



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



Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler



Guest:

Jody Carr

Lawyer

**Former New Brunswick Minister of
Education and Early Childhood
Development**

Jody Carr is currently a lawyer in private practice in Fredericton and Oromocto, New Brunswick. He has more than 20 years of experience in political, legislative and government affairs. Mr. Carr was first elected to the New Brunswick Legislature in 1999.

He served as Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development between 2010-2013 and two terms as Minister of Post -Secondary Education, Training and Labour in 2006 and from 2013 to 2014. These mandates included responsibility for early childhood learning, public schools, universities and colleges, labour, training and the human rights commission.

He served as caucus chair and lead MLA on policy and platform development as well as chair of the Legislature's Standing Committee on Law Amendments. As Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Mr. Carr championed and directed policy and legislative changes that align education practices with the CRPD and human rights legislation.

Minister Carr issued Policy 322 on inclusive education in 2013 that was recognized as a global exemplar at the 2016 Project Zero Conference sponsored by the ESSL Foundation, the World Future Council, and the European Foundation Centre at the United Nations Office in Vienna, Austria. Mr. Carr is particularly interested in the policy, leadership and human rights aspects of transforming school culture to embrace inclusion and diversity. In cooperation with ARCH Disability Law Centre he conducted a Canada wide jurisdictional review of legislation and policy mandates for inclusion.

Key Issues in this Chat Session:

- 1. Political interest in inclusive education:** Jody emphasized that he knew inclusion was important to his constituents when he heard from them about their concerns. While supportive of inclusion, they made clear there was a need for proper support to ensure success. This motivated him on the issue.
- 2. The challenge to advocates:** as an advocate, it can be difficult to get access to politicians and decision-makers. Jody discusses ways to reach them by having individuals with existing relationships make the connection to politicians. A parent of a child experiencing barriers to learning speaking directly to decision-makers makes a difference.
- 3. Frequent political leadership turnover:** Jody discusses the challenge of frequent turnover of elected leaders assigned to a specific department. Strategies for strengthening relationships are discussed including a) establishing relationships early in an elected official's term; and b) working closely with senior bureaucratic leaders who tend to remain in positions longer.
- 4. Being useful:** Jody shared advice that advocates need to suggest solutions not just identify problems to political leaders. It is a way to establish a positive and supportive relationship. He shared advice he received early in his political career: When you are on the outside of a group, you can still try to make yourself helpful.
- 5. Use multiple strategies:** The importance of using more than one strategy is discussed, as well as potential use of the courts, tribunals or human rights agencies while working on individual cases and advocating for systemic changes that support/protect minority groups. Policy changes that are 'wide in scope' will potentially stay in place even when leadership changes and will not be reversed as easily.
- 6. Education is at the provincial level in Canada:** therefore, it is difficult to have a national policy on inclusive education. Jody discussed the possibility of using federal funding to tackle inclusion on the periphery of schooling (e.g., early childcare; employment; transition planning). This may result in federal initiatives that support inclusive education but at the same time do not infringe on provincial jurisdiction.
- 7. Working with unions:** Jody discusses the challenge of working with unions that play a major role in the education system. He contrasts working with teacher unions and support staff unions. The focus of unions on "working conditions" rather than student learning or teaching, and how that connects to inclusion is discussed. The approach of union leaders as opposed to union members is elaborated.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. In what ways is advocacy for inclusive education challenging given the dynamic, ever-changing nature of political leadership?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of education being the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments as opposed to the federal government in Canada?

Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. What strategies would be most effective in gaining support for inclusive education from elected political leaders?
2. New Brunswick has had great success in developing an inclusive education system. How can constituents of other provinces who support inclusion unite to advocate for policy changes within their local education systems?
3. What role do teacher unions play in making schools and classrooms inclusive?

More from Jody Carr:

- Minister responsible for the report – **Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools**, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, Province of New Brunswick, 2012.
<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/Inclusion/Inclusion.pdf>
- Minister responsible for **New Brunswick Policy 322**: This policy establishes the requirements to ensure New Brunswick public schools are inclusive. Effective September 17, 2013. This policy applies to all schools and school districts within the public education system in New Brunswick.
<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/policies-politiques/e/322A.pdf>
- **A Conceptual and Legal Framework for Inclusive Education**, ARCH Disability Law Centre, Toronto, and Inclusive Education Canada. An analysis of the legal basis for inclusive education in Canada; a valuable addition to the research available of particular interest for the focus it provides on several jurisdictions in Canada.
<http://inclusiveeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/03/Legal-Framework-Inclusive-Education-Jody-Carr-Dec-30-2016.pdf>

