



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



Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler



Northern Inclusion

Guest: Liz Baile

***Director of Student Services and
former Principal & Teacher
Yellowknife Catholic Schools
Northwest Territories***

Liz Baile is the Director of Student Services for Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YKS) in the Northwest Territories.

Liz has held many positions in school and district administration. She has been a teacher and resource teacher as well as a principal and vice-principal and has led several initiatives with the NWT Department of Education. In 2015/16, she played a key role in the drafting of a major revision of the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling*.

Liz coordinates of all YKS's Inclusive Schooling services as well as professional learning and the development of collaboration through school-based teams. She is the facilitator of the district Self-Regulation Initiative and oversees implementation of *Jordan's Principle* supports. Liz is committed to student well-being, inclusion and *Indigenous Ways of Knowing*.

Liz is a creative, collaborative problem solver and lifelong learner. Originally trained as a teacher in Ontario, Liz has a master's degree in Diverse Learners from UBC and is currently working on Women's Transformational Leadership (Social Justice) through a program at St. Paul's/Ottawa University.

She has served on many community, territorial and national committees and boards among them Inclusion NWT and Inclusion Canada.

Liz Baile is an NWT Hall of Fame Educator recognized by her peers for her passionate commitment to the north and to the children and youth who live there.

Key Issues in this Chat Session:

1. **Diverse Curriculum:** while the NWT does not have their own curriculum for schools, schools generally follow the Alberta curriculum. However, since teachers come from across Canada to teach in the NWT, they bring their own perspectives on programming; this results in diverse application of curriculum in classrooms. Although a challenge in practice, schools in the NWT attempt to have each student achieve unique goals based on their ability.
2. **Geography and Demographics:** small and isolated communities limit the programs offered in many schools and “specialists” or “experts” are always in short supply. Consequently, the special education system that developed in the NWT could be considered ‘primitive’ compared to urban areas in Southern Canada. Accommodating diversity and supporting inclusion was a clear way to address this reality.
3. **Program Support Teacher:** every school in the NWT is allocated one or more ‘program support teacher’ whose role is to collaborate with classroom teachers to develop strategies that are effective with diverse learners. Cooperation and teamwork among school staff is highly valued.
4. **Professional Learning:** the education system in the NWT makes significant investments in the professional learning of teachers, school leaders and other staff; often this training is targeted to the unique challenges students and their teachers face in the North.
5. **Respecting Indigenous Culture:** schools put high priority on acknowledging the values, languages, and ways of living of indigenous people and their communities. Practical elements of schooling include language instruction, providing experiences on the land and sharing the stories of elders. The values of elders align with accommodating diversity and inclusion.
6. **Strengthening Self-determinism and Agency of Students:** this is particularly important in the NWT based on the high proportion of Indigenous students and their histories of forced assimilation and ensuing intergenerational trauma.
7. **Partnership with Families:** parent and family involvement in a student’s learning is very important target in the NWT education system. A community/family liaison role has been created to address difficulties accessing students’ families.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

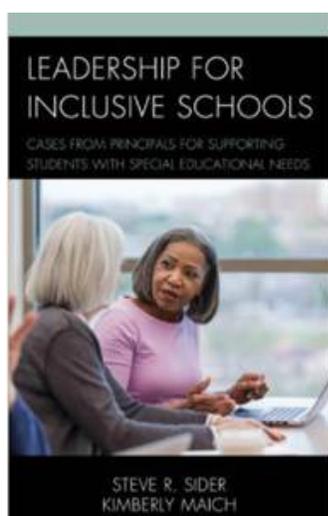
1. What do you think about when considering education and schooling in Canada’s North?
2. Are there unique factors that make inclusion challenging in Northern schools?

Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. Catholic schools in Yellowknife, NWT are fully inclusive even though they employ few specialists. What is your reaction to this? Does this seem reasonable? Possible?
2. Liz Baile notes success is about how a student feels about their learning, more than what they are learning. To what extent might this be the case?
3. Liz emphasizes the value of autonomy for all students several times in the discussion. How can teachers adapt instruction to strengthen and support autonomous learning?
4. Liz states that NWT schools mandate that it is a teacher's job to teach ALL the students in their classrooms. During this chat session she provided some examples of how the schools she works in support teachers to do this. What additional strategies and practices might be used to aid teachers in successfully accomplishing this?

More from Liz Baile:

- Baile, L. (2016, February 2). Turning a corner. Inclusion Canada. <https://inclusiveeducation.ca/2016/02/02/2-turning-a-corner-by-liz-baile/>
- Baile, L. (2018, March 1). Sharpening our northern inclusive schooling lens. Inclusion Canada. <https://inclusiveeducation.ca/2018/03/01/sharpening-our-northern-inclusive-schooling-lens/>



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