



# Let's Chat... about *Inclusive Education*



*Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler*

## *Teachers as Leaders with Guests: Missy Pfaff & Amy Kipfer Teachers and School Leaders/Administrators Avon Maitland District Schools Huron & Perth Counties, Ontario*



**Missy Pfaff** is an educator with 30+ years of teaching experience in the Avon Maitland District School Board located in Southwestern Ontario. She has taught most grades in elementary school, and has supported teachers and students as a resource teacher at both the school and system level. Recently, she moved into school administration as principal of Stephen Central Public School. Missy emphasizes the need for educators to keep learning. Pursuing inclusive education is both a choice and a passion for Missy. Her mission is to make school a joyful place to learn and grow. She believes in the hashtag **#choosin'inclusion**



**Amy Kipfer** is the vice-principal of Bedford Public School with the Avon Maitland District School Board. She has been a classroom teacher, a Learning Services Coordinator, Indigenous and Equity Education Lead as well as a Vice-Principal in their Remote Learning School. Throughout her career she has been an advocate and leader in Avon Maitland's move towards Inclusive Education K-12. Amy has shared her knowledge and experience with schools across Ontario. She has played a key roll in the progress her school board has made to include students with diverse needs of in the social and academic life of Avon Maitland schools.

## Key Issues in this Chat Session:

1. **Segregation Doesn't Work:** Amy and Missy observed students with barriers to learning not only being removed from classrooms with their peers but having to change schools to be in the suggested special education classrooms. Leaving their neighbourhood schools meant these students did not have the opportunity to socialize with their peers.
2. **Inclusion and Equity:** When implementing an inclusive education framework, the Avon Maitland schools integrated equity training. This was useful in changing people's opinions of inclusive education.
3. **Belief or Practice:** It was originally thought that "belief" had to come before "practice". Amy and Missy found that in their work with classroom teachers, this was not always the case. In many cases teachers just needed to be willing to try the new ideas.
4. **Working with the Willing:** Partnerships were created between willing teachers and one or more inclusion facilitators. While trying out the inclusive model, these partnerships allowed "facilitators" to engage with teachers wherever they were in the process and collaborate on strategies that led to success.
5. **Researchers Help:** Collaboration between teachers and researchers was paramount to the success of the inclusive model in Avon Maitland schools. This collaboration informed teachers about best practices and allowed researchers to fine tune their research.
6. **Retrenchment – a Continuing Challenge:** Regrettably, not all teachers or parents are convinced that an inclusive model is best for students. Strategies to deal with the inclination to revert to a more traditional special education model when issues and problems come up are needed. This may seem as easier than to adjust the inclusion model and to continue to find new ways to solve problems.

## Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. How important is socialization with peers for a student experiencing barriers to learning?
2. Does the concept of equity align with the goal of inclusive education?

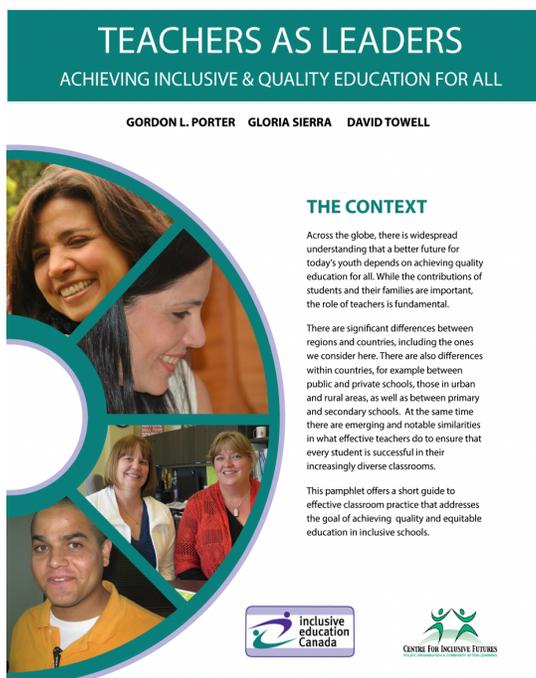
## Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. What do you think about the idea that you need to change 'belief before practice'?
2. Amy and Missy question whether the widespread assertion that 'belief before practice' is valid. They suggest that if you can convince a teacher to 'try', engagement in inclusion can later affect their beliefs. How might more teachers be encouraged to willingly try inclusion?
3. Missy and Amy observe that academic research does not often reach teachers working in PK-12 public schools. How can knowledge mobilization be improved to disseminate important findings to teachers, administrators, principals and parents?

# More from Missy Pfaff & Amy Kipfer:

- Pfaff, Missy. *Social Inclusion is Not Enough*. (2016). Commentary, Inclusive Education Canada. <https://inclusiveeducation.ca/2016/03/17/commentary-social-inclusion-is-not-enough/>
- Kipfer, Amy. *Secondary School: Inclusive Education's Final Frontier*. (2016). Commentary, Inclusive Education Canada. <https://inclusiveeducation.ca/2016/02/12/10-secondary-school-inclusive-educations-final-frontier-by-amy-kipfer/>

## Check out this resource on the IEC website



[https://inclusiveeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/01/Teachers-as-Leaders\\_pamphlet-2020.pdf](https://inclusiveeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/01/Teachers-as-Leaders_pamphlet-2020.pdf)