



## SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: A POPULATION-BASED INVESTIGATION Background

### Why this project?

In the 2015/2016 school year, almost 58,000 (10.5%) K-12 students in British Columbia had a special needs designation [British Columbia Ministry of Education (BC MED) Student Statistics 2015/2016]. Despite these considerable numbers, we know very little about the educational journeys of students with special needs and disabilities.

In December, 2017, we invited public school districts to participate in our SPECIAL EDUCATION IN BC: A POPULATION-BASED INVESTIGATION research study. Participants completed our survey, which was created to help us identify research priorities related to the educational journeys of students with special needs and disabilities.

### How Many Participated?

In total, 71 participants completed our survey, representing 43 of BC's 60 public school districts. The average participant had:

- a master's degree;
- a district administrator position; and
- between 20 and 29 years of educational experience.

The majority of participants were experienced in special education.



## Who Participated?

We asked a wide range of education professionals to complete this survey, including:

- district administrators;
- district learning support service providers; and
- school staff.

Participation was voluntary.

## Findings and Reports

Overall, survey participants agreed on three specific priorities for future research on the educational journeys of students with special needs and disabilities. These priorities were:

1. whether students with special needs and disabilities are completing high school and, if so, with which credential;
2. at what pace, over time, students with special needs and disabilities are progressing through grade levels; and
3. the number of school years students with special needs and disabilities are in the school system prior to receiving their first/initial special needs designation.

We have therefore prepared district-specific reports for each of these three topics, with province-wide data included for comparison. In each report, we break down students' results by their BC MED special needs designation.

We have also created a [Methodology Fact Sheet](#), which explains the anonymized and de-identified student-level BC MED data we used to generate the reports. It also describes our chosen methods and analyses.



## Conclusion

This study is an important step forward in our knowledge about the educational journeys of students with special needs and disabilities. A particular strength of this project is that it describes students' outcomes in these three areas by their BC MED special needs designation. We hope that the results will be useful in guiding policy and program development, both here in BC and beyond.

We thank participating districts for their involvement in our project. We welcome you to get in touch if you have any questions or comments about the reports, or our project more generally. Our contact information is below.

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### Download the Province-Level Reports at:

<http://spice.nursing.ubc.ca/>

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