

Inclusion, Segregation and Grey All Over: Inclusive education debates reignite across Canada

NATIONAL

“Not only has he been stripped of all his peer connections, but he’s been stripped of his right to an education.” (Lisa Kahn, parent)

A [recent Globe and Mail article has added fuel to the fire](#) over current approaches to inclusive education where special needs students learn alongside non-special needs students either for most or all of a typical school day. Centred on the story of one seven-year-old boy named Grayson who has autism, this recounted experience underlines the increasing challenges that both parents and educators encounter while seeking to best include children with complex needs in regular classrooms.



Caroline Alphonso @calphonso · Jan 7

OSSTF president reacts to @globeandmail story (theglobeandmail.com/canada/educati...) and says education workers routinely punched, kicked, scratched and spat upon in the course of their daily work.



Stephanie Paterson @Stephmack10 · 1h

This article hits home...currently I have been asked to stay home with my 5yr old who is in a mental health crisis. We have been seen by so many services in the last week with very little direction as how to truly support his needs. I feel helpless

It has moreover raised the question as to whether greater investment in additional educational assistants and one-on-one supports is where the priority should lie to fully reap the benefits of inclusive models, whether other models such as congregated schools could best support students with complex needs, or whether some other gray area needs to be considered.



Inclusion BC @InclusionBC · Jan 5

We need to support staff AND abandon failed models, attitudes & systemic barriers to [#inclusion](#) & diverse learners. Adding support without other keys to systemic reform (training, mentoring, accountability, collaboration) just fosters costly dependence & uphill battles [#bced](#)

“A congregated school is a special purpose school, specifically designed and staffed with willing educators to provide children who have complex disabilities with a safe place to learn, to develop community and to thrive.” (Phil Richmond and Hayley Avruskin, Parents, Congregated School Parent Network)

This was [the response by two Toronto-based parents who stated that](#) inclusive education doesn't work for students with complex special needs but only for those with moderate special needs, supporting instead special purpose schools deemed “congregated schools.” These parents suggest that both inclusion and congregation models should co-exist.



Shannon Proudfoot @sproudfoot · Jan 9

That's it, right? It's not a one-fits-all, you want to be able to pick the option that works best for your child. I'm glad you found a class that's a good fit!



Jacqueline Specht @JacquelineSpec9 · Jan 8

It reminds me of the line in the documentary Including Samuel... "Inclusion is easy to do poorly. And when we do it poorly, we reinforce the beliefs that this cannot work". [@_danhabib](#)

NOVA SCOTIA

“It's either segregation or inclusion, and we fail to look at the grey area, and there is a grey area specifically within the autism community.” (Allison Garber, Board Member, Autism Nova Scotia)

Allison Garber, board member of Autism Nova Scotia, [suggests that we can't say that inclusion doesn't work](#) since appropriate investments haven't actually been tried, and given that education models continue to guarantee the failure of neurodiverse students and students with disabilities. [Garber has also stated that debates have often been framed by either segregation or inclusion](#), and that there is a grey area specifically for students with autism whereby some students benefit from the social skills they gain being among peers in inclusive classrooms, coupled with learning breaks and the support of a teaching assistant. For other learners, she says, they can't manage at all in the mainstream classroom. In the former case, Garber suggests that *all* students benefit from learning to embrace differing needs and abilities.



Ally Garber @AllyGarbs · Jan 10

We can't accurately weigh the merits of inclusive education until we actually commit to doing it right.

That responsibility is on us, not our kids. My editorial for the [@globeandmail](#) .



Jody R. Carr ✓ @jodycarr_mla · Jan 10

Successful inclusive education requires 3 P's:

1. POLICY and Legislation
2. PROCESS and Implementation
3. PRACTICE and Support

You can't be successful w/o all 3. There are great examples throughout Canada + World for anyone wanting to improve.

[#inclusionisnottheproblem](#)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

“This is a systemic issue around the province, meeting the needs of all children as it is a challenging proposition. We face major challenges around funding levels that make it difficult.” (Jordan Watters, Chair, Greater Victoria School District)

The [Greater Victoria School District announced that it has begun tracking why special needs students](#) arrive late, leave early or miss school entirely including how frequently such requests to do so are being made outside of students' individual education plans. The [North Vancouver School District and the Toronto District School Board](#) have also been reported to be undertaking similar data collection.



Paul McGuire @mcguirp · Jan 9

Replying to @calphonso @Educhatter and 3 others

Also, tracking doesn't solve anything. Schools would still be expected to integrate without adequate resources. Truly a difficult situation, especially in elementary schools. 2/2



Caroline Alphonso @calphonso · Jan 9

This is precisely what those BC boards are tracking (the undocumented suspensions, as some have called it). Trustees passed motions on it. Others can do the same.



Glen Hansman @glenhansman · 20h

Here is the BCTF's statement on **inclusive education** for students with special needs, as adopted by our 2018 Annual General Meeting: bctf.ca/IssuesInEduca ... We continue to be committed to inclusion of all students in a fully funded universal public education system. #bced

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

“Many children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador are routinely absent from school without excuse or reason.” (Jacqueline Lake, Child and Youth Advocate, Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Newfoundland and Labrador)

Keeping in line with the related issue of student absenteeism, a [new report by Newfoundland and Labrador's Office of the Child and Youth Advocate](#) has found that “chronic absenteeism” – missing 10%, or 18 days, of the school year for unexcused reasons – is not effectively being addressed within the province. The report calls for [responses not only from schools but also from various government services and interdisciplinary teams](#) to tackle factors such as learning disabilities, mental health issues, and weak student-teacher relationships, among others.



NL Child & Youth Advocate @OCYANL · Jan 10

Today we released **Chronic Absenteeism: When Children Disappear**. **Chronic Absenteeism** is not just a school responsibility. A comprehensive approach from many service providers is required.



Donna Miller Fry @fryed · Jan 14

Please take 3 minutes and watch this from [@tweetsomemoore](#) on how we can make education work for ALL kids, not just the ones who are easy to teach.

