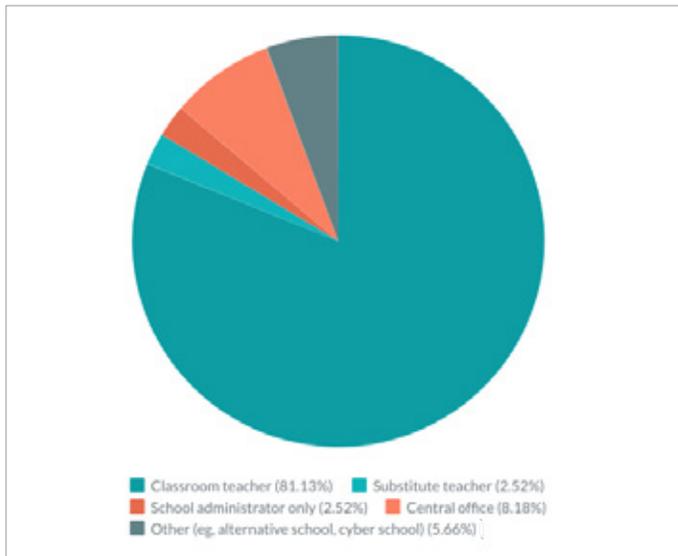
Participants were approximately evenly distributed between schools in rural locations, in small urban/suburban and large urban locations (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. In what type of school do you usually teach/work?
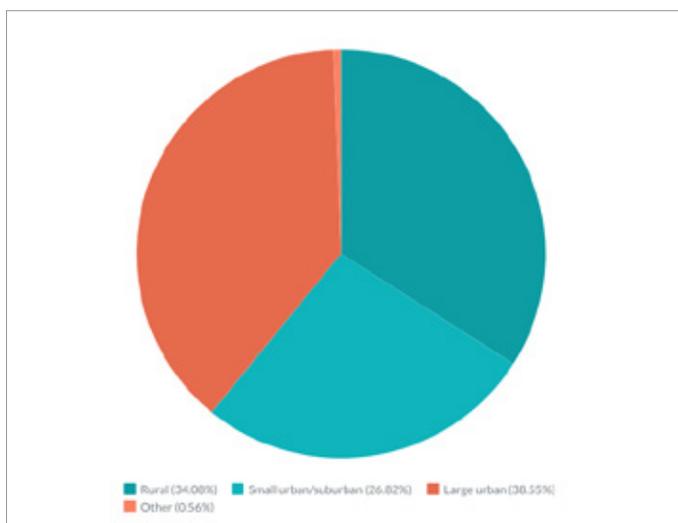
Appendix B: Open-Ended Questions

Respondents were asked to provide their opinion on the key challenges they face with inclusion. There were three main challenges that participants reported:

1. not enough support,

2. not enough time and

3. not enough resources.

The most cited challenge was that inclusive education lacks the necessary resources and support. Other challenges mentioned were lack of time to plan and prepare, lack of educational assistants in the classroom, students with severe behaviours disrupting other students' learning, amount of time required by students with high needs, and inability to meet diverse learning needs. See Table 1 for a thematic breakdown of responses.

Table 1: In your opinion, what are the key challenges that you face with inclusion? (n=115)

Category of Comment	Number of Responses	Representative Comments
Inclusive education lacking the necessary support	50	Students with significant delays in learning are not receiving the intensive, individualized support that they need in order to address the gap between their current skills and grade level. We are always told that the district staff are backed up and our school is not a priority because other schools have higher needs. Also being made to feel like it is solely my responsibility to accommodate students with diverse learning needs and that it is my fault if they are not succeeding. There really are no supports. We pretend there are supports and then leave it all up to the classroom teacher to figure out.
Not enough time	43	For the sake of the diverse learner, other students are neglected; time with an teacher/EA is taken from them. There is not enough time to provide the attention that all students need. Students who are not problematic have become desensitized to violence, and have come to not only expect it, but accept it as normal.

Category of Comment	Number of Responses	Representative Comments
Insufficient resources	14	Consistency of resources for student who require [them]; limited access to district-level programs for students with complex needs. Number of ELLs versus number of students with special needs, resources to provide support for all
Large class sizes	14	Teaching many different grade levels at the same time. Our class sizes are large, with a large range of skill levels. With so many students in one classroom it is difficult to meet everyone's needs at once. Allowing equality. The large class sizes necessitate the division of teacher time and attention into an insignificant and ineffective block of time for each child. If they can't learn in a group, and their peers can't help them, and the parent volunteer can't help them, they just don't succeed. It's the division of a block of teacher time into smaller and smaller segments until nothing is left to divide.
Lack of educational assistants in the classroom	13	Not enough EA support! Or training to deal with the diverse needs. No educational assistant help. Too many students requiring help and not enough money given to the school to employ needed EAs. I have a student who requires an EA but does not have one and I have to go to a different grade level to "borrow" the EA when needed. Severe and complex behavioural needs with not enough [EAs] in the classroom. Unqualified EAs to deal with challenging students. Three or more students with needs grouped together to share supports.
Students with severe behaviours disrupting the learning of other students	8	Other students do not feel safe or are very distracted when students with behaviour or cognitive challenges have a crisis. Not enough adult support. Violence of children, safety factors. All time is spent with "behaviour kids" and not with the rest of the class. It's unsafe and not fair at times.

Participants then provided additional feedback describing the sources of the challenges with inclusive education they face. The lack of adequate funding was the most cited topic, followed closely by the lack of proper supports and resources. The diversity of students' learning needs, the large class sizes, the lack of time and the lack of training were also mentioned as sources of challenges with inclusive education.

Respondents described the key successes they have experienced with inclusive education. The fact that students are more accepting of peers with disabilities was the most cited key success. Participants also mentioned student socialization. One of the themes that also emerged from these comments was a caveat that while there are definitely successes, there needs to be sufficient funding and resources to make sure that inclusive classrooms work. Full results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: What are the key successes that you have experienced with inclusion? (n=92)

Category of Comment	Number of Responses	Representative Comments
Increased acceptance of differences, empathy and understanding of others	42	Students have greater patience and affection for students with special needs. Students learning value of each person and recognizing everyone is different and should be respected.
Growth of peer relationships for students who may not have had that opportunity	15	Socialization benefits, builds empathy, friendships developed. Greater social acceptance among peers.

Appendix C: Online Survey Questionnaire

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS

Demographics

1. What is your current assignment?*

   ☐ Classroom teacher   ☐ Substitute teacher   ☐ School administrator only

   ☐ Central office   ☐ Combined classroom and administrative duties

   ☐ Other (e.g., alternative school, cyber school)   ☐ Other (not school-based)

2. What grade(s) are you currently assigned to?

   ☐ ECS/Kindergarten   ☐ Grades 1 to 6   ☐ Grades 7 to 9

   ☐ Grades 10 to 12   ☐ Combinations

3. What combinations of grades are you currently assigned to?

   _____

4. Including the current year, how many years of teaching experience do you have?

   ☐ 1 year or less   ☐ 2 to 4 years   ☐ 5 to 9 years

   ☐ 10 to 14 years   ☐ 15 to 19 years

   ☐ 20 to 30 years   ☐ Over 30 years

5. Which teachers' convention do you attend?

☐ Calgary City   ☐ Central Alberta   ☐ Central East

☐ Greater Edmonton   ☐ Mighty Peace   ☐ North East

☐ North Central   ☐ Palliser   ☐ South West

☐ South East

6. In what type of school do you usually teach/work in?

☐ Rural   ☐ Small urban/suburban   ☐ Large urban

☐ Other

7. Please specify what type of school you usually teach/work in

_____

Class Size and Composition

8. Currently, how satisfied are you with the following elements of inclusion?

1—Very dissatisfied   2—Somewhat dissatisfied   3—Neutral   4—Somewhat Satisfied   5—Very Satisfied

The size of my classes.	1	2	3	4	5
The composition of my classes.	1	2	3	4	5
Continuum of supports and services offered by my school (e.g., mentor teacher).	1	2	3	4	5
Continuum of supports and services offered outside my school (e.g., mental health).	1	2	3	4	5

9. In total, how many students are you teaching this year? _____

10. Currently, how satisfied are you with the following elements of inclusion?

1—Very dissatisfied   2—Somewhat dissatisfied   3—Neutral   4—Somewhat Satisfied   5—VerySatisfied

The size of classes in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
The composition of classes in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
Continuum of supports and services offered by my school (e.g., mentor teacher).	1	2	3	4	5
Continuum of supports and services offered outside my school (e.g., mental health).	1	2	3	4	5

11. In total, how many students are in your school this year? _____

12. Of these students, how many:

Have Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) or Instructional Support Plans (ISPs)?:	
Do not have an IPP or ISP, but require a high level of learning supports?:	
Require a high level of behaviour support (with or without an IPP or ISP)?:	
Are English-Language Learners?:	
Children or youth in care (e.g., in a foster home)?:	
Students with disabilities?:	
Other exceptionalities not listed:	

Professional Development

13. Please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following:

1—Very dissatisfied   2—Somewhat dissatisfied   3—Neutral   4—Somewhat Satisfied   5—Very Satisfied

Opportunities for **self-selected professional development** generally related to working with students with diverse learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for **in-service or training by the school or school jurisdiction** generally related to working with students with diverse learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for time to meet or collaborate with available supports and services within the school day (e.g., learning coach).	1	2	3	4	5

14. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

I could benefit from additional professional development opportunities related to:

1—Strongly Disagree   2—Somewhat disagree   3—Neutral   4—Somewhat Agree   5—Strongly Agree

Assistive Technologies	1	2	3	4	5
Differentiated Instruction and Assessment	1	2	3	4	5
English-Language Learners	1	2	3	4	5
First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students	1	2	3	4	5
Gifted and Talented Learners	1	2	3	4	5
Immigrants and Refugees	1	2	3	4	5
Individualized/Specialized Supports	1	2	3	4	5
Mental Health Needs	1	2	3	4	5
Sexual and Gender Minorities	1	2	3	4	5
Students in Care	1	2	3	4	5
Students with Complex Needs	1	2	3	4	5
Working effectively with supports and services within and outside the school	1	2	3	4	5
Targeted Supports or Intervention	1	2	3	4	5
Time to meet or collaborate with available supports and services	1	2	3	4	5
Trauma-Informed Care	1	2	3	4	5
Universal Supports	1	2	3	4	5

15. Please indicate your top 3 priorities for additional professional development

	First Priority	Second Priority	Third Priority
Assistive Technologies			
Differentiated Instruction and Assessment			
English-Language Learners			
First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students			
Gifted and Talented Learners			
Immigrants and Refugees			
Individualized/Specialized Supports			
Mental Health Needs			
Sexual and Gender Minorities			
Students in Care			
Students with Complex Needs			
Working effectively with supports and services within and outside the school			
Targeted Supports or Intervention			
Time to meet or collaborate with available supports and services			
Trauma-Informed Care			
Universal Supports			

Supports and Resources

16. Please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following:

1—Very dissatisfied   2—Somewhat dissatisfied   3—Neutral   4—Somewhat Satisfied   5—Very Satisfied

Access to specialized professional support from inside my school, such as an inclusive education facilitator, learning team leader, consultant, or learning support leader.	1	2	3	4	5
Access to specialized professional support from outside my school, such as a speech pathologist, psychologist, physiotherapist, divisional consultant, or learning specialist.	1	2	3	4	5
Access to support within my school, such as educational assistants.	1	2	3	4	5
Access to embedded time within the school day to develop Individualized Program Plans (IPPs)/ Instructional Support Plans(ISPs).	1	2	3	4	5
Access to community supports (e.g. Safe Contacts, Elders, School Family Liaisons)	1	2	3	4	5
The sizes of my classes in which students with diverse learning needs have been included.	1	2	3	4	5
Support through a district-level inclusive education resource person.	1	2	3	4	5
Access to support of a teacher counsellor within the school.	1	2	3	4	5
Access to assistive technologies (e.g., text-to-speech).	1	2	3	4	5
Consistency of access for students who need support through technology.	1	2	3	4	5

17. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following:

1—Strongly Disagree   2—Somewhat disagree   3—Neutral   4—Somewhat Agree   5—StronglyAgree

I have time during the school day to collaborate with other teachers and support staff to meet the diverse learning needs of my students.	1	2	3	4	5
I have time during the school day to work with students in an appropriate group size to implement IPPs/ISPs.	1	2	3	4	5
I have time during the school day to implement behaviour support plans.	1	2	3	4	5
There is support by an educational assistant when needed.	1	2	3	4	5
The educational assistant(s) have sufficient training to perform expected duties in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
I have support and resources to assist the transition of a new student with complex needs.	1	2	3	4	5
I have support and resources to plan effective transition strategies between grade levels for students with diverse learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5
I have support and resources to plan effective transition strategies between schools and to post-secondary for students with diverse learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5
There are spaces created in my school to help students feel safe (e.g., prayer room, smudging space, gender neutral washrooms).	1	2	3	4	5
There are alternative spaces in my school that students with sensory, attention, or behaviour challenges can access	1	2	3	4	5

Open-ended

18. What are the key successes that you have experienced with inclusion?

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. What are the reasons for these successes?

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. What are the key challenges that you have faced with inclusion?

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. What is needed to help inclusion work better in your school and classroom?

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. Do you have any other comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group on the topic of inclusive education if one was available in your area?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If you select yes, you will be redirected to a separate site where you can enter your contact information.

Thank You!

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

1. What are the successes you have experienced in your school system in regard to inclusion?

   a. What are the reasons for these successes?

   b. Any examples, success stories?

2. What are some of the challenges faced in your school system in regard to inclusion, in your experience?

   a. What are the sources of these challenges?

   b. Any examples, stories?

3. What have you seen or experienced that has helped inclusion work effectively?

4. What supports are NOT currently in place that you think would help inclusion work more effectively in the school system?

5. Are there any other comments that you wish to make about inclusion?

The Alberta
Teachers' Association