

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Provincial Governments

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada is co-ordinating the submission of Canadian responses from six provinces and one territory to an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study on special education needs. The study — with data collection instruments developed by the OECD in conjunction with Eurostat and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) — will provide current information on students (from UNESCO member states, which include more than 180 countries worldwide) receiving additional resources to access the curriculum due to disabilities, learning or behavioural difficulties, and/or social disadvantages. The goals of the study are to establish internationally agreed upon and educationally relevant definitions pertaining to special educational needs; collect, validate, analyze and disseminate reliable and comparable statistics; and develop, calculate and disseminate policy-relevant education indicators in the domain of special educational needs.

In Canada, provincial policies, programs and services for students with disabilities have evolved considerably at post-secondary institutions. In British Columbia, for example, thousands of students with various disabilities are now able to access specialized programs and services throughout the public provincial post-secondary system. Measures to improve access to post-secondary education for students with disabilities include:

- increasing access to specialized services and resources for students with visual, hearing and learning disabilities;
- improving physical access to buildings in post-secondary institutions for students with disabilities;
- increasing awareness of the needs of students with disabilities regarding educational support services;
- improving the social integration of disabled students on campus; and
- establishing resource centres for students with disabilities at post-secondary institutions to help students achieve their educational goals and maximize their participation at these institutions.

In addition, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program has existed for many years in British Columbia, providing support, assistance and access to training for persons with disabilities to ensure that they can develop employment skills and participate in the economy. The Program is now provided in conjunction with the Supports to Employment Program, which encourages individuals receiving disability allowances to join the labour force.