



**Canadian Association
for Community Living**



The Roeher Institute

Proceedings of Meeting on Inclusive Education – Atlantic Region
Amherst, Nova Scotia – January 9, 2003

In June 2002 representatives of CACL, The Roeher Institute and Nova Scotia ACL met with NSTU representatives in Halifax and had a very productive discussion about inclusive education. It was on the basis of this meeting that the initiative to hold a meeting on inclusive education for stakeholders in the Atlantic Region was developed. The meeting was held on Thursday, January 9, 2003 at the Wandlyn Inn in Amherst, Nova Scotia. It was a full day meeting that began at 10:00 am and adjourned at 4:00 pm.

The meeting brought together three groups with the direct interest in the issue of inclusive education:

1. Parents of students with special needs – specifically those with intellectual disabilities and other children traditionally represented by the Association for Community Living associations. We had representatives from the provincial associations in New Brunswick (NBACL), Nova Scotia (NSACL) and PEI (PEIACL) and Newfoundland (NACL) in attendance.
2. Representatives of the teachers associations – President and Executive Director of both the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the New Brunswick Teachers Association, as well as the President of the PEI Teachers Association were in attendance.
3. Officials responsible for special education, support service or student services in the provincial ministry of education. The Directors from New Brunswick (English) and Nova Scotia attended and a Senior Consultant from the PEI Ministry of Education attended.
4. In addition Executive Vice President Michael Bach and Don Gallant, Community Inclusion Coordinator represented CACL, and Gordon Porter, Senior Consultant for The Roeher Institute facilitated the meeting.
5. Dr. Viane Timmons, Vice President of the University of Prince Edward Island planned to attend but was unable to do so at the last minute. She has agreed to provide support for follow-up through the university network in the Atlantic Provinces.

The purpose of the meeting:

- to identify areas of common concern;
- to find ways to mutually support teachers/schools to assure that inclusion goes well;
- to stimulate regional action to bring more focus to support for inclusion;
- to develop strategies for training and professional development for teachers, principals and other staff in best practices for inclusion;
- to identify research and information sharing strategies relevant to inclusion;
- Other related matters.

▪ **Meeting Agenda**

- What are the major issues related to inclusion for schools, teachers and parents;
- What is going well?
- What are the areas of priority for action?
- What kind of cooperation is possible?
 - Between the stakeholder groups?
 - Between provinces?
 - Through regional agencies and institutions?
 - What kind of inter-provincial training efforts might be helpful?
- What can we do to promote more information sharing?
- How can the ACLs assist both teacher group and ministry efforts?
- Can we identify new areas of financial support based on collaboration?
- Can we agree on actions for 2003 and beyond?
- Other?

Record of Issues discussed at the Meeting:

Participant Identified Interventions or Actions that are priorities:

1. Commit to meet again.
2. Continue to lobby for maintaining teacher numbers as enrollments decline so class size can be lowered and more support services can be placed in schools.
3. General lobbying for increased educational resources and funding.
4. Provide teachers with support in learning/utilizing practical strategies that will help them day-to-day in the classroom.
5. Provide appropriate needs based in-service to:
 - Classroom teachers
 - School leaders
 - Teacher Assistants
6. Promote more collaboration within each province and among the Atlantic Provinces.
7. Identify, describe and disseminate information on “Best Practices in Inclusive Education”.
8. Research on funding approaches used for special education and support services across Canada; look at underlying rationale and constructs; develop some funding models for discussion on how to achieve program goals most effectively.
9. Develop a Regional – Atlantic Framework for delivering in-service and professional development on best practices at the school and classroom level.
10. Extend the dialogue to other organizations with an interest in education for students with special needs (disabilities), for example parent groups for children with Learning disabilities, autism and downs syndrome, as well as other groups advocating social inclusion, i.e. Poverty and child welfare groups. It was emphasized that even if they do not fully agree with the “inclusion mandate” – it is better to have them in the discussions.

11. Find a way to hold “School Boards” accountable for the practices in their jurisdictions since there is clearly wide latitude for divergent practices in individual districts and schools depending on accountability and outcome measures.
12. Explore ways to address the pre-service training of teachers and their preparation for the diverse needs of students in their classrooms. Successful inclusion depends on the attitudes and skills of the classroom teacher. There is considerable concern that many university programs are not adequately preparing their graduates for this challenge.
13. Identify the “Assets” - “Features” - “Practices” of schools that make them inclusive.
14. Invite schools that are committed to developing and holding high standards for inclusion to join a “League of Inclusive Schools”.
 - Develop and enhance the “Vision for Inclusion”
 - Promote networking
 - Identify and address areas of common interest
15. Develop a research agenda and seek partners for carrying it out.
16. Seek a well-defined answer to the question: “What constitutes the duty to accommodate in public education?”
 - This is not clear in education in the same way it has become clear in employment law.
 - What are the reasonable parameters and how can they be defined?
17. Finally, we need to clarify what we mean by “inclusion”. Do we mean the same thing in elementary schools, middle schools and high schools? Do we need to identify a “range of practices” that differ in some way but still fit in an inclusive framework? Is there room to talk about inclusive programming but not necessarily inclusive placement? How do we deal with the issue of attitudes?

Three Major Areas For Action by CACL/The Roeher Institute:

1. Address The Big Picture

- 1.1 Summarize and consolidate information on provincial practices in regard to legislation, policy and funding mechanisms. It would be descriptive and analytical and address the issues relevant to inclusion. It could be a project for the Council of Ministers of Education or for cooperation among CTF, provincial ACLs and CACL.
- 1.2 Regional Summit on Inclusive Education to be hosted by CACL or The Roeher Institute prior to December 2003.
 - **WHO:**
Parents, family members; Educators, teachers’ union representatives; District leaders, educators and trustees; Government officials, Student

Services and Policy Officials; Political leaders, Ministers, MLA's; University officials, faculty and administration; Key leaders from diverse groups and provincial coalitions; representatives from the broader parent movement, home & school, others.

- **HOW:**
 - A Steering Committee lead by CACL and using contacts in the four provinces;
 - Contact the Ministers of Education and Deputy Ministers.
 - Pull in appropriate people to create interest and participation.
- **ESSENTIAL:**
 - Make the case – “**WHY?**” and “**WHY NOW?**”
 - It must be a “DIALOGUE” – not just a meeting for CACL to promote its’ point of view; needs to be an open discussion of the issue seeking common ground and common interest.
 - ACLs must have meaningful dialogue with other stakeholder groups prior to the Summit.
- **THE OUTCOME**
 - Seek a statement reflecting consensus.
 - Seek agreement on what is needed to do the job better.
 - Link inclusive schools to societal values and creating effective schools where every child achieves personal goals.

2. Knowledge Network on Inclusive Education

- 2.1 Conduct or consolidate research on “Exemplary Practice” in schools and classrooms.
- 2.2 Create a “**Knowledge Network on Inclusive Education**” – perhaps on a National basis but with a regional emphasis as well.
- 2.3 Develop a national website on inclusive education with provision for regional work.
 - Have a way to share new practices that schools find successful.
 - Establish a working group to gather submissions on “best practices” and disseminate the information through a website.
- 2.4 Establish a “listserv or message board” so individuals can share information. Provide for: Sharing; Comments; Question Board; Articles; Chat.
- 2.5 Prepare a model “parent information package” for parents of children with special needs to guide them in their interactions with schools and other agencies.
- 2.6 Develop “position papers” on pertinent issues and publish on website.

- 2.7 Administrators, teachers and parents with “one Page” information sheets on topical issues.
- 2.8 Provide summer institutes for stakeholders with priority to teachers, principals and parents.

3. Initiatives Related to Professional Practice

- 3.1 Conduct provincial and regional seminars and summer institutes for educators and parents.
 - Teachers – educational planning (IEPs); curriculum; instructional strategies;
 - Parents – planning including ISSP;
 - School Leaders – summer institute with focus on school processes and practices to support inclusion:
 - Connect to NS Consortium for Educational Leadership;
 - Develop a NB “module” on leadership in the inclusive school for educators seeking principal’s certification.
 - Connect to Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation” that conducts training for leaders on “cooperative discipline”.
- 3.2 Develop a “Certificate on Inclusive Practices” for use with various groups.
- 3.3 Concentrate on “High Schools” – seek out high schools that have developed inclusive practices and create a “regional network”.
- 3.4 ACLs schedule Saturday workshops on topical issues throughout the region.

Appendix A
List of Participants - January 9, 2003 Amherst NS
Meeting on Inclusion

Nova Scotia

Wayne Noseworthy, Ex. Dir. NSTU
Brian Forbes, President, NSTU
Dr. Carmel French President, NSACL
Ann Powers, Director Student Services, Nova Scotia Ministry of Education
Gentleman, NS Ministry of Education

New Brunswick

Mary Wilson, President, New Brunswick Teachers Association
Bob Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, NBTA
Sherman Niles, Past President, New Brunswick Association for Community Living
David Jory, NBACL
Ken Pike, NBACL
Robert Gerard, Director Student Services (English) Ministry of Education NB
Kate McLellan, Student Services, Ministry of Education NB

Prince Edward Island

Mary Mills, President PEI ACL
Mary , PEI ACL
Winnie McInnis, Student Services, PEI Ministry of Education
Margaret Stewart, President, PEI Teachers Federation

Newfoundland

Catherine Alex, Ex. Dir. Nfld ACL
Don Gallant, CACL Community Inclusion Project

CACL & The Roeher institute

Michael Bach, Executive Vice President, Canadian Association for Community Living
Gordon Porter, Senior Consultant, The Roeher Institute

Appendix B

Inclusive Education Regional Summit Amherst, Nova Scotia Notes

New Brunswick Update

- Critical stage - Scraba report - 15 years later
- Priority ACL (Political): inclusion scapegoated, teacher training inservice/preservice
- Too much reliance on TA's: inclusion downloaded on TA's, TA's don't replace teachers
- Scraba report: mismanagement of inclusion in province, French immersion difficulties
- Quality learning agenda
- Long history of inclusion with support from teachers, but lack of resources (not only financial)
- QLA remain in inclusion yet have options for others without losing inclusion
- Differences in implementation of inclusion within the province
- High level of commitment and also low levels
- How to implement best practices
- Media not supportive - mixed messages / media biased against inclusive education
- Department of Education committed to policy on inclusive education that clarifies legislation
- Change in dynamics of society within classroom
- Lack of resources for all for inclusion, immersion etc
- Class composition: better balance, natural proportion
- Behavior issues - can be *any* kid
- Step back and look at inclusion - it should be about *all* kids - special education and inclusion don't seem to mix language and this is a problem
- Rights of people with disabilities not recognized
- Greater community involvement
- Over reliance on TA's

Prince Edward Island Update

- A lot of NB commitments apply to PEI
- Inclusion being scapegoated: province accused of bringing inclusion in back door

- 1-3% of students with severe challenges re: behaviors blame inclusion for problems
- Reliance on TA's
- Lack of resources, support for teachers and students with special needs
- Need to examine the role of the TA - more training is needed for TA's
- Practice in schools is farther ahead than the policy and legislation
- Teachers are stressed!
- Policy debate / discussion
- Ministers directive took 3 years
- All under English until 1999
- Over reliance of students on the TA's - may interfere with natural school life - parents see it as best of service/support
- Parents need education on resources available
- The number of TA's has increased in the past 3 years - from parent demand, but now moving back, message getting through, different need now
- Principal chooses 2 TA's over 1 teacher!! - Need action to show this is changing, TA's not used in TA roles, recently got 8 and a half new resource positions/TA's/ youth workers, education budget cut last year
- TA's need more education on inclusion and student independence

Nova Scotia Update

- Lack of resources
- Inclusion has become most stressful issue for/among teachers
- Implementation of policy without resources creating stress
- Critical issue - report issued on Sept 11/01 got lost in world events so no response to recommendation from Minister...still waiting
- Needs to be a sense of vision/plan/direction on the policy
- Parents with children in system conclude that system cannot meet needs so they withdraw child and put them into private schools that meet their needs
- Parents look for compensation because they have to send their child to private school
- Inclusion cannot happen on the 'backs' of teachers
- Nova Scotia Teacher's Union Resolution - withdraw support for inclusion due to lack of government/department support and resources
- Division (Department of Education) established in 1992 (short history)
- 1996 - Special Education policy established
- Review of Special Education completed - largest in Canada - in collaboration with community groups

- Learning for Life - will help resource (\$70 million) the recommendations
- Outcomes must be reached - "Quality programming"
- Issue of accountability
- High parental expectations
- Transition to the high schools is causing pressure
- Pre service programs not keeping pace - need additional in-service
- Difficult to communicate complex issue - need increased face to face
- Gap exists between policy and practice
- Need an articulated vision and one that is shared and communicated
- Lack of ministerial response to task force report
- Over reliance on TA's - TA role not clearly understood
- Exodus from school system to home/private schooling
- Inclusion is a belief system but you need resources
- Problem might be with allocation and not necessarily with the resources themselves
- Funding increased each year
- Pockets of good practice
- Funding (to date) lowest in the country
- Despite negative experiences with inclusion, teachers are still supportive
- Teachers are being asked to achieve 'mission impossible' due to lack of resources
- Teachers are motivated by a desire for students to gain access to better quality education, and with a hope of a return (eventually) to the public system
- Difficulty is that everyone has a different definition of inclusion
- Many students without exceptionalities are leaving the public system and are asking for public money to do this