

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
MEETING NOTE**

CLIFF: 247573
PREPARED FOR: Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister

MEETING DATE: June 14, 2021

MEETING WITH: The Rick Hansen Foundation

ATTENDEES: Minister Whiteside
Jill Wurflinger, Director, Rick Hansen Foundation School Program
Amanda Basi, Acting VP, Strategic Initiatives

MEETING PURPOSE: “Seeking opportunity to discuss our Accessibility Certification program and our School Program with you in more detail.”

BACKGROUND:

- The Rick Hansen Foundation School Program (RHFSP) has resource toolkits available for Kindergarten-Grade 8 and Grades 9-12.
- These resources include lesson plans as well as supplementary e-books, videos, and other materials to accompany the lessons.
- All materials are available for download on the Rick Hansen Foundation website.
- These resources have many curriculum connections for schools interested in using these resources.
 - The new PHE curriculum contains several learning standards related to diversity, inclusion, and discrimination such as:
 - Grade 5 - Describe and apply strategies that promote a safe and caring environment
 - Grade 8 - Propose strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying
 - Social Studies has several learning standards about discrimination and human rights, including:
 - Grade 5 - human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian society
 - Grade 10 - advocacy for human rights, including findings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
 - Social Justice 12 - social injustices in Canada and the world affecting individuals, groups, and society
- RHFSP has provided curriculum connections for teachers to help illustrate resources that are directly relevant to their grade and subject area.
- In addition to the direct curriculum connections, the resource toolkits align well with the core competencies, particularly the competencies of Personal Awareness and Responsibility and Social Responsibility.

- These competencies encourage students to empathize with others and respect the rights of others and are a natural fit with the Rick Hansen Foundation's focus on accessibility and inclusion.
- In February 2021, Nova Scotia became the first province to officially adopt RHFSP materials into its curriculum.
- The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) is a rating system that evaluates the meaningful accessibility of commercial, institutional, and multi-unit residential buildings and sites. The system promotes increased access through the adoption of Universal Design principles.
- The Ministry does not require school districts to certify schools under this program, although districts may choose to get the certification.

DISCUSSION:

- The Rick Hansen Foundation has had meetings with each of the past five Ministry of Education Minister's as an introduction of themselves and the various programs and services they offer for inclusion and accessibility measures at schools.
- RHFSP is a program that already has many connections throughout British Columbia, particular since the Rick Hansen Foundation is based in the Lower Mainland.
- In previous years, the RHFSP has asked to have their curriculum materials officially adopted by the Ministry of Education.
- The BC Ministry of Education generally does not review and approve materials for use in schools. Instead, school districts are responsible for reviewing and approving educational resources for use in their schools.
- The Rick Hansen Foundation is a contributor to BC's online classroom resource sharing platform, ShareEdBC. Teachers and educators have access to Rick Hansen Foundation materials via this platform. Currently the following is available: "What is a Difference Maker" for Grades 3-6. and "What is a Spinal Cord Injury" for Grades 9-12.
- Focused Education Resources reviews and approves educational resources on behalf of school districts in BC
- RHFSP materials do not appear to be part of Focused Education Resources' K-12 Evaluated Resource Collection.
- RHFSP may wish to have their resources reviewed and approved by Focused Educational Resources for use in districts throughout the Province.
- RHFSP may also wish to consider expanding the resources they have posted on ShareEdBC.
- In recent years the RHFSP has requested a requirement for schools to utilize the RHFAC to inform design for renovations and construction projects.
- Boards of education are required to meet the current BC Building Code that relate to accessibility.
- The Office of Housing and Construction Standards recently released an update of the Building Accessibility Handbook: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/construction-industry/building-codes-and-standards/guides/2020_building_accessibility_handbook.pdf

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
INFORMATION BRIEFING NOTE**

- The Ministry has not required RHFAC or been directed to consider as a priority in Ministry of Finance capital plan instructions, like GHG reduction, mass timber utilization, and seismic safety.
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- The Ministry would be pleased to continue to look for opportunities to promote promising practices, assessment tools and other resources made available by the Foundation to school districts moving forward, with a view to promoting accessibility for students across districts.
- In addition to funding accessibility improvements as part of major renovations and new builds, the Ministry also continues to provide funding to school districts on an annual basis for smaller projects that improve accessibility at existing school facilities via the School Enhancement and Annual Facility Grant Programs.

Program ADM/Branch: Melanie Stewart/Educational Programs Division. Reg Bawa/ RMD

Program Contact (for content): Nick Poeschek

Drafter: Nick Poeschek/Michael Nyikes (Capital Management Branch)

Date: June 4, 2021