

education watch:

an update on inclusive education

Volume 5, Issue 2 - Fall 2014

UNESCO Celebrating excellence in education for people with disabilities

UNESCO Paris

Two organisations have been recognised in 2014 for their achievements in inclusive education. The Armenian NGO Bridge of Hope and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of the Government of New Brunswick (Canada) were awarded the UNESCO/Emir Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah Prize to Promote Quality Education for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

The award ceremony took place in Kuwait in the presence of H.E. the Minister of Education from Kuwait, H.E. Mr Hao Ping, President of the 37th session of the General Conference of UNESCO and Vice-Minister of Education of the People's Republic of China and H.E. and H.E. Mr Mohamed S. Amr, Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Arab Republic of Egypt to UNESCO.

Established in 2002, the UNESCO/Emir Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah Prize recognizes the outstanding activities of individuals, groups, organizations or centres that promote quality education for persons with intellectual



Recipients from Armenia (left) and New Brunswick, Canada (Right) with Government of Kuwait Official

disabilities. The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, announced the laureates of the 2013 edition during Education for All Global Action Week (4-10 May), celebrated under the theme of "Equal Right, Equal Opportunity: Education and Disability."

The two laureates have been rewarded for their inclusive

education programmes that have had a significant impact on the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families.



Canadian Association
for Community Living
Association canadienne pour
l'intégration communautaire

Diversity includes. On se ressemble.



What makes the 2014 UNESCO Kuwait winners so special

Panel Chair Marie Schoeman, Ministry of Education, Republic of South Africa

The UNESCO/ Emir Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah Prize to Promote Quality Education for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities is unique in as far as it is one of very few international prizes which promote and recognise efforts to realise the right of persons with intellectual disability to be included and respected in society.

The two winning programmes of the 2013 prize were selected out of

pressure on their Government and has expanded to a national level. The Canadian Provincial Government of New Brunswick, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was recommended for their commitment since 1986 towards a systemic approach to inclusive education for learners with disabilities. Both nominees demonstrate excellent examples of sustainable policies and inclusive educational practices with wide

programmes should be sustainable, have a systemic impact within a country and beyond and that there should be proof of attitudinal change in the societies in which they operate. We were also sensitive to context and took into account a poverty dimension.

The non-governmental organization (NGO) Bridge of Hope, has an impressive range of projects that promote human rights, social and education inclusion of children and youth with disabilities. Their leadership in engaging with key participants including government ministries, international agencies, families, communities, schools, and early childhood settings has resulted in significant country wide improvements in inclusive education. Their work, especially under challenging conditions, is an excellent model for the region. It is truly inspirational what can be achieved by a grassroots parent organisation that exerts pressure on their government to achieve deep societal change.

The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was acknowledged for their vision and achievements in establishing a system wide approach to inclusive education. There is a clear and broadly accepted approach that all learners are valued and included. Social justice and equity are central to their vision for education. This Ministry of Education was visionary at the time but would also not have been able to achieve such wide-ranging success without the pressure exerted by the organised parents movement, namely the Canadian Association for Community Living. The collaboration enabled them to implement a province wide capacity building strategy that has created exemplary models of mentoring and professional learning for inclusive education. The model is an exceptional example of evidence-based practice and practice-based



UNESCO Panel Chair Marie Schoeman, South Africa, with Susanna Tadevosyan Founder and President of “Bridge of Hope” NGO of Armenia

54 candidatures received from all five UNESCO regions that displayed a wide range of approaches for supporting children, youth and adults with intellectual disabilities. Bridge of Hope, Armenia, was recommended by the jury for their extensive work in the promotion of inclusive education and quality of life for people with disabilities over the past 17 years. The programme was initiated by a Non-Governmental Organisation of parents that exerted

ranging benefits for children and their families.

The Jury considered programmes that are premised on the principles of inclusive education and with an impact on promoting equal education opportunities for persons with intellectual disability. Furthermore, the Jury considered in the evaluation of candidatures evidence of the voice of persons with disabilities, that the



New Brunswick Deputy Minister of Education – Francophone, Gérald Richard with UNESCO Panel Chair Marie Schoeman’ Policy Advisor, Dr. Gordon Porter accompanied DM Richard.

evidence that is constantly evolving in the light of lessons learned. Their revolutionary system-wide approach to inclusive education is a model of excellence in a public education system that has inspired other countries across the globe over the past almost three decades.

The Jury found that the evidence on the impact of the work of Bridge of Hope and the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development confirms that they have improved and contributed in their own country and internationally to: The quality of life of persons with intellectual disabilities; Expanded access, participation and achievement in education for persons with intellectual disabilities; Raised awareness about the right to education for all and impacted, directly and indirectly, national and global changes in education policy and practice towards inclusion.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Nova Scotia Education Panel Targets Inclusive Education

Panel Header by Former Lt. Governor Releases Report – 50% Unhappy with Provincial Education System

The Minster’s Panel, chaired by former Lt. Governor Hon. Myra Freeman released their report titled, “Disrupting the Status Quo: Nova Scotians Demand a Better Future for Every Student”.

The report identifies seven themes for improvement. Theme Four of the report deals with inclusive education – Ensure that inclusion is working – for everyone (see pages 40-43). One of the three recommendations the panel makes is that Nova Scotia return to the use of congregated classes.

Recommendation 4.2 (page 42): Assist schools and school boards to create a range of learning environments for students with special needs, including congregated classes taught by highly qualified specialist teachers, where appropriate.

This recommendation has produced considerable discussion – no surprise to our readers and followers. An IEC Editorial is followed by several news stories and commentaries on this development.

[Link to The Nova Scotia Report](#)

[The detailed Technical Report released by the Panel](#)



Former Nova Scotia Lt. Governor and Panel Chair Hon. Myra Freeman



Inclusive Education Canada Editorial

Presumption, Bias and Stigma: Nova Scotia Education Panel Says - Bring Back – “Congregated Classes”?

The Nova Scotia “Panel on Education” established by the Minister Karen Casey in February 2014 delivered their report, “Disrupting the Status Quo: Nova Scotians Demand a Better Future for Every Student” on October 30, 2014. For students with disabilities and their families, the report does indeed “disrupt the status quo” and not in a positive way.

The report includes some warm words about how proud we should be that our schools are more accepting and supportive of students with diverse needs but from there it is all down hill.

The presumption of the Minister’s Panel seems to be that since many parents and teachers told them that “inclusion” is not “working well for every student”, the focus needs to be on accepting the fact that not every student can be included. To put it another way, some children need to be excluded.

The Panel recommends that the Minister establish “congregated classes” for students with special needs.

While acknowledging that the implementation of inclusion has been inadequate, and the Panel recommends further examination of Nova Scotia’s implementation and funding of the model, it prejudices the outcome of such an examination by boldly staking out the ground for “congregated classes”. They make this recommendation despite acknowledging that “the majority

(of respondents) called for a sustainable, improved approach to the current model of inclusive education.” (See Report – Page 41)

The Panel does suggest the need for flexibility, sustainability (resources) and timely assessments and services. These are recommendations everyone can agree on. There is nothing radical here.

Indeed the panel acknowledges that improving conditions may not require more money; there may be enough already in the system. One would think the logical path forward would be to look at what the money already being spent is being used for.

Research on successful inclusion makes it clear that schools must have skilled and knowledgeable leaders who both accept the inclusion mandate and provide direct and practical support to classroom teachers. The Panel makes it clear that teachers need support. What is not highlighted is that staff already employed in the schools realistically must provide this support. This task falls to principals, resource teachers and other professionals already in the system.

The focus for improvement needs to be directed to how principals and resource teachers provide this support. Do they actively collaborate with teachers and assist them in using differentiated instruction and universal design for learning, both of which are mentioned in the report? Do classroom teachers receive the kind of collaborative engagement they need from colleagues to solve problems as they come up?

The Panel asked many questions and received a lot of feedback from stakeholders. Many of the questions missed the mark if the goal was to improve on inclusion now in practice

in Nova Scotia classrooms. Asking teachers if they think inclusive education is working for every student, is obvious in it’s inadequacy. Of course teachers will say it does not, if indeed it is meant to ask if it works with every student –in every lesson, with every teacher, and if “working” means it is easy to achieve. Our school literacy programs are not working for everyone either, but that doesn’t mean we stop our efforts to do better.

Schools are places where both teachers and students struggle daily to make things go well, and to make progress everyone must be engaged.

The question we wish the Panel would have asked is this:

Given we live in the second decade of the 21st Century, a period of human rights, equality, and inclusion of diverse students in our education system, what can we do to strengthen our success with every learner?

How can we collaborate to overcome barriers and challenges and meet the ambitious goals we have set for ourselves?

By suggesting a return to “congregated classes” the Nova Scotia Panel is pointing to a path backward to a past where bias against those who have diverse needs is reflected in a conditional acceptance of their place in our public schools. They will be included ... if ... we can manage it. They will be segregated if we can’t.

Access to what every other child can take as a right, is negotiable for students with special needs. For them, segregation in “congregated classes” is acceptable. In effect, the education system makes the children with special needs and their families

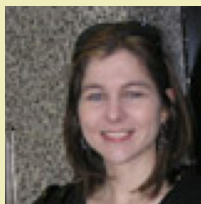
pay for the system's failure. Those with the power and the status to define the educational agenda justify the stigma of segregation for these children.

The Panel's goal of "Disrupting

the Status Quo" was meant to improve Nova Scotia education in a positive way. The call for "congregated classes" for students with special needs does not meet that standard. Nova Scotia will benefit from an intensive review of

inclusive education practices so an already record of achievement can be enhanced. That path forward must not be subverted by the call for "congregated classes" with all the bias and stigma that goes with them.

Commentary



"So it seems that the creation of "congregated" classrooms is being considered for children with cognitive challenges in NS - to what extent and on what criterion children will be channeled out of the "typical" stream, remains to be seen. I feel very strongly that classroom segregation runs contrary to the inclusive education that is championed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of People With Disabilities, which Canada ratified in 2010. If you value inclusive learning, either for your child with special needs or because you believe that inclusivity in schools is good for your "typical" child and is an important route to tolerance and acceptance in our society, you might consider writing a letter to your MLA or the Minister of Education. Of course you will want to mention that our hard-working teachers will need supports in fulfilling this important rights mandate."

- Martha Walls, Parent and Faculty member in History at Mount St. Vincent's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Advocates in Nova Scotia have prepared a message for Minister for Education Hon. Karen Casey And Premier of Nova Scotia Hon. Stephen MacNeil

Here is the text they recommend to supporters:

Say 'No' to Segregation

The report of the Minister's Panel on Education calls for segregated, self-contained (or "congregated") settings that could take children with a wide variety of disability labels out of our classrooms, our schools, and our communities.

It also suggests narrowing the curriculum to focus on Literacy and Math in the elementary years, leaving fewer entry points for those who have different educational strengths, such as the arts or sports.

We believe that the education of children who are diverse learners is too complex an issue to be addressed by just a few recommendations. We are particularly concerned by the suggestion of segregation. Excluding children who are not 'typical' from their classrooms would set our education system and our communities back some 20 or 30 years and would be in contradiction to Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

An independent report into the ways that our education system can work for all - conducted by experts in education for diverse learners, constitutional law, and disability issues, and including input from the Human Rights Commission, the Special Educational Programs and Services Committee, First Nations communities, the African Canadian community, Disability Community, disabled learners and parent voice, - is crucial before any further steps are taken.

I call on you to set up a representative committee to develop an independent action plan as outlined above. We value the diversity in our communities and we ask you to do the same.



Human Rights Commission worried about classroom segregation

Angela McIvor
CBC News Story
November 19, 2014

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission is raising the alarm about one of the recommendations in the province's new education report, worried it boils down to segregation.

The report titled *Disrupting the Status Quo: Nova Scotians Demand a Better Future for Every Student* was released on Oct. 30. The minister's panel on education outlined seven areas where improvements are required, such as inclusion. The section on inclusion comes with a recommendation for students with special needs. It suggests including some "congregated classes" taught by specialist teachers.

Tracey Williams, CEO of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, says that caught her off guard. "It seems to be a blueprint for what we would think would be the potential to cause significant harm to what some of what would be probably the most vulnerable and promising students in some cases in the school system. So that's a concern for us," she said.

Williams says her interpretation of "congregated classes" amounts to segregation.

"That's not going to create the kind of environment that prepares students, you know, overall and does not really help or equip teachers and students and families to envision and create what we would consider an inclusive and welcoming and caring school community," she said.

The report's recommendation around classroom inclusion, according to Williams, is that it is contingent on whether it works for everybody. "Inclusion shouldn't be limited to when it's convenient or comfortable for someone. Inclusion means everybody benefits from that."

Williams says schools are about preparing students for the future.

"Segregation, or putting children in a separate environment, really doesn't do much in terms of preparing them and learning the skills, and learning to work together and build capacities together to ensure everyone is included," she said.

The Department of Education plans to release an action plan in January.

Williams says she hopes the government listens to the commission's concerns.

"We urge government to create their action plan using a human rights lens and would welcome the opportunity to work with them in a collaborative manner as they move forward," she said.

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Don't re-segregate special-needs kids

Cynthia Bruce
Halifax Chronicle-Herald
November 12, 2014
Ever since Education Minister



Karen Casey's panel released its comprehensive review of Nova Scotia's education system, I have been considering how best to respond to a document that risks setting the inclusion of disabled people in this province back 20 to 30 years.

The report acknowledges that the current system of inclusion does not support the majority of its participants — students, teachers, support staff, and school-based administrators alike. My intent is not to dispute this reality, but to bring focus to the exclusionary potential of the proposed path for improving it.

At least twice in what is a comparatively small section on inclusion, particularly given the volume of responses received on inclusion-related questions, the authors report that there is widespread support for the province's model of inclusion.

This suggests that benefits have been realized, but the report fails to highlight anything other than the "problems." As a blind woman, a disabled activist and a doctoral candidate in educational research with university teaching experience in the area of inclusive education, I can attest to the gains that moving toward inclusion has made possible for Nova Scotians with disabilities.

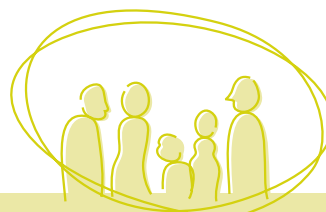
More disabled Nova Scotians than ever are graduating from high school and participating in post-secondary education. More than ever are seeking and gaining meaningful

employment in a broad range of professions. Most importantly, the current generation of Nova Scotia students without disabilities has had an unprecedented opportunity to experience schooling with diverse learners and to recognize the richness that such diversity can and does bring to our communities.

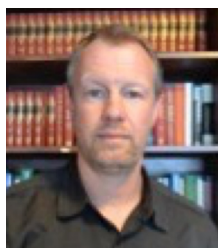
Our system is not perfect, but supporting inclusion means creating a bold vision and action plan that will support all public schools to embrace and implement inclusive practices such as universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and co-teaching approaches that bring together educators with diverse expertise and teaching experience.

Sadly, the text of this report points to an agenda of further segregation of students with "special needs" rather than an improvement of the province's implementation of inclusion.

[Read this editorial in full](#)



Alberta Professor Tim Loreman is Inclusive Education Canada Associate



IEC is supported by a number of educators, academics and parents across Canada. They provide professional support to our

activities and contribute to our efforts to provide information and training on inclusive education.

One of our associates in Western Canada is Tim Loreman. Tim Loreman is Dean of Research and Faculty Development at Concordia University College of Alberta and a Professor in the Faculty of Education. He is also an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. He has taught in a variety of classroom settings in Australia and Canada and worked in the Faculty of Education at Monash University in Melbourne before joining Concordia in 2003.

His active research interests include inclusive education and pedagogy. In 2010 he was Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Bologna in Italy and in 2013 was Visiting Research Professor at Queens University Belfast, Northern Ireland. He has held a number of major Canadian research grants and recently completed a large cross-institutional and cross-national CIDA project aimed at reform of the education system in Ukraine in order to better support inclusive education.

His current international work is with school systems in Pacific island nations. Dr. Loreman was founding editor of the International Journal

of Whole Schooling and is currently co-editor of *Exceptionality Education International*.

Dr. Loreman is the host of The Scholarship of Inclusive Education Podcast, available on iTunes. He is on the Executive of the International Inclusive Teacher Education Research Forum.

His key interests include Pre-service teacher education, pedagogy, inclusive education in international contexts. His recent research work includes the following:

Loreman, T., Deppeler, J.M., & Harvey, D.H.P. (2010). *Inclusive education: Supporting diversity in the classroom* (2nd Ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin. *Winner of the Exceptionality Education International 'Book of the Year Award 2011'

Loreman, T. (2014). Teacher education, professional development, and student diversity. In J. Andrews & J. Lupart (Eds.), *Understanding and addressing diversity in Canadian schools*. Toronto, Canada: Nelson. pp. 187-215.

Loreman, T. (2013). Canadian pre-service teachers and exclusion: Views and origins. In P. Jones (Ed.), *Infusing insider perspectives into inclusive teacher learning: Potentials and challenges*. Abbingdon, UK: Routledge.

Loreman, T. (2010). A content-infused approach to pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive education. In C. Forlin (Ed.), *Teacher education for inclusion: Changing paradigms and innovative approaches*. Abbingdon, UK: Routledge.

Loreman, T. (2013). Measuring inclusive education outcomes in Alberta, Canada. *International Journal Inclusive Education*. DOI:10.1080 / 13603116.2013.788223. Published online. Print publication to follow.

Loreman, T., Sharma, U., & Forlin, C. (2013). Do pre-service teachers feel ready to teach in inclusive classrooms? A four-country study of teaching self-efficacy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(1), 27-44. Available at: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol38/iss1/3>

McGhie-Richmond, D., Irvine, A., Loreman, T., Cizman, J., & Lupart, J. (2013). Teacher perspectives on inclusive education in rural Alberta, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education*. 36(1). 195-239.

Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2012). Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices: An international validation. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 12(1), 12-21.

Forlin, C., Earle, C., Loreman, T., & Sharma, U. (2011). The Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) scale for measuring teachers' perceptions about inclusion. *Exceptionality Education International*, 21(3), 50-65.

Irvine, A., Lupart, J., Loreman, T., & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2010). Educational leadership to create authentic inclusive schools: The experiences of principals in a rural school district. *Exceptionality Education International*, 20(2), 70-88.

Loreman, T. (2010). Essential inclusive education-related outcomes for Alberta pre-service teachers. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(2) 124-142.

STOP HURTING KIDS: Restraint and Seclusion in BC Schools

by Karen DeLong, Inclusion BC - November 2014

“Internationally, seclusion is understood as a violation of human rights. Standards forthcoming in the European Union recommend alternatives to traditional seclusion practice in order to avoid the negative impacts of isolation and emphasize engagement....”

– BC Ministry of Health, 2012

In the summer of 2013, Inclusion BC and the Family Support Institute launched a web-based provincial survey on the use of restraint and seclusion in BC schools. This was a direct result of the increase in calls to both organizations from families whose children were subjected to these aversive techniques. One situation in particular triggered this campaign—a student with autism was placed into a closet which had been transformed into what the school named his personal workspace. He was forcibly taken to this room frequently, often in the peak of anxiety. The room was equipped with mats, a heavy door with a small, high window and was blocked from leaving by staff. (See photo) Evidence of physical injury was often seen by his family after incidences that occurred during seclusion.

The survey included 52 questions, was anonymous and required that all participants were parents/guardians. Approximately 200 individual responses were received over the 6 week period that the survey was open. The results and personal comments were disturbing. Here is a sampling of the questions & answers:

70 people answered the question, “When your child was physically restrained, what form of restraint was used?” Answers included seated hold, vertical hold, prone hold (face down), supine hold (face up) and being dragged out of the classroom by wrists, the use of cuffs, straps, mats and blankets.

“When you raised concerns or complained to the school, were you satisfied with the response?” Over 90% responded “no”.

It must not go unnoticed that an extraordinary 80% reported emotional trauma as an outcome and over 20% experienced physical injury. Not surprisingly, many said that these procedures increased the problematic behaviour that led staff to restrain/seclude the student in the first place. Another alarming fact that emerged was that parents are often not informed by the school when their child has been restrained or secluded. This is particularly concerning in instances where a child does not have the language skills to tell their parent and the parent is reliant on reports from others. One individual wrote that they received this information via an anonymous note on their car.

The results of this survey led to a public awareness campaign that included broad media coverage and distribution of our survey report. The survey results shocked the public and prompted more families to get in touch with us and share their stories.

An important aspect of this campaign is to raise awareness of the need for positive behaviour support

plans for students requiring such intervention and strategies in order to facilitate their inclusion within the classroom. Although most reported that a behaviour support plan and an Individualized Education Plan were on file with the school, the majority of these plans did not include an agreed upon restraint or seclusion action. In other words, these techniques are being used without adequate data to support these strategies and without parental consultation and approval.

Many parents simply give up and choose to either homeschool or seek private education—an expensive alternative for families who already carry a heavy load of caregiving. “We removed our son from public school this year, mainly due to this issue and its effects.”

“Pulled from public school setting this year as we found conditions unacceptable.”

There are several ethical issues related to the use of restraint and seclusion with children. For example there is a lack of evidence that these practices lead to positive outcomes (less problematic behaviour in the classroom. Conversely there is an increased potential for: physical injury and emotional trauma; use of these techniques at the exclusion of positive techniques to support students; and the higher incidence of use with children who have disabilities. Of particular concern to groups such as Inclusion BC and the Family Support Institute is that while we say that our schools have become more inclusive over the past 30 years by welcoming students into their neighbourhood schools, these practices are lurking within their very walls. The practice of restraint and seclusion is a systematic promotion of the removal of these children from access to an education with their peers.

Continued



Inclusion BC and the Family Institute will continue to work on this issue and have begun working with the Ministry of Education on some provincial guidelines and on teacher training on Positive Behaviour Support.

For links to our Survey Report and Parent Guide on Restraint and Seclusion at Stop Hurting Kids <http://www.inclusionbc.org/stophurtingkids>

Karen De Long is the Director of Community

Development at Inclusion BC and includes inclusive education in her work. Inclusion BC kdelong@inclusionbc.org

British Columbia: Education System Puts Students at Risk

The recent teacher strike in BC laid bare a serious problem in Canada's move to have more inclusive schools. Teacher unions identify class size and composition as one of the most critical issues in schools today.

While the target is to have no more than 3 special needs students per class, teachers suggest it is often more and in some instances elementary school teachers have nine or ten of these students in their classroom.

The presence of students with special needs or disabilities in classrooms can be a potent wedge issue that highlights concerns about funding and staffing levels. While teacher unions tend to argue for a limit on how many students with special needs can be placed in a class, parents assert the bias and prejudicial effect of purposefully altering classroom composition on the basis of disability and labels. Community schools and the right of the child to be served in a local class with peers is the priority.

Parents assert that placement of the child in an appropriate class in the community school is a human right, and that concerns for quality must focus on providing sufficient support to teachers. The debate on this issue in British Columbia is not confined to the province, it is echoed in other provinces as well. Below is an opinion piece from Inclusion BC Executive Director Faith Bodnar and a colleague from the Vancouver Sun.

All children deserve quality education

Op/Ed in the Vancouver Sun

Opinion: Special needs kids in B.C. aren't always getting the chances to succeed by Faith Bodnar and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Special to the Vancouver Sun – October 2, 2014

The following letter by Inclusion BC Executive Director Faith Bodnar and the Representative for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond was printed in the Vancouver Sun on October 2.

Thankfully, B.C. schools are open again after a difficult period for parents and caregivers. Despite this, big questions still loom — What will be done to ensure that supports for children with special needs foster real inclusion in classrooms, and that these children reach their full potential academically, socially and with the support of their peers? What will be done so that families do not have to search for support for their children outside the system?

While some details have been released about the labour settlement, students with special needs and their parents have yet to see how — or even if — learning conditions will improve. And without some fundamental and evidence-based changes, the likelihood of improvement for these students is small. Unless there are clear assurances that all students are valued, we risk the continuing decline of our entire education system.

We have seen many instances in recent years where students with learning disabilities, such as significant reading delays, have not had their needs met, and parents have scrambled to find private tutors and supports to ensure that their child learns and achieves. Of deeper concern are those students who have behavioural issues requiring more intensive support so that they can be included in the classroom instead of being streamed out of class or into “soft rooms” or other exclusionary measures. Driving these children out of the classroom, and even sometimes out of the school, ignores their needs, and creates a cascading range of social problems that will follow these children into adulthood, at a far greater economic cost than appropriate school and community-based



support.

Education policy and practice must acknowledge the fundamental right of every child to receive a quality, inclusive education. It is the responsibility of government, educators and each one of us to ensure that all students' needs are met. An estimated 60,000 students with special needs attend public schools in B.C., representing 10 per cent of the total student population. These students range from those with sensory disabilities to severe behavioural problems, developmental disabilities, the autism spectrum, learning disabilities, and the gifted.

As prescribed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, each of these students has the right to a quality education and to attain the highest level possible. Further, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states children students should "receive the support required, within the general

education system, to facilitate their effective education."

Despite Canada being a signatory to both conventions, we know that many children with special needs in B.C. do not fully realize these rights. It is time for the provincial government to make good on the commitments made on an international stage, to the citizens of B.C., especially our children and youth.

Inclusion doesn't mean parking children in a class without needed supports and expecting the teacher to meet their needs. It means providing nurturing classrooms that support every learner and offering specialist behavioural supports to assist teachers in making this work. Inclusion is not only a legal and moral obligation — it is best practice. Extensive research, including a recent study done at Simon Fraser University, demonstrates that all students benefit from inclusive classrooms.

Still, despite this knowledge, it has come to our attention through numerous cases that many schools continue with outdated, harmful and exclusionary practices. Physical restraints and isolation are widespread and continue to be seen as acceptable. Once again, we call for legislation and a ministerial order prohibiting these practices. Students with special needs in B.C. are routinely segregated, isolated and subjected to aversive treatment by a system set up to support them. Is it any wonder they experience bullying by their peers?

The system needs to address the root causes of these practices — there are not enough appropriate, positive supports in schools, not enough trained and experienced individuals working with children with special needs, accountable to them and their caregivers. Regular auditing and reporting on completion of Individual Education Plans, outcomes and measures of achievement needs to be implemented to demonstrate what supports B.C. children are actually receiving.

It is ... time to move the discussion away from who should or should not be included in our schools, and on to the fundamental question of what must be done to provide all B.C.'s students with a quality, inclusive education and a system of supports that works for children, families and communities.

Faith Bodnar is the executive director of Inclusion BC. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond is B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth.



“Inclusion: Where are we?”

Karen Morrison is an educator with experience in the special education system in Ontario. Currently acting as a curriculum developer with the Rick Hanson School Program, a project of the Rick Hanson Foundation, Karen has written a personal reflection on the current status of inclusive education in Canada. Her paper is well referenced and provides interesting reading for teachers, parents and school officials.

Karen’s article gets into the topic with the following:

Inclusive education continues to be a current topic in education which has been widely studied and debated. While there is general agreement that inclusion is valued in the Canadian education system, what this means and how this is achieved is by no means uniform. Current literature demonstrates that there continue to be some barriers to effective inclusion but that there are schools and boards who are doing an excellent job of ensuring that all students are valued members of their school community. The issue is not whether inclusion works, but how it can be effectively implemented. This article, is a review of current literature that outlines some common barriers and exemplary practices, and concludes with some suggestions for best practice.



Inclusion is a philosophy that all people in an organization, culture and community are respected and valued members of that group. In education, inclusion is a philosophy and an approach to educating students with various needs and challenges. In the educational setting it is often used to indicate the place where children with varying needs and abilities are educated, but real inclusion is more than this (Bennett, 2009; Porter, 2010).

Under the inclusion model, students with special needs spend most or all of their time with their non-disabled peers. The term inclusion came to be associated with placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms as their primary placement (Sailor, 1991; 2002). The critical features of inclusion are defined as:

- a) all students attend the school they would attend if non-disabled (with rare exceptions);
- b) school and general education classroom placements are age/grade appropriate; and
- c) special education supports are provided in the general education classroom (Sailor, W., 2002).

The balance of evidence shows favourable academic outcomes

for students with disabilities educated in inclusive settings (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Summary evidence concludes that inclusion does not compromise general education students’ outcomes (Sharpe, et. al, 1994; Salisbury & Palombaro, 1998; McDonnell et al., 1997) and that ‘typical’ peers benefit from involvement and relationships with students who have disabilities in inclusive settings (Kishi & Meyer, 1994; Helmstetter et al., 1994). There is a solid bank of research to support the benefits of inclusion for all students, academically and socially (Kochhar et. al., Taymans , 2000; Walther-Thomas et al. ,1996; Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Hunt, 2000). Furthermore the presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms leads to new learning opportunities for general education students (Evans, et al., 1994; Salisbury, et al., 1997). Some research shows that inclusion helps all students understand the importance of working together, and fosters a sense of tolerance and empathy among the student body (Gilles, 2004). Supporters of a full inclusion model argue that excluding children with disabilities from general education classes is a human rights issue and that inclusion is grounded in ethical social participation (Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Sapon & Shevin, 1992; Sailor, 2002).

Karen concludes her article on the current state of the evolution of inclusive education with the following key lessons from current research about barriers and best practices to advance inclusion:

- Society is moving from a medical to a social model of disability;
- While the topic of how inclusion is practiced is hotly debated, there is agreement that inclusion has value in the education system;

- Many good models for successful inclusion exist and lead us to understand that is not a question of 'if' schools can be inclusive but 'how';
- While accessibility of physical spaces has improved, there are some key areas that require attention. School can assess their current practices and identify gaps;
- Disability awareness programs are effective. Various forms of disability awareness have been shown to be effective such as first-hand accounts and video interviews.
- Teachers can support social inclusion and reduce bullying through existing social and emotional learning programs and disability awareness programs (such as the Rick Hansen School Program), and by looking for opportunities to support the development of friendships within the classroom and school;
- Administrators are key individuals for creating, supporting and leading exemplary inclusive practices in schools; Teachers are essential to the implementation of inclusive practices, but many still feel inadequately prepared to do so. Teachers who are knowledgeable are more likely to support inclusive practices and to be in a position to teach those values to our students. Teacher education is an effective avenue for addressing gaps in attitudes, knowledge and understanding to prepare all teachers to accommodate and educate students with disabilities;
- Teachers' own attitudes affect practices and what they communicate and model in the classroom. Teachers can examine their own beliefs and schools can conduct surveys to assess attitudes and needs;
- Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction approaches hold promise for addressing the academic needs of all students in inclusive classrooms.

[Link to full article](#)

Inclusion BC recognizes Senior Administrator Laurie Meston – National Inclusive Education Award



Mrs. Laurie Meston who is currently the Acting Superintendent of the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows School District was recognized by Inclusion BC and the Canadian Association for Community Living with a National Award in 2014. Mrs. Meston began her career

with the district at a time when inclusion in the school system for students with special needs was a brand new model. In a variety of roles such as district consultant, vice principal, principal, Director of Student Support Services, Deputy and Acting Superintendent, Mrs. Meston has translated her belief, that all students must be supported to fully participate in all aspects of school life, into concrete policies and practices.

For the past 30 years she has continuously demonstrated her enthusiasm to go above and beyond what is expected in order to establish a welcoming and inclusive learning experience for all students. For example, Mrs. Meston

has ensured that all students participated in all school events, field trips and in particular an annual outdoor education trip, no matter the location. She provided direct, ongoing support to school staff by:

- Being actively involved in developing and implementing programs for children who challenge schools the most,
- Being a liaison between school and home,
- Helping to find solutions when issues arose.

Continued...



Among her many, many accomplishments, Mrs. Meston:

- Led the district in the very first Ministry of Education internal and external review of Special Education,
- Established what was perhaps the first Inclusive Education Committee in the province, and
- Served as president of BC Council for Administrators of Special Education and developed teaching resources designed for leaning assistance and resource teachers.

A colleague of Mrs. Meston's says this about her:

"She has lived and breathed being part of moving from more segregated settings to all children attending their neighbourhood school. She has championed ensuring that all children are educated with their peers, working with parents to develop comfortableness with their children attending the local school, listening to the concerns and fears of teachers about teaching children with special needs and promoting the motto, of "Try it, Fly it, Fix it". She walks the talk."

Mrs. Meston continues to provide leadership and support to principals to ensure schools respond from an inclusive mindset - all in the midst of budget challenges.

Inclusive education means ensuring that all students are educated with their peers in regular classrooms, have equitable access to learning and achievement, and are welcomed, valued and supported in the education system.

For more than ten years Inclusion BC, in conjunction with the Canadian Association for Community Living, have been presenting awards to individuals and teams who are making a positive contribution to inclusive education in BC.

In Canada – February 2015 is National Inclusive Education Month

Do your part to recognize a parent, a teacher or a community group – working to make your community and your community schools more inclusive.

Segregation is the Past – Inclusion is the present and the Future

Check out our website: www.inclusiveeducation.ca

Share you thoughts on inclusive education with us on our Facebook page. [Click Here](#)



Diversity includes. On se ressemble.



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We welcome your comments, feedback, questions and suggestions.