

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

Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler



Guest:

Cathy Montreuil

***Educational Administrator & Deputy
Minister of Education
Province of Nova Scotia, Halifax, NS***

Cathy was appointed to the position of Deputy Minister of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as of March, 2018. She brings a wealth of experience having worked in education for over 30 years.

During her career, Cathy has had teaching experience in both elementary and secondary schools, special education, care and treatment and custody programs, and has been a vice-principal, principal, superintendent, and Director of Education in Ontario school boards.

She served as a system leader for Special Education where she was instrumental in her board's achievement of the Ontario Award for Inclusive Schools and collaborated with the Canadian Association for Community Living on an Inclusion Education tool for school communities.

Cathy has also written and taught Special Education Additional Qualifications courses for teachers. Prior to accepting the position of Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development in Nova Scotia, Cathy served as the Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Student Achievement Officer for the Province of Ontario.

Key Issues in this Chat Session:

1. **Society is Better with Diversity:** Cathy asserted that inclusion is a critical element within schools because society does better by embracing diversity and inclusive schools are necessary for creating and sustaining an inclusive, diverse society.
2. **Putting Inclusion at the Core:** In Cathy's current work on educational policy, she and her team focus on having inclusion at the core of policies. She explained that if inclusion is viewed as central to a policy, then it cannot be considered an add-on and rolled back when things get challenging.
3. **Advocates Should Build Coalitions and Common Ground:** Cathy explained that in her experience individual groups that advocate for change should connect with one another and thus grow their reach and enhance their ability to see that the changes they want happen. Groups fighting for equity can help one another and refrain from competing for attention and resources.
4. **Connecting Innovators:** In Cathy's experience, change to inclusion in schools does not occur solely from the school in a bottom-up manner, nor from the board or ministry level down. What matters is connecting individuals and groups who are doing good work in inclusion at all levels. She has found that given the space and support, people will connect and learn inclusive practices from each other, resulting in the kind of change we need.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. Do you believe there is competition between different groups advocating for inclusion in schools and beyond?
2. What do you think of when you hear the phrase, 'all means all' when applied to inclusion?

Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. How important do you believe policy and policy changes are in the movement towards inclusive education? At what level does it matter most – Ministry? District/Division? School?
2. Do you think effective coalitions between advocacy groups could lead to better results for all? How might you go about building these coalitions?

More information about Deputy Minister Montreuil's work on inclusive education policy and programs can be located on the website of the Department of Education, Province of Nova Scotia: <https://bit.ly/3ScjFer>



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