



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



Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler



Guest:

Tanya Whitney

*Principal, Nackawic Middle School
Educational Leader,
New Brunswick Anglophone Schools
Nackawic, NB*

Tanya Whitney is a highly regarded and experienced leader of education in anglophone schools in New Brunswick. She served as the Project Executive for Inclusion for the Ministry of Education and coordinated the implementation of the goals identified in the Porter-Aucoin report, *Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools* (2012). Throughout her career, Tanya's professional focus has been a commitment to equity issues and inclusive schools. This has set her apart as a leader in these areas. Currently principal of a school in the Anglophone West School District in New Brunswick, she has served in a variety of system leadership roles including Director of Schools, Learning Specialist for Professional Learning and School Reviews, as well as Leadership Lead for a school district. She is a Qualified Mediator and certified Human Synergistics coach and has been called on to use those skills in NB.

Tanya began her career working in First Nations communities and continues to support the work of reconciliation as an active ally and is a trained KAIROS Blanket Exercise facilitator. Tanya is a member of the executive committee of the New Brunswick Association for Community Living and an active volunteer for Sexual Violence NB. She has led critical work in her district developing a policy and module on Sexual Violence prevention and response. Tanya has been a school administrator in many schools and enjoys her role as principal of Nackawic Middle School.

Key Issues in this Chat Session:

1. **Inclusion as the Scapegoat:** Based on Tanya's experience, inclusion is often asserted as the reason that something has gone wrong in New Brunswick's education system. She believes these assertions are misinformed and that inclusive practices are challenged more than other aspects of the education system in New Brunswick.
2. **Leadership Matters:** A reoccurring theme during this chat is the importance of having school leaders who are committed to inclusion. Commitment means continuing to learn ways to enhance inclusive practices, even when inclusion is thought to have been achieved.
3. **Inclusion is Foundational:** Sometimes, inclusive practices are treated like other 'new' curriculum programs or education packages delivered to teachers when in fact they are more than that – inclusive practices must be foundational in the public education system.
4. **Collaboration Leads to Superior Outcomes:** Tanya asserted that thriving schools are most often highly collaborative. Discussions among teachers surrounding student support, co-teaching and including families in problem solving are all examples of collaborative practices Tanya has observed in prospering schools.
5. **Smaller Communities and Inclusion:** In smaller communities where people know their neighbours, Tanya has noted higher tolerance towards inclusion. In cities and urban areas, this sense of community is often missing, and this disconnect from other families seems to influence people's attitudes towards inclusion in schools.
6. **Siloed Arms of the Education System:** A challenge many principals face is accessing the disconnected social, health and educational services targeted at students experiencing barriers to learning. Even with her extensive experience, she has found it difficult to access and navigate these services. She attributes this disconnect to middle management level communication issues in the education system. Better integration of student services with other parts of the service system and increased collaboration can make this task more manageable.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. How might schools foster community acceptance of diversity and inclusion?
2. What does inclusion do to strengthen success for all students in schools?

Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. Can you think of an example where a family's involvement in problem solving challenges that are arising for a child in the classroom may be beneficial for both the child and the school?
2. What factors support the assertion that inclusion must be a foundational factor of our public education system?

More from Tanya Whitney:

Sexual Violence Policy Awareness module: Author

<https://pedex.nbed.nb.ca/pl/sv/#/id/co-05>



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