

important part of Canada's future, her focus is always on making our country a better place to live."

"This is a tremendous honour because of what it represents – an acknowledgement that together with many colleagues over the years, I have played some small part in a larger national movement to help Canada move forward positively as a society," says Dr. Timmons. "With this appointment comes added responsibility, however, because many of Canada's longstanding ideals – inclusiveness, tolerance and mutual respect – seem to be increasingly under threat. My hope is that as an Officer of the Order of Canada, I can continue to advance and promote these ideals for the next generation of Canada's leaders, on whom we will depend so much in the years to come."

Psychology at the University of Alberta.

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 he is currently co-editor of Exceptionality Education International. In 2015 Inclusion Alberta awarded him the 'Community Inclusion Award' and in 2016 he was presented with Concordia's 'President's Research Award'.

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.

By Donna Barrett, Ed.D.

Determination and Partnerships: Keys to Successful Inclusion for Secondary Students

Introduction

Sharing stories of the lessons learned in the process of including students with developmental disabilities in middle and high schools has the potential to assist other students, their families and school staff in advancing inclusive education for all. This story highlights successful inclusion that has come about through the determination of parents, strong school leadership, support from Inclusion Lloydminster, Inclusion Alberta and the commitment of staff to build their capacity to offer inclusive learning opportunities at a middle school. In the process of learning to support one student, teachers report what they have learned has helped them to meet the needs of other students.

Living an Inclusive Life

Tylan Andrews was diagnosed early in his life with developmental delays, cerebral palsy, hearing and vision loss. Tylan's parents, Stacey and Quentin Andrews, have been very clear that they "wanted the same things for him as his older sister." They want him to have friends, to be included in school and be an active participant in all aspects of community life.

Stacey feels that her family's vision has been the driving force behind Tylan's inclusion. One "non-negotiable" was that Tylan would learn alongside his peers. At three, Tylan, like his sister, enrolled in their community preschool where he met several girls and boys who would later become his friends as he progressed through elementary school. Tylan's inclusive education through elementary school was positive. Over time school staff came to understand the value of inclusion for Tylan as they saw his growth and progress. Stacey says, "They could see he was a learner and that he thrived when he was with his friends and classmates." Stacey and the school staff learned to collaborate and Stacey reflects that his year in sixth grade was his very best year in school.

The Importance of School Leadership

Currently, Tylan is a grade nine student at Bishop Lloyd Middle School in Lloydminster, a small city on the border of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Tylan transitioned to his new school in Grade 7 along with his grade six classmates.

At Bishop Lloyd Middle School, Vice Principal Deb Kruchkowski acknowledges that when Stacey initially shared her desire that Tylan be fully included in regular middle school subjects, and to sustain his friendships with peers, she was “puzzled” about how to realize these aspirations. Deb suggests that educators need to be “okay” with admitting that they do not have all the answers.



The Bishop Lloyd administration team is committed to creating a culture of inclusion where everyone feels welcomed and has a sense of belonging. Deb said that in her experience all parents want different kinds of things for their child, not just those of students with special needs. She believes school leaders need to listen to parents and focus on “how” the school can work with families “putting the student’s interests at the centre of decision making”. She believes that we can learn how to create inclusive opportunities for every student by working together and maintaining open communication.

Building Capacity to Support Inclusion in a Middle School Context

For the last two years, an education consultant from Inclusion Alberta has been working directly with the school staff to support teachers to include Tylan in their classrooms. Reflecting back on Tylan’s transition to middle school and some of the challenges that arose in grade seven, both his mother and the vice principal said that staff needed support to build their capacity to include Tylan. The family and Inclusion Alberta connected the school with other specialist supports to help teachers determine Tylan’s learning needs and to develop strategies to assist him in an inclusive setting. Team meetings were held frequently and involved all of Tylan’s teachers, support staff, education support teachers, and the school administration.

As vice principal, Deb is responsible for supervision of the education support teachers. She attended as many team meetings as possible. If she couldn’t attend, she met with teachers after the meeting to learn what had been decided and to consult with teachers on the supports needed to implement the strategies identified. As she visited classrooms, she monitored how things were going with Tylan.

During my visit to the school, teachers and school leaders commented on how much they valued the ongoing and targeted support. Tylan’s Grade 8 teacher said that she initially needed help to plan her lessons so they included Tylan. Later, she volunteered to take a leadership role in transition planning with grade nine teachers because they had not been part of the training and planning sessions. She was confident to do this because of the positive results she had from her work with Tylan. She also said she is able to incorporate strategies she used with Tylan to support the learning of other students in her class.

Inclusion in Grade 9

Tylan is now in Grade 9 and his teachers are working to maximize Tylan’s involvement in day-to-day classroom learning activities. Because Tylan has limited communication, his teachers use emails and digital photos to communicate with his parents and to augment formal report cards.

Tylan participates in grade nine band and this is a good example of how teachers are working to meaningfully include him in the life of the school. Initially, Tylan had difficulty staying in band and would walk out of class. He enjoyed playing a percussion instrument, but a combination of the vibrations and the location of the instruments at the back of the room did not work for Tylan. Over time his band teacher discovered that by moving Tylan front and centre in the room, he could follow the light on the conducting baton and play his triangle on cue.

In addition to being in class, Tylan’s mother wanted him to do homework and learn to prepare for and take tests. To create these opportunities, the education consultant from Inclusion Alberta assisted the science and physical education teachers

to select outcomes for homework and assessment tasks. This planning and personalization enabled Tylan to be better prepared for class activities and increased his participation and learning. They also helped his family understand what he was learning at school.

Inclusion in Field Trips and Extra Curricular Activities

For Tylan, like every student, participating in field trips and extra-curricular events is as important as the formal curriculum activities. The staff at Bishop Lloyd Middle School understand this. Stacey commented “people are wanting to include him...there has been a shift from questioning his inclusion to ‘he belongs here, so let’s figure how to do it.’” She credits the school leadership and the support provided to his teachers for this shift over time. So, whether it is a ski trip, an overnight band trip or a school dance, staff work with Tylan and his family to ensure he participates in a meaningful way. Tylan’s peers happily and naturally supported him at a recent school dance, an important rite of passage for all teenagers.

Looking Ahead

Next year, Tylan will be transitioning to high school with his friends and peers. His family are clear that they want him to continue on an inclusive path and that his transition needs to be inclusive as well. His mother says that Tylan needs to experience this process with his peers. Having learned from past experience, Deb is actively working with high school leadership to plan a successful transition for Tylan. Tylan’s mom believes the high school staff need to see Tylan in his middle school classes so that they can “see him in context.” The staff at Bishop Lloyd Middle School look forward to sharing their successful strategies and learning with the high school.

One positive first step was when members of the high school administrative team attended an information session offered jointly by Inclusion Alberta and Inclusion Lloydminster. They had an opportunity to learn about the impact inclusion in school can have on positive experiences in postsecondary education and the workplace. They learned how inclusion can impact the lives of students with developmental disabilities. They also became aware of the supports they can access from family-based organizations.

Lessons Learned

Tylan’s story illustrates many of the elements that contribute to quality inclusive practice in schools. Parents play a critical advocacy role by helping schools understand their vision for a fully inclusive life for their child. Schools support inclusion by examining and adjusting their practices, where necessary, so that students can benefit from inclusion in all aspects of school life. School leaders are critical to this process. Inclusion specialists contribute by helping frontline staff to use strategies that can support learning in regular classrooms and school environments.

As a result of actions taken in this school over the past two years, Tylan’s mother feels that he is flourishing. Deb notes that while he still needs some support in class, Tylan is much more independent. He knows the routines of the school, can get from class to class on his own, and hangs out with his classmates at noon hour.

His educational assistants consciously work to pull back and facilitate from a distance both in and outside the classroom. They are focused on encouraging independence and enabling direct interactions with his friends.

Stacey feels the school is truly welcoming and she has a strong bond of trust with the staff and administration. While she will continue to be Tylan’s advocate, she values the support provided by the deepening partnership between the family and the staff at Bishop Lloyd Middle School.

Finally, there is confidence that the efforts involved in supporting Tylan, will have a positive impact on the inclusion of other students in the future.

Donna Barrett is an accomplished educator and school administrator in Alberta. She held senior positions in the Edmonton Public School Board and was Superintendent of the Northlands School Division. Donna has also been active with the work of Inclusion Alberta. She brings both a pedagogical and administrative perspective to inclusive education. Ms. Barrett is the principal of DBarrett Consulting in Edmonton.

