

School Principals

Leading the Way to Inclusive Schools: Implementation Steps For Moving Forward

School Principals play a critical role in setting the priorities for learning in the school. Through values, commitment, knowledge and skill the principal makes the difference. Effective leadership by the principal is especially important if schools are to be truly inclusive and meet the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population. This brochure provides some things to think about to meet this challenge.

inclusive
education

50 years
Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Diversity includes.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

The provision of inclusive public education is based on three complementary principles:

- (1) public education is universal – the provincial curriculum is provided equitably to all students and this is done in an inclusive, common learning environment shared among age-appropriate, neighbourhood peers;
- (2) public education is individualized – the success of each student depends on the degree to which education is based on the student's best interests and responds to his or her strengths and needs; and
- (3) public education is flexible and responsive to change.



The Big Picture

Inclusive Education – what does it mean?

PHYSICAL

- Dedication to providing education for all children within their *community schools*
- Dedication to providing for all children *common and safe learning environments* where experience and learning is integrated and valuable

ACADEMIC

- Dedication to *personalized learning goals and subsequent supports* for all students
- Dedication to *thorough and responsive collaborative supports and planning* to provide such services
- Dedication to providing appropriate instruction *within the common learning environment (regular classroom)*

SOCIAL

- Students with disabilities *are not conditional members of their classes.*
- There is a sense of belonging and being a part of the school community in which everyone is accepted and is supported by all members of the community

THE BACKGROUND OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CANADA:

- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Provincial Human Rights Legislation
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Research Tells Us

- ✓ The role of the school principal is pivotal in creating and promoting inclusive school cultures.
- ✓ The environment and culture of the school setting can have a direct impact on acceptance of students with exceptionalities.
- ✓ Including students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom does not have a negative impact on the academic achievement of other students.
- ✓ Social benefits accrue to both regular and exceptional students in inclusive settings, among them an increase in advocacy and more tolerant attitudes.

– Dr. Sheila Bennett, Brock University

Implementation



Defining the Role for the School Leader

The role of the principal in leading the movement towards a truly inclusive school

- Where do I begin?
- What are all the considerations?
- What do I need to learn?
- How do I embed this in the school's culture/operations?

BEGIN BY ASKING YOURSELF:

- What is my own understanding of Inclusive Schools?
 - What skills/knowledge do I have?
 - What do I have yet to learn?

Some thoughts:

- Understand inclusive education
- Identify exemplars of inclusive practice
- Identify resources: people, information, websites and more
- Connect inclusive school practice to effective school practice
- Provide a research and evidence based context for school growth and improvement

THEN FOCUS ON “CHANGE”:

- What do I know about the change process?
- Do I understand how to support complex change in a school?
- What do I have yet to learn?
- Who can I look to for collaborative support?

Some critical considerations:

1. Uncovering and defining collective purpose
2. Articulating purpose and building commitment
3. Creating safe environments for risks
4. Adaptive change vs. technical change
5. Supporting comprehensive paradigm shifts
6. Building collective learning into the process
7. Upholding standards of inclusion while solving practical problems
8. Creating a culture that encourages “learning by doing”

The task of the principal is to then make it happen...

A critical stage for accomplishing inclusive schools is establishing collaborative teams within your school that act as decision making bodies that reference the philosophy and standard of inclusion. These collaborative teams will be vital in assisting a school leader in embedding the practices in the school culture and operations. They will ensure sustainability and collective accountability.

Teams ensure that critical decisions that involve complex factors are **never made alone**.

Create Your Own Collaborative Team for Success

Identify Champions of inclusion and invest in their training and growth



Who are your key Champions?

- A teacher or teachers?
- A Resource Teacher(s)?
- An Educational Assistant or other professional?
- A parent or group of parents?
- Someone from your community, the district or another school?

Establish integrated leadership teams to assist with mandate



Leadership Teams:

- Administrative Team
- School Improvement Team
- Student Services Team

Together – align inclusive school philosophy and practice with current structures and policies and work with parents

Establish an Effective Student Services Team model



Student Services Team:

- Administrator(s); Resource Teacher(s); Guidance Counsellor(s); Other professionals; district staff; other staff as appropriate.
- Involve community partners when needed
- Involve parents when needed
- Designate meeting times as a priority
- Focus on issues related to teachers, students and the school as a whole
- Focus on improving student success through more effective strategies of support

Clarification of Supporting Roles

SCHOOL-BASED STUDENT SERVICES TEAM

The school-based team will establish a positive, supportive and welcoming climate for all students. They will:

- establish effective partnerships with parents;
- support professional development opportunities for teachers;
- establish mutual support among teachers by creating a climate and work routines that favour teamwork and collaboration; and
- ensure effective use of resources, focus the attention of teachers on effective instructional strategies and ensure that classrooms are effectively organized for quality instruction.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT

Supports the teacher in the classroom and provides direct support to students based on their needs.

RESOURCE TEACHER

The Resource Teacher will act as a partner, coach, co-teacher and collaborator with the classroom teacher to support inclusive strategies. Facilitating sharing among teachers and helping solve dilemmas and problems is the focus.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Develop school-wide initiatives to improve instructional outcomes for ALL students and link school improvement and inclusion.

OTHER SCHOOL AND DISTRICT SUPPORT STAFF

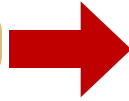
Contribute specific know-how for meeting diverse student needs based on professional skill sets.

Levels of Support

WHOM DO I SUPPORT?

- Classroom teachers in REGULAR classrooms are the focus of support.
- Assist other members of the school team to help the teacher get his/her job done.
- Focus on developing knowledge and skills that help in many situations – such as differentiation/universal design/cooperative learning/co-teaching methods/individualized instruction.

IDENTIFY: WHAT DO I SUPPORT?



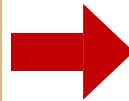
Skills

- Collaboration
- Differentiated Learning
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Behavior Support

Attitudes

- Diversity
- Inclusion

IDENTIFY: WHAT STRUCTURES DO I BUILD?



Assess what your school needs:

Ensure your decisions are based on accurate data and not assumptions – possible instruments to use:

- Provincial perception data
- School review instrument
- Utilize self reflection tool – data provides a neutral yet valid point of discussion for staff

IDENTIFY: WHOM DO I COMMUNICATE WITH?

Intentional communication with:



1. Understanding the value of inclusive schools
2. Reminding about alignment/purpose in our practice and decision making
3. Informing about personalized goal setting and programming
4. Teaching about value of inclusive communities

- Community
- School and district staff
- Parents – as individuals
- Students

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL INDICATORS: "Things to look for"

Many of the things you will observe in an Inclusive School include:

- Teacher Teaming
- Effective Problem Solving
- Collective commitment to inclusion – well communicated
- Integrated leadership models
- School-based Student Services Team
- Sense of belonging – by students & staff
- Sense of collective responsibility towards all students
- Focus on RTI (Response to Intervention) or POI (Pyramid of Intervention)
- PBIS – Personal Behaviour Intervention Plan
- Common Learning Environments
- Safe Learning Environments
- Differentiated Instruction
- Personalized Learning and Planning
- Comprehensive Transition Planning
- Evidence of Achievement
- Resource teacher as coach, co-teacher
- Flexible and fluid groupings of students
- Paraprofessionals as Teacher Supports
- Common Planning Time
- Involvement & Support from Community Agencies

Inclusion Process

The Human Rights Commissions in Ontario and New Brunswick have published guidelines on accommodating students with a disability. They are available on their websites. Clarity on “the duty to accommodate” is the focus of both guidelines. The principle of inclusion is a critical factor in providing supports for students with disabilities. The flowchart at the right is used in the New Brunswick Guideline to illustrate “what supports and strategies are necessary to allow the students to be included in the regular classroom.” These supports are directed to the school, the teacher and the student. As the Guideline states: *Every effort short of undue hardship must be made to provide support so that the students may be included.*

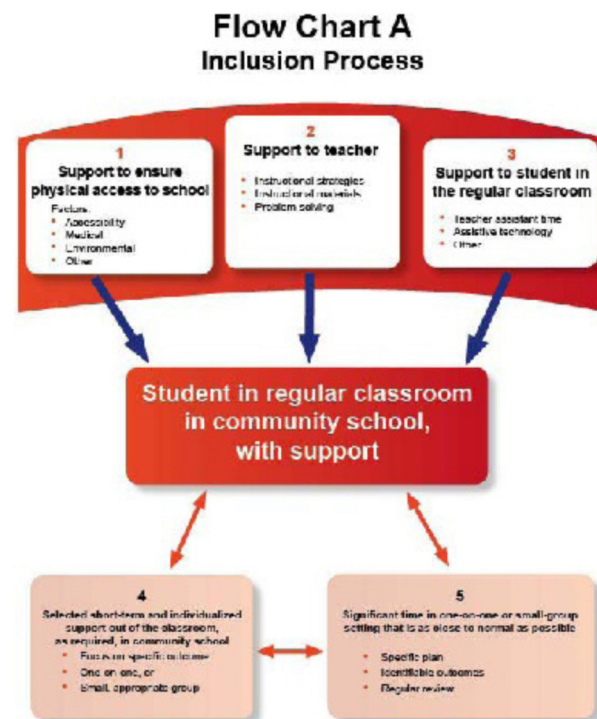
The Guideline states that if one-on-one or small group instruction is needed after all reasonable efforts at accommodation have been made, that these interventions occur in the child’s neighbourhood or natural school and that “... this should occur for a limited time period and with a goal oriented plan focused on returning the child to his/her regular class”.

For the full text of the Guideline and the Flow Chart (page 18) see the link below.

<http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/g/Guideline-Accommodating-Students-Disability-New-Brunswick.pdf>

Ontario Human Rights Commission Guideline

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Guides/AccessibleEducation/pdf>



Links to more information on “Inclusive Education”:

Inclusive Education Canada website: www.inclusiveeducation.ca. See the “Principal Perspectives” page on this site.

Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education: http://www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education/index.asp

Canadian Association for Community Living: www.cacl.ca

Case Study Book: *Exploring Inclusive Educational Practices through Professional Inquiry*, Gordon Porter & Deirdre Smith. Published by Sense Publishers, The Netherlands: www.sensepublishers.com

Principals on front panel, from the top are:

Gary Gallant, Principal, Devon Middle School, N.B.

Iris Trask, Principal, Golden Secondary School, Golden, B.C.

Celinda Van Horne, Principal, Hampton High School, N.B.

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Diversity includes.

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