

# education watch:

## an update on inclusive education

Volume 5, Issue 3 – Summer 2015

### Q&A on Inclusive Education with Peggy Blair, Superintendent of Education (Learning Services) – Avon Maitland District, Ontario



#### **Peggy, why does Avon Maitland have a “Learning for All” program?**

Learning For All is the title of a document from the Ontario Ministry of Education. This

document guides the work of district school boards in our province for all students. The foundation for work with all students is based on some articulated beliefs including “All students can succeed” and “Classroom teachers are the key educators for a student’s literacy and numeracy development”. We have used these beliefs to shape the supports required to bring inclusion of students to scale. To ensure students with special education needs are successful in regular classroom settings, we have introduced fifteen ‘Learning For All Coaches’ to partner with teachers in the elementary and secondary panels.

teachers faced with meeting the needs of students that had not been in regular classrooms. I also knew that if we wanted coaches to be welcomed into classrooms, they could not be perceived as an ‘expert’. As Steven Katz has said, “If we knew the answer to a problem of practice, then we would already be doing it”.

The role of the coach needed to be a job-embedded position where both people worked on the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle: Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect. The student learning need would become the teacher learning need. To be an effective partner would require a coach to be in a learning stance not a judgmental one. The focus for the partnership was to be based on key elements of the Learning For All K-12 document: *differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, assessment for, as and of learning*, in conjunction with the IEP.

In keeping with the AMDSB’s Strategic Plan, I also wanted to

*Continued on page 2*

#### **What is the role of the teachers working as “coaches”?**

Prior to starting on the journey to inclusion, I reviewed current literature and best practices related to systemic change. I knew that a consultative role would not offer enough support for classroom



Canadian Association  
for Community Living

Association canadienne pour  
l’intégration communautaire

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*Peggy Blair with Amy Kipfer an Avon Maitland “Learning For All Coach”.*

have coaches and teachers leverage technology (largely iPads) to enhance the learning of our students. To ensure teachers felt supported, I felt that coaches needed to be in the school working alongside a specific teacher(s) at least once a week for up to a half-day for semester or the entire school year. When hiring for these fifteen positions, we looked for teachers with a variety of backgrounds not just special education. This was intentional on my part. Successful inclusion of students requires a team of people looking from various perspectives at how best to do things.

Now in the second year of this work, Learning For All Coaches continue to work in collaborative partnerships with teachers in regular classrooms who have students with specific learning profiles such as developmental disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, autism or multiple disabilities. In the past, these students would have been placed in a self-contained setting. Now these young people are part of the larger school experience.

### **What does it mean for a school to be inclusive in Avon Maitland?**

We are working towards a preferred vision of inclusion in the board. This would mean that students are placed in regular classrooms in their home school with age-appropriate peers. Students are included both socially and academically. A sense of belonging is at the core of inclusion. I would like all people to feel that diversity enriches each school community.

We do have a draft definition that was wordsmithed by a number of school administrators. This definition is undergoing some changes as a result of input from the Special Education Advisory Committee. It will continue to be refined through consultation with additional stakeholders.

I have learned that the work to build inclusive school communities will require a sustained effort over many years with very intentional leadership moves by staff and students alike.

### **Avon Maitland has been described as a “small, rural school district”. How does this affect your efforts to strengthen inclusive education practices?**

Yes we are a smaller board – approx. 16, 000 students. There are several benefits to working on inclusive education in a smaller school board. Because of the size of the board, we have less central infrastructure. This means that we can be responsive to student needs in a quick, direct manner. The lack of central staff also results in the need for staff to be industrious; people have to operate outside narrow boundaries of specific roles. Another benefit of bringing inclusion to scale in a smaller board is the ability to move things along more quickly. As well, the central staff in a small board has the ability to know the strengths and needs of individual students at a very granular level. Finally, there is a greater likelihood of personal connections between staff and students. They would see each other outside of school hours in neighbourhoods and communities.

*Continued on page 14*

**We asked Peggy to share several anecdotes about staff members – a principal or perhaps a teacher – who has made a big change in practice linked to the “Learning for All” program?**

See pages 10 to 13 for a few examples of changes in practice linked to the move to inclusive education from Avon Maitland Schools.

# Ontario Professors Honoured: Expert Support for Inclusive Education Recognized

Sheila Bennett and Jacqueline Specht have contributed a great deal to the development of inclusive education in Canada. They are both Education Faculty at Ontario universities. Sheila Bennett is at Brock University in St. Catherine's and Jacqueline Specht is at Western University in London.

Both have had public school and academic positions and have grounded their work in university teaching and research with personal experience in the public education system.

Specht and Bennett were both nominated by Community Living Ontario to be recognized for their work by CACL with a National Inclusive Education Award. The presentation took place in March 2015 at a symposium held in Kingston, Ontario. The event was a joint project of Community Living Ontario and Inclusive Education Canada. Both recipients were presenters at the event, which included educators from Ontario public schools. The presentation was made by Kimberley Gavin of Community Living Ontario and Gordon Porter, the Director of Inclusive Education Canada.

Sheila Bennett has been the chair of the Department of Teacher Education at Brock. Professionally, Sheila has worked in Newfoundland and Ontario as a



***Sheila Bennett and Jacqueline Specht with National Inclusive Education Awards – 2015.***

classroom and special education teacher, school board resource person and faculty member. She has been active in the field of special education for many years and has been involved in policy and practical issues in the field. She completed her Ph.D. at OISE, University of Toronto. Co-chair of the *Special Education Transformation Document* (Ontario) as well as co-author of *Special Education in Ontario Schools*, Sheila has dedicated her career to working with educators and students in her chosen field.

Jacqueline Specht is an associate professor at Western who teaches in the area of educational psychology and special education. She completed her Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Western Ontario. Jacqueline taught in the psychology department at Huron University College before joining the Western Faculty of Education in 2003. Currently she is the director of the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education. Her research interests encompass pedagogical issues surrounding the participation of children in the school system.



***Jacqueline Specht and Sheila Bennett with Kingston symposium participant, Uton Robinson, Executive superintendent of special-education programs. Toronto District School Board.***



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## ARCH Appoints New Executive Director: Roberto Lattanzio

Roberto (Rob) Lattanzio has been named the Executive Director of ARCH Disability Law Centre in Toronto. Rob has served as staff lawyer at ARCH for over 10 years and, in the past few, has distinguished himself as director of ARCH's student programs. Over these years, Roberto has developed a significant expertise in disability law along with an excellent relationship with the diverse disability communities that ARCH serves.

Rob Lattanzio has been a valuable resource person to the Community Living groups in Ontario. He has also played an important role in Inclusive Education Canada's training and education efforts in Ontario, most recently at sessions in Kingston, London and Toronto. IEC has been pleased to have him as a member of our Network of Associates. We look forward to continued cooperation with Rob and with ARCH Disability Law Centre.

Rob joined ARCH as an articling student in 2003 and was called to the Bar of Ontario in 2004. He received his LL.B and B.C.L. law degrees from McGill University in 2003, and received his B.A. from Concordia University in 1999. He has been involved in test case litigation at different levels of court, including the Supreme Court



**Roberto (Rob) Lattanzio**

of Canada, and has made law reform submissions to various levels of government, committees, and administrative bodies. Roberto has presented and written on topics such as equality and human rights law, administrative law, education

law, legislative reform, and social science evidence. Roberto has a long-standing interest in disability issues and had extensive work experience with disability communities prior to attending law school.

# Canadian Research on Inclusive Education

## Academic articles:

- Thompson, S.A., Lyons, W., & Timmons, V. (2014). **Inclusive education policy: what the leadership of Canadian teacher associations has to say about it.** *International Journal of Inclusive Education*

Researchers from Saskatchewan conducted this nationwide study as part of the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance to explore the extent to which Canadian provincial/ territorial teacher association leadership personnel were aware of inclusive education legislation and policy. Results indicated a strong awareness and support for inclusive education policy, contingent upon adequate resourcing. The study explores this finding and discusses the implications these attributes may have on inclusive education.

[https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/1-2014\\_-\\_thompson\\_inclusive-education-policy-what-leadership-of-canadian-teacher-associations-has-to-say-about-it.pdf](https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/1-2014_-_thompson_inclusive-education-policy-what-leadership-of-canadian-teacher-associations-has-to-say-about-it.pdf)

- Tétrault, S., Freeman, A., Carrière, M., Beaupré, P., Gascon, H., & Marier Deschênes, P. (2014). **Understanding the parents of children with special needs: collaboration between health, social and education networks.** *Child: Care, Health, and Development* 40(6), 825 -832.

This qualitative research study takes place in the province of Quebec. The researchers use interviews with parents of children with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties to evaluate parents perspectives of the implementation of complementarity of services between health and social service, and education networks. In addition, the study explores how this implementation affects children with special needs and their families. Findings indicate that school inclusion of children with special needs remains a challenge for all societies. However the researchers denote the intention of the Quebec government to promote an alliance between health and social services and education holds significant possibilities for benefitting children and their families.

[https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/1-2014\\_-\\_s\\_tecc81treault\\_-\\_understandingtheparentsofchildrenwithspecialneeds.pdf](https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/1-2014_-_s_tecc81treault_-_understandingtheparentsofchildrenwithspecialneeds.pdf)

- Gilham, C. & Williamson, W.J (2014). **Inclusion's confusion in Alberta.** *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 18(6), 553-566

This article explicitly examines a six year tracking of Alberta Education's series of reforms relating to inclusion. The authors indicate that Alberta Education still claims to be committed to inclusion, however has moved from a disability and coding system, formerly known as "Action on Inclusion" to what is now being identified as "Diversity", with steps towards an inclusionary school system. Major obstacles to this plan are identified and discussed.

[https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/1-2014\\_-\\_thompson\\_inclusive-education-policy-what-leadership-of-canadian-teacher-associations-has-to-say-about-it.pdf](https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/1-2014_-_thompson_inclusive-education-policy-what-leadership-of-canadian-teacher-associations-has-to-say-about-it.pdf)

## In other news...

A positive feature story about a partnership between Alberta Association for Community Living and a program called "Campus Connections" at MacEwan University, which focuses on inclusive support for students with developmental disabilities in post-secondary settings.

<http://thegriff.ca/2014/10/campus-connections-fostering-full-experience>



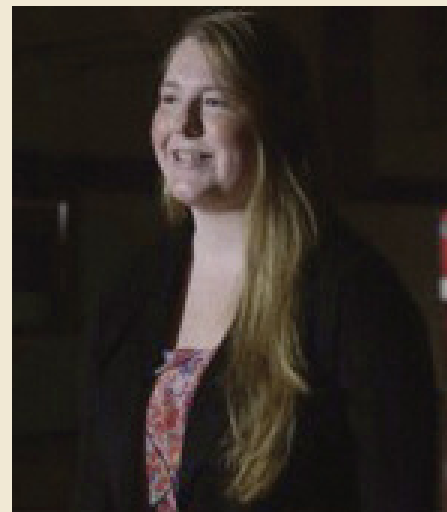
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# Inclusive Education by Kaitlinn Shaw

During the first annual Choosin' Inclusion Symposium, held at the Stratford Rotary Centre, Student Trustee Kaitlinn Shaw of Stratford Northwestern Secondary School delivered an amazing and uplifting speech on inclusive education. She made such an impression on everyone in attendance that there have been many requests to view her presentation.

This powerful story recounts Kaitlinn's first day of grade 7 and what we can all do to truly make our schools a more inclusive place to learn in a positive safe environment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1zn1nmhGnc&feature=youtu.be>



## Avon Maitland — Learning for All Coaching Program

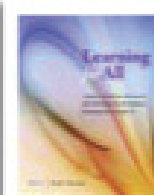
### Learning For All Coaches

AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

A Publication of Learning Services

#### Vision

The Shared Beliefs first presented in the Ministry document *Education For All*, released in 2005, represent the philosophy upon which the role of the Learning for All coach is based. This K-8 document emphasizes strategies to promote successful outcomes for all learners. In 2011, a draft version of *Learning For All* was released which extended these principles K through 12.



*Amy Kipfer, Learning for All Coordinator with graphic illustrating the model at an Inclusive Education Canada session in Kingston, Ontario.*

Avon Maitland District School Board has developed a K-12 coaching model to build teacher capacity in order to foster positive inclusive learning environments board wide. Partnerships have been established between coaches and classroom teachers to work through the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle. The goal of the work is to build greater teacher capacity in the successful inclusion of all students. Principles from the Learning for All document including Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning are the foundations of this work.

# Nova Scotia: An Update on Inclusive Education



**Hon. Karen Casey,**  
**Minister of Education,**  
**Nova Scotia**

Hon. Karen Casey, Minister of Education in Nova Scotia released her department's plan for improving education at the end of January 2015. The plan – *"The 3 Rs: Renew Refocus Rebuild"* – is in response to the October 2014 report of the Minister's Panel on Education – *Disrupting the Status Quo: Nova Scotians Demand a Better Future for Every Student*

The October report drew reaction when it recommended the return to "congregated classes" in Nova Scotia schools. This was based on the conclusion that "inclusion is not working well for every student." We published several items on the Nova Scotia developments in our last issue – Fall 2014 Volume 5 Issue 2. The Link:

<https://inclusiveeducationcanada.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/education-watch-fall-2014-active-links.pdf>

In the January 2015 action plan, Minister Casey committed to develop four pillars for the Nova Scotia public education system. See text box.

Among the commitments to enhance inclusive education were efforts to monitor and improve Individual Program Plans (IPP) through better use of technology and by developing provincial criteria for placing a student on an IPP. The Action Plan continues –

*"This needs-based model of service delivery supports teaching and learning for all students. While most students' learning needs can be met through large group instruction within the classroom, some students may periodically require small group instruction and/or intensive individualized programming outside the classroom."*

Among other things, the Action Plan states that –

***In order to implement the new model, we will***

- ***Create a Continuum of Support to provide a broad range of programming options for students with special needs***

The Minister has established a process to work on these matters and parents and family advocacy groups are participants, including the Nova Scotia Association for Community Living. Jean Coleman, NSACL Executive Director is involved and is confident the success of inclusion in Nova Scotia schools can be enhanced by positive actions. "We look forward to further improvements in making inclusion a reality in Nova Scotia schools. We are especially concerned that excellent practices in some communities be shared and implemented throughout our province. Parents find the differences in school and classroom practice to be great and we know strong leadership from the Department of Education can make a difference", she stated.

We look forward to following developments in Nova Scotia and will update information on our website – [www.inclusiveeducation.ca](http://www.inclusiveeducation.ca)

To access the full Nova Scotia Action Plan follow the link below. The section on inclusive education is on pages 26-31.

Link to the Nova Scotia Minister's *"The 3 Rs Report"*:

[https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/2015/Education\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/2015/Education_Action_Plan_2015_EN.pdf)

Nova Scotia's  
Action Plan  
for Education  
2015

**The 3 Rs:**  
**Renew**  
**Refocus**  
**Rebuild**

## THE FOUR PILLARS

**A Strong Foundation to  
Renew, Refocus, and  
Rebuild**

The actions in this Plan comprise four pillars, each one essential to a strong foundation for public education. The pillars are interconnected and intertwined to reinforce our focus on student success:

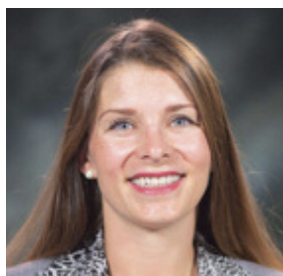
1. A modern education system
2. An innovative curriculum
3. Inclusive school environments
4. Excellence in teaching and leadership



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Inclusive Education Canada has a Network of Associates, who assist us in our work in various ways to support educators and families – indeed all the stakeholders interested in advancing inclusive education in the schools and classrooms across Canada. Through IEC we can access members of our Network for training, consultation and program support.

See our full list of IEC Associates at <http://inclusiveeducation.ca/about/associates/>



## Gabrielle Young

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Faculty of Education

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Dr. Gabrielle Young is an Assistant Professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where she teaches graduate courses such as Nature and Assessment of Learning Disabilities, as well as undergraduate courses such as Nature and Characteristics of Learning Disabilities, Inclusive Practices for Students with Learning Disabilities, and the Practicum in Special Education.

**Interests:** Gabrielle's research interests include the use of assistive technology by students with special learning needs, learners' self-beliefs and the self-esteem of individuals with learning disabilities, and the use of universal design for learning and differentiated instruction to support the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the general education classroom.

### Recent research/publications:

- Young, G., & MacCormack, J. (2014). Assistive technology for students with learning disabilities: An evidence-based summary for teachers. Retrieved June 26, 2014 from: <http://ldatschool.ca/classroom/literacy/assistive-technology/>
- Young, G. (2013). Assistive technology for students with learning disabilities: Perceptions of students and their parents. *The Morning Watch*, 41(1-2), 1-7. <http://www.mun.ca/educ/faculty/mwatch/vol41/fall2013/gabrielleYoung.pdf>
- Young, G. (2013). Using metaphor and poetry to portray the process of becoming a researcher. *The Morning Watch*, 40(1-2), 1-12. [http://www.mun.ca/educ/faculty/mwatch/mwatch\\_sped13/Young.pdf](http://www.mun.ca/educ/faculty/mwatch/mwatch_sped13/Young.pdf)

### Priority areas for consultation or training:

Inclusive education for students with learning disabilities, universal design for learning, and assistive and instructional technology for learning.

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## Gillian Parekh

Post-doctoral Fellow, University of Toronto

On leave as Research Coordinator, Toronto District School Board

Gillian Parekh is a SSHRC postdoctoral fellow at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She started her fellowship in January 2015. Gillian is on leave as a Research Coordinator for the Toronto District School Board. She has a doctorate in Critical Disability Studies from York University. Her areas of research

include structural analyses of education institutions, their relationship to students' experiences of belonging and exclusion in school, demographic trends, and the role of education in the reproduction of poverty and privilege in broader society. Over the past few years, Gillian has developed resources and presented on classroom, school and board-wide strategies for implementing inclusive education as well as explored the social, political, and economic impact of special education systems. Gillian has participated in several Inclusive Education Canada training sessions in the last few years.

**Interests:** Gillian approaches inclusive and special education from a social justice perspective and challenges current notions and praxis that lead to the stigmatization and segregation of students identified with exceptionalities. Her work seeks to deconstruct conceptions of normalcy and exceptionality by exploring the social relations of disability to demographic characteristics such as race, class, and gender.

### Publications:

- A case for inclusive education (Parekh, 2013)  
[https://www.academia.edu/6583218/A\\_Case\\_for\\_Inclusive\\_Education](https://www.academia.edu/6583218/A_Case_for_Inclusive_Education)
- Structured Pathways: An exploration of programs of study, school-wide and in-school programs, as well as promotion and transference across secondary schools in the Toronto District School Board (Parekh, 2013)  
[https://www.academia.edu/6656796/STRUCTURED\\_PATHWAYS\\_An\\_Exploration\\_of\\_Programs\\_of\\_Study\\_SchoolWide\\_and\\_InSchool\\_Programs\\_as\\_well\\_as\\_Promotion\\_and\\_Transference\\_across\\_Secondary\\_Schools\\_in\\_the\\_Toronto\\_District\\_School\\_Board](https://www.academia.edu/6656796/STRUCTURED_PATHWAYS_An_Exploration_of_Programs_of_Study_SchoolWide_and_InSchool_Programs_as_well_as_Promotion_and_Transference_across_Secondary_Schools_in_the_Toronto_District_School_Board)
- Special Education in the TDSB and Ontario (Brown & Parekh, 2013) –  
[https://www.academia.edu/6951072/Special\\_Education\\_in\\_the\\_TDSB\\_and\\_Ontario\\_An\\_Overview\\_2011-13](https://www.academia.edu/6951072/Special_Education_in_the_TDSB_and_Ontario_An_Overview_2011-13)
- The Toronto Connection: Poverty, perceived ability, and access to education equity (Parekh, Killoran, and Crawford, 2011). Canadian Journal of Education.  
<http://journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/view/941>
- Special Education: Structural overview and student demographics (Brown & Parekh, 2010).  
[https://www.academia.edu/4456379/Special\\_Education\\_Structural\\_Overview\\_and\\_Student\\_Demographics](https://www.academia.edu/4456379/Special_Education_Structural_Overview_and_Student_Demographics)
- The intersection of disability, achievement, and equity: A system review of special education in the TDSB (Brown & Parekh, 2013)  
[https://www.academia.edu/6606833/The\\_intersection\\_of\\_disability\\_achievement\\_and\\_equity\\_A\\_system\\_review\\_of\\_special\\_education\\_in\\_the\\_TDSB](https://www.academia.edu/6606833/The_intersection_of_disability_achievement_and_equity_A_system_review_of_special_education_in_the_TDSB)

**Consultation:** Inclusive education policy; Large system implementation; Critical disability theory and how it relates to inclusive and special education; Disproportionate representation in special education.

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# A Stratford Secondary Teacher's Learning Journey

"Very simply I look at the class, the students and the classroom and choose my delivery methods based on that. What methods will give the most students the opportunity to succeed." That's Dean Elief speaking, a Secondary Teacher at Stratford's Northwestern Secondary School. Dean teaches Travel and Tourism at his school and that includes classes on foods and cooking. He works with Learning For All Coach Amy Crummer. Dean has developed strategies to get all his students engaged and participating in his classes – a challenge, but an important one to take on. He shares a few thoughts on his efforts:

*My most important adaptation? In one word – fluidity! –And that means from semester to semester; class to class; day to day; minute to minute." A teacher has to try new strategies and concepts to make more students feel included more often.*

*For example: no where in my course outline does it say students must be able to read to complete tasks in may of my classes. So why would I mainly deliver essential information in that way? It would be nice if every student could read well, but if they are working on it or struggling with it, there are ways I can work around that in my*



**Dean Elief in his kitchen classroom at NWSS.**



**Amy Crummer, a Learning For All coach**

*classroom. My arsenal heading into class has more in it than reading – the larger the better. My favourite new tool is group work – but more specifically cooperative learning. The students can work in groups and sub-groups and this usually works out well for students with learning needs. Yesterday a student who is included seemed to feel a little too exposed in a pair but when he was in a bigger group, it was a successful class.*

# “How can we include more students, more often?”: *A Teachers Commentary*



By April Smith, Avon Maitland

Prior to arriving at my current grade 7-12 school I developed a personal entry plan, in particular to get to know more about my students. To do this, I reviewed the Individual Education Plans (IEP) for all students receiving special education supports. I noticed that some steps were being made to include students with visible disabilities such as Communication, Autism, Physical Disabilities.

I learned that a resource teacher was withdrawing more than half of the students who had “invisible” learning disabilities in the secondary panel for additional support for academic assessments. Some of the time this support was delivered by an educational assistant. However these same students had not been withdrawn in grade 7 or 8. Once in grade 9, students who had challenges with reading/writing at grade level were being sent to another room to receive support from an educational assistant or in some cases a resource teacher to prepare

for assessments.

So I wondered, “*Why is it necessary to withdraw so many of our students in grade 9 when they had never been withdrawn before?*” Some secondary teachers seemed to question who should provide instruction to students who had learning needs when academic assessments were to come.

I intentionally set out to develop a plan that would allow students in grades 9-12 with learning disabilities to receive supports in the regular classroom just as they had been provided in the junior grades. To do this I intentionally worked with a team made up of our Learning For All Coach, an elementary administrator, and the elementary and secondary resource teachers. It was there had to be a shift in teaching and assessment practices. I believed I could most effectively reach this goal by incorporating some principles of *universal design for learning* and *Learning For All: K-12: “Necessary for some and good for all”* (MoE, 2013).

We began by identifying the specific reasons why students were being removed from regular classes. Through observations, conversations with teachers and another look at the students’ IEPs it was obvious that there were big differences between practice in Grades 7 & 8 and high school. Grade 7 and 8 teachers were

focusing on assessment “as” and “for” learning, not just “of” learning. Also, when it was time to assess “of” learning, grade 7 and 8 teachers were not relying primarily on paper and pencil tests. In high school (Grade 9-12) students were being removed from their regular class if they received accommodation for verbatim reading and scribing by an adult when they had to complete a paper/pen test.

We had the team focus on other strategies that we could use so that secondary students would not have to be segregated for assessments. That was the starting point of the plan.

We began by looking to technology to help with needed accommodations. We gave all grade 8 students who were designated in an IEP to receive *verbatim scribing and reading* accommodations and iPad. Next, we trained these students on the iPad accessibility features, such as voice-to-text, and text-to-voice, as well as a few apps for scanning. We knew that used effectively, the iPad would help meet the student’s needs, provide for greater engagement, and most importantly ensure the student was included in the classroom.

The team trained all grade 7-12 teachers on the iPad accessibility features and met with parents about changing their child’s IEP to ensure they would receive effective

*Continued on page 12*



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## “How can we include more students, more often?”

*Continued from page 11*

support in the classroom. All the parents approached agreed to the change. The iPad is an effective assistive technology for students with reading and writing disabilities. This device is a useful tool for enhancing the learning of all students. The iPad has proven to increase overall student engagement.

The following year, when the students moved to grade 9, we offered their new secondary teachers a refresher course on strategies and accommodations. The Learning For All Coach provided

additional support to teachers along with the Information Technology Trainer. They worked in the classroom with students and staff as needed. The result: these students no longer have to leave the regular classroom for assessment purposes; they receive support in the classroom.

Teachers are now better able to recognize the diverse learning strengths and challenges of each of their students and are becoming more comfortable with technology in the classroom.

For me, the critical thinking

came first: “How can we include more students, more often?” The change in the support model for students came next. Currently, when students with learning challenges are required to demonstrate their learning via a pencil/paper task, secondary teachers are using accessibility features on their iPad to complete their assessments. As we move forward, teachers from both panels (junior and senior) continue to seek out and develop more effective ways to assess student learning and provide descriptive feedback.

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## Coaching and Inclusion

By Patty Brintnell, Exeter Elementary School

My thinking and my practice have certainly changed in the last year. Before being involved with a *Learning for All Coach*, I believed inclusion meant having a student with “*differabilities*” somewhere in my classroom, physically speaking. That student might not be doing anything that remotely resembled what the rest of the class was doing. Now, I look at how I can adapt activities in my classroom so that such students truly are a part of it.

In some cases, it involves “tweaking” an activity that we already do so the student can be involved. For example, when we are playing a counting game in French with a ball, I have specific expectations like: for example if the ball hits you (even though it



*LFA Coach Lorrie Goos with a student.*

was meant for someone else), you must grab it and say the number before passing it on. In the past, students would give it to the person it was intended for (which demonstrates good manners). However, that was a source of frustration for my student with autism because she "counts" each number in her head as the ball touches someone. For my student with CP, his EA has the French numbers recorded on his iPad using the Proloquo2go app. Therefore, when it is his turn he can press the number so the iPad speaks for him and then push the ball on to the next student.

In other situations, like the computer lab, the reading task might be too difficult for the student but I try to choose a similar, worthwhile task. For example, if the class is solving riddles that require them to use the online dictionary wordreference.com and to "think outside the box", I have my student with autism use wordreference.com as well to translate individual food words into English. The list she creates will be vocabulary we use in a unit later this year.

Another example would be when most of the class is reading/listening to a French Tumblebook online and demonstrating their ability to use various reading and listening strategies by answering questions, my student with autism would listen to the same story but use wordreference.com to choose the correct image (between two) that matches a word from the story.

I also now look carefully at where students are placed within my classroom. Some teachers place the child at the back of the room or beside an educational assistant. I think the student needs to be among their peers for socialization, learning and independence.

It is important to teach the class about the differability involved right at the beginning of the school year. I felt like I was giving up a lot of my French curriculum time the first two weeks of September to educate the class and myself about the "differability" but it was worth every moment. The students interact much better with the student involved when they understand the challenges they face.

I frequently think about how much a student is understanding. Much of the time, we really are not sure. However, my *Learning for All Coach* and the books I have read (*Out of My Mind* and *Carly's Voice*) have convinced me to always give the student the benefit of high expectations. What if they really do understand most of what is happening in our classroom but just cannot express that to us? One day last week, I really wondered if my non-verbal student with CP was trying to help the rest of the class when they were struggling to form questions accurately. Three times in one class it sounded like he was making the first sound they needed, getting louder each time. As a result, I try to be optimistic and frequently ask myself "What can I do next to take this student further?"

I think I am learning to "read" my

students better. For example, the student with autism will stimulate, make noises and refuse to do something if it is a new activity for her. In the past, I would have been concerned with the noises and felt the task may be too hard and frustrating. Now, I try to be patient and encouraging, knowing that by the second or third time we do a similar activity, she will be fine and willingly complete it.

Finding something that works for one student often means you can apply it to other students. For example, last year we discovered that my student with autism enjoys reading. As a result, when we are trying to get her to learn something new or stop an inappropriate habit, we use sentence strips. Soon after, I started using similar sentence strips with several students from all of my classes for questions that they frequently need to ask but cannot remember how to express correctly.

Finally, I try to consider moving in "baby" steps. My *Learning for All Coach* was a HUGE help with this. I don't think making accommodations lowers our expectations; it just breaks actions down into manageable pieces for the student, accomplishing one small thing at a time.

Even when I do not have direct contact with the Learning for All coach on a weekly basis, it is very reassuring to know I have someone I can email or call and collaborate with when I don't know what to do or need a second opinion. I no longer feel like I am on an island by myself.



Diversity includes.  
On se ressemble.

# New Zealand School Official Visits New Brunswick

Moira Geerkens, a school trustee in New Zealand received a grant from the National School Trustees Association to look at leadership in Inclusive Education. She decided to look at practices in Canada and arranged a study tour of schools in New Brunswick.

Moira has worked in community disability support, and has been employed with CCS Disability Action, a New Zealand NGO, over the past 15 years as the Branch Team Leader for Northland. In February 2015, she assumed a new role as National training coordinator for CCS Disability Action.

Moira is a volunteer parent representative on the Board of Trustees of two schools and has an active interest in advocacy around Inclusive Education. During her visit, Moira was looking for positive inclusive practices and leadership in change within schools, NGO's or other community services.



*Tammy Dunbar, Principal, Meduxnekeag Consolidated School, Woodstock, NB and Moira Geerkens, School Trustee, New Zealand*

Moira's primary interest is school governance and that led her to visit schools in Saint John and Woodstock in New Brunswick. She

is shown with Tammy Dunbar (left), principal of the new Meduxnekeag Consolidated School in Woodstock during her visit.

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## Q&A on Inclusive Education with Peggy Blair

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### **What are the 2 or 3 most positive outcomes of your "Learning for All Coaches" work?**

There are a number of positive outcomes of the Learning For All Coaches work in schools. I think the benefits can be looked at in terms of 'big ideas'. It is important to state that teachers want to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms. It can be challenging

to program for a student with more complex, learning needs. The coaching partnership enables teachers to feel capable of meeting the needs of diverse learners. Another benefit is a shift from a deficit lens to one of ability. Students are exceeding everyone's expectations. One other significant outcome from the work on inclusion by coaches is related to student voice. Young people are asking why

their peers have been placed in segregated settings. These same young people feel that their peers make valuable contributions to everyone's learning.

### **Can you share what the key challenges you will have going forward?**

Instead of challenges, I would like to think of obstacles as an opportunity to put next generation

learning strategies to work: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication and problem-solving. One of the things, I will need to continue to consider is the effect of changing roles, responsibilities and practices. I know that we have to go slow to go fast. While I might want all students included all of the time, I want to ensure that students and staff are experiencing success in regular classrooms. We have found that when inclusion of a student in regular classroom is going well, the inclusion of more students in the school accelerates. Effective change results in new learning for staff. Change also brings about feelings of discomfort. It is essential to recognize these feelings and provide support.

We are fortunate in Ontario to have a supportive funding model for Special Education. Throughout this province, a number of boards including the AMDSB continue to experience declining enrolment. With fewer students in schools, funding is reduced. However, the senior staff in the AMDSB has purposefully aligned funding to the two core priorities in the strategic plan. The one related to this work is *“We will create positive, inclusive environments”*. To ensure resources are meeting the needs of our students, we continue to monitor impact of programs and supports. We also look for evidenced-based practices and programs to ensure we are closing the achievement gaps for exceptional learners.

Lastly the journey to inclusion is allowing us to move special education to the ‘middle’. Moving to inclusion is causing us to align practices with the Program Department. Special Education is being demystified. I would hypothesize that this shift will result in moving ownership of student learning from special education staff to the classroom teacher. I have noticed that changes related to existing roles and responsibilities result in a sense of mourning by individuals. The stages of grief noted by Kubler Ross are relevant to the movement away from a specific service delivery model to a new one. It doesn’t mean we stop our inclusive education efforts. This is where there is need for pressure to keep moving forward but also support for teachers and other staff. Our school leaders and central staff of the board continue to honour voices and past practices as well as providing next steps.

### **There are 72 boards in Ontario. How do these efforts in Avon Maitland fit in the bigger picture?**

The Ministry of Education has developed a document “Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Strategy: Realizing the Promise of Diversity”. One of the areas of diversity that we have considered in the AMDSB in terms of the strategy is cognitive ability. The saying ‘rising tides floats all boats’ supports work being done in school boards across the province regarding all aspects

of diversity including our work with inclusive education. Here we have made a concerted effort to support students with exceptional learning needs in regular classrooms to bring about greater equity of outcomes. I continue to hear stories from schools about students who are now in regular classrooms. These students are participating in increasing numbers of academic activities. In an effort to spread the word about inclusive education, Learning For All Coaches continue to share our work at various venues throughout the province.

### **What do you think it will take to see more systemic inclusive education practices in Ontario schools?**

I would like to say that all boards of education in Ontario are working on inclusive education because of the diversity in our province. Each school board will look at what best meets the needs of their learners when making decisions about inclusion. I think the notion of inclusion begins with a critical review of practices related to inclusion of all students. We need to see that inclusion of all students is possible regardless of need. And the benefits are exponential: socially and academically for all learners. In Ontario, many boards are using the work of Carol Dwek on growth mindsets (Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, 2007). Growth mindsets will allow educators to consider having more students included.

It will be important to share



**Diversity includes.  
On se ressemble.**

## Q&A on Inclusive Education with Peggy Blair

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personal narratives of students who are successful. We are accumulating stories of students who are successfully moving to regular classrooms or who are entering school placements in regular classrooms.

The voices of parents and young people can play a major role in

moving inclusion forward. Recently we asked a young man about his thoughts on being included in the regular classroom. He said, “I like inclusion because now people will know that I am nice”. How heartbreaking that until recently he thought his placement was not with all of his peers because he

was a challenge. In the AMDSB, these voices need to be heard and considered when looking at educational placements. In the words of Maya Angelou, *“I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better”*.



### Share With Us

Inclusive Education Canada is looking for good examples of school and classroom practice where inclusion is making a positive difference in the lives of children.

That means we want to hear from teachers, school principals, education officials and other school staff who have something to share with others. We welcome suggestions from parents and family members as well as students.

If you or someone you know has something to share, just send us an email at [inclusiveeducation@cacl.ca](mailto:inclusiveeducation@cacl.ca) with contact information. We look forward to hearing from you.

— Gordon L. Porter, Director, Inclusive Education Canada



Contact us through our website: [www.inclusiveeducation.ca](http://www.inclusiveeducation.ca)  
or by email: [InclusiveEducation@cacl.ca](mailto:InclusiveEducation@cacl.ca)  
Please send us information, comments or feedback.

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