



6 April 2009

National Inclusive Education Update

Associations for Community Living celebrated National Inclusive Education Week in February. In this info@ we share some of the stories of activities and events that happened that week – and some of the awards that were presented to recognize outstanding achievement.

Manitoba Summer Institute on Inclusive Education - July 21-24 in Winnipeg

Community Living Manitoba and CACL are organizing a Summer Institute on Inclusive Education in Winnipeg from July 21-24, 2009. Other partners are The Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Council for Leadership in Education. Anne Kresta of CLM and Gordon Porter of CACL are working together on the event. A number of Manitoba educators and resource people are involved.

» [Download brochure for Summer Institute \(pdf\)](#)

CACL Launches No Excuses Awareness Campaign

As part of **National Inclusive Education Week**, CACL is launching a National Inclusive Education Awareness campaign – ‘No Excuses’ – to help raise public awareness and support for inclusive education. According to a national survey, only 33% of Canadians support inclusive education. We have a lot of work to do to build public support. With the pro bono support of Partners + Edell, and Wildmouse Productions, along with an anonymous donor committed to our cause, we have created a campaign to challenge Canadians to question their usual assumptions about students with intellectual disabilities in the regular classroom.



Our message is that children and youth with intellectual disabilities belong with their peers in regular, well-supported, inclusive classrooms and schools. It can be done. It should be done. It might not happen overnight across all Boards of Education in Canada. But there are No Excuses for not making it happen.

Join our campaign. Spread the word. Get engaged. - Join the network and sign the Declaration for Inclusive Education at <http://www.no-excuses.ca/>

Check out the National Post Thursday February 19 - for a CACL 10-page Supplement and “No-Excuses” Poster.

CACL has partnered with the National Post, General Motors of Canada, the BMO Financial Group and many other contributors to produce a 10-page Supplement to appear in the National Post edition this coming Thursday. You can also see the Supplement online starting Thursday at www.nationalpost.com. The supplement includes a full-page 'No-Excuses' poster to help launch our national awareness campaign for inclusive education. Many thanks to all those who contributed their messages, stories and experiences to help Canadians understand the facts, figures, and people behind our 10-year Agenda.

Join Our Education Networks

We invite you to join our effort to move inclusive education ahead in Canada. This is a time for those committed to inclusion in our schools to work together to create new opportunities and to meet the challenges that face so many children and their parents and teachers. You can get information, share information, engage in discussion, and support initiatives in your community, your province and across the country.

We invite you to join us:

- If you are a parent, family member, advocate or friend, join our [Parent/Advocate Network on Inclusive Education](#)
- If you are a teacher, a school principal or work in another role in the education system, [join our Educator Network on inclusive Education](#)

Community Living Manitoba Makes Two Awards

The Canadian Association for Community Living acknowledge inclusive education leadership across the country with certificates of recognition awarded during inclusive education week. This year in Manitoba, when the call was put out for nominees, two candidates were nominated.



These two leaders work as school principals and provide wonderful examples of the qualities that create a welcoming atmosphere, not just for students who have special needs, but for all students, teachers, educational assistants, support workers and parents with whom they work.

Elaine Lochhead has received many awards for her work as a principal of Ste Anne Collegiate in the Seine River School Division and for her leadership of the Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children. She is inspirational and has boundless energy and enthusiasm for her vocation.

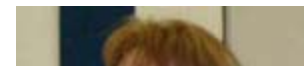


Pam Ball, the principal of Robertson School in Winnipeg School Division, believes in providing information and support to those around her so that they too can become the leaders of the inclusive education movement in her school. She is February's principal of the month on the national inclusive education website and her story provides a blueprint for how to promote change in a positive and forthright manner.

Congratulations to both Elaine Lochhead and Pam Ball for receiving this national recognition from CACL.

A Manitoba Retrospective – Progress Made Since the Special Education Review (1998)

Joanna Blais, Director of Student Services for Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, provided an overview of the key areas identified in the Special Education Review. These action areas include:



- Communication
- Policy
- Accountability
- Educational Supports
- Human Resources
- Funding
- Intersectoral Collaboration

Progress in these action areas includes the development and proclamation of the Appropriate Education Act in 2004, followed by the supporting standards and regulations in 2005. In addition, MECY has produced a significant number of policy and support documents that describe appropriate practice in promoting inclusive education at the school division, school and classroom levels.

A more complete version of Joanna's presentation can be viewed on the web at <http://www.aclmb.ca/> or <http://www.inclusiveeducation.ca/>

President of Canadian Education Association discusses Implications of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities – at Manitoba Event



Carolyn Duhamel, President of the CEA and the Executive Director of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees reviewed the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities for those attending the forum. Although Canada has signed the convention, it has yet to be ratified and adopted by Canada and its provinces and territories.

Carolyn also spoke about the concept of disability. That it is not a medical condition but a result of interaction between social attitudes and barriers with the condition of a particular person. As a result, the term “disability” is not restrictive. It includes long-term and short term physical, mental, intellectual and sensory disabilities.

The UN Convention specifically addresses inclusive education and promotes a number of key concepts including:

- Inclusion at all levels
- Dignity and self-worth
- Access on an equal basis
- Reasonable accommodation

- Effective individualized support measures
-

National Inclusive Education Awards Announce in BC

To highlight National Inclusive Education Week (February 15 - 22), and to bring attention to the many positive examples of inclusive classrooms and schools across the country, the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) has created a national certificate of recognition to be bestowed upon recipients who have made positive contributions to inclusive education in their province or territory.

Three awards were selected in the areas of early childhood education, K-12 education and post-secondary education. Winners were announced during Inclusive Education Week (February 15-22, 2009) and will be honoured at the [BCACL Conference and Annual General Meeting](#) in June, 2009.

And the Winners Are...

- **Early Childhood Education** – Elaine Kopetski, Megan Kikert, and Echo Hawkridge of Quesnel and District Daycare.
» [Read ECE Award press release](#)
- **Elementary School Category**– Elaine Fitzpatrick of Parkhill Elementary School in Dawson Creek.
» [Read Elementary School press release](#)
- **Secondary School Category**– Curtis Tuininga and Shannon Kumpolt of Centennial Christian School in Terrace.
» [Read Secondary School press release](#)
- **Champion of Inclusive Education in BC**– Barbara Laird of Vancouver
» [Read Champion press release](#)

National Inclusive Education Week offers all of us an opportunity to highlight the benefits of inclusive education and to increase awareness of its many positive outcomes.

Inclusion means fully engaging and supporting students with developmental disabilities to participate in a holistic learning environment with their non-disabled peers.

Ontario Award Winners Focus on What's Working to Promote Inclusive Education Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement wins Ontario's CACL Inclusive Education Award

Wednesday, February 18, 2009 — Camille Jensen

By changing their strategy to focus on the positive steps being made towards inclusive education, the Brockville and District

Association for Community Involvement (BDACI) was able to help transform a high school not known for accepting students who have a disability into a successful example and advocate for inclusion.

For these efforts and others, BDACI was named the Ontario recipient of the Canadian Association for Community Living's (CACL) Inclusive Education Award.

Beth French, BDACI's executive director, says they are pleased to be recognized and that the acknowledgment offers both encouragement to staff members and enhanced credibility as the association continues their work towards promoting inclusive education. She credits BDACI's president, Nancy McNamara for her involvement and continued efforts towards inclusion.

While the accolades are a nice pat on the back, French says she wants the award to highlight the larger subject of how best to promote inclusive education.

"It's very nice for us to be recognized but I think what's most important is that there be recognition of the issues with respect to inclusion of kids who have an intellectual disability in the school system," says French.

According to French, their association experienced real progress towards that goal after deciding to change their approach. She says for many years the association was supporting families in their efforts to have their child included in the classroom and found the process "quite discouraging," noting they made little progress.

"We decided that what we really needed to do was to switch that around a bit and highlight a positive accomplishment and that was when we started to think about the partnership we had with the Upper Canada District school board," recalls French.

Already having good relations with the school board, BDACI focused their attention on the Brockville Collegiate Institute (BCI), which had the reputation as a highly academic school and not welcoming of students who have a disability.

BDACI joined the school's accessibility committee and worked extensively with the principal, Dave Coombs, who agreed to meet with BDACI families and staff.

"BDACI found ways to teach BCI staff about the high degree of curriculum modification and innovative accommodation needed by students with developmental disabilities. BCI learned to connect this with its board's efforts for differentiated instruction, character development and school improvement," said Marilyn Dolmage, inclusive education consultant, in a letter nominating BDACI for the award.

The efforts of BDCAI and the high school also caught the attention of the Ministry of Education, which funded a research project to learn how the high school was able to develop and sustain motivation and strategies for effective inclusion of students who have a disability.

According to Doug Cooper, co-chair of the awards committee and member of Community Living Ontario's board of

directors, BDACI deserves to be recognized for taking a leadership role in proving that inclusions does work in schools.

“I think just the efforts that they put in towards working with the school board and in particular the one collegiate which really didn't have students who have a developmental disability in their school. . . . other school boards will take that example as well.”

The CACL Inclusive Education Awards highlight National Inclusive Education Week, which runs from Feb. 15-22, by drawing attention to the positive examples of inclusive classrooms and schools across the country. The award recognizes an individual or team who has made contributions to inclusive education in their province or territory.

Awards in New Brunswick

Forest Hill School, Saint John District 8 – Honoured with National Inclusive Education Award

School Staff Award Recipient

The Teaching and Administrative Staff, Forest Hills School, Saint John



Forest Hills School was one of three recipients of an Inclusive Education Award in the School Staff category.

Comments from Marlene Munn, President of NBACL:

- This is a school that has made great strides in inclusion in recent years; moving from a situation where nine children with autism were taught in a segregated classroom in the basement of the building to the point where now five of those students have returned to the schools in their neighbourhoods while the remaining four, all living in the Forest Hills area, are fully integrated in their classrooms.
- Credit for this great accomplishment goes to the school principal, Tanya Whitney, who took every opportunity to prepare her staff for the transition;
- and to that staff, especially Al Fequet and Vickie Beaulieu-Manuel and the many others who studied and worked hard to be ready to seize the opportunity to make a change
- Tanya Whitney and her team stepped up to the plate and bravely faced the challenges ... for the students who they knew in their hearts would benefit from it (inclusion). And that includes not only the students with intellectual

disabilities, but all the students in the school... and their families.

- This team has embraced NBACL's changing lives/changing communities philosophy entirely. And they have achieved it. They have changed many students' and families' lives and they have changed their school community.

Certificat au Premaire

Lyne Harrigan, Enseignante, première année – Centre scolaire Samuel-de-Champlain, Saint John



Lyne Harrigan, une enseignante, de la première année du Centre scolaire Samuel-de-Champlain de Saint John, a été reconnue pour son dévouement dans l'inclusion et la célébration de chaque élève dans sa classe. Jolaine Richardson, mère d'une élève qui fréquentait la classe de Lyne l'an dernier, a présenté la candidature.

La meilleure justice qu'on peut rendre à la mise en candidature de Mme Richardson est de présenter sa lettre. Puisqu'elle a été écrite en anglais, nous allons la présenter tel quel, mais d'abord, une petite explication s'impose. La fille de Mme Richardson, Jillian, a un certain nombre d'handicaps – inutile de dire que Mme Richardson était préoccupée de la façon que Jillian se débrouillerait dans sa nouvelle classe de première année, où se trouveraient 15 autres élèves qui prendraient le temps et l'attention de l'enseignante. Les expériences du passé auprès des garderies n'avaient pas été des plus satisfaisantes, mais, comme Mme Richardson le relate dans sa lettre à propos de Lyne Harrigan, "I need not have worried."

Après que Jillian eût passé une semaine dans la classe de Mme Harrigan, Jolaine Richardson a rencontré l'enseignante. Voici ce que Jolaine dit dans sa lettre:

"Already [Mme Harrigan] had made some observations about Jillian, had taken notes and was prepared to speak with us about our concerns... rather than being condescending and negative, she was upbeat and positive... she even seemed excited and enthusiastic... [Mme Harrigan] explained to me that she had a background in special education, she saw so much potential in Jillian, and that she was up for the challenge. She had all year to prove to us that these were not empty promises, and she did not disappoint."

Mme Richardson poursuit sa lettre en décrivant la façon que Mme Harrigan a manifesté son engagement envers l'inclusion en personnalisant ses méthodes d'enseignement selon le style d'apprentissage particulier de chaque élève, et sa perception drôlement aiguë des forces et des sources de motivation particulières de chaque enfant.

"She not only thinks outside the box," écrit Mme Richardson. "[Mme Harrigan] reinvents the box, creating new approaches to teaching and learning on a daily basis."

La mère de Jillian décrit comment Lyne Harrigan a poussé le dévouement au-delà de la salle de classe, au point même de proposer une méthode permettant à Jillian d'apprendre à se brosser les cheveux, chose qui présentait une difficulté en raison des déficiences sensorielles de l'enfant.

"Mme Harrigan showed me that every battle has potential for success," écrit Jolaine Richardson. "For Mme Harrigan,

teaching is in . . . her soul, in her spirit and it doesn't stop at academics. It reaches beyond – to a little girl's tangled tresses.”

Comme autre exemple de la bienveillance, de la compétence et du dévouement de Mme Harrigan, Mme Richardson raconte comment l'enseignante a organisé une réunion de l'équipe stratégique de Jillian au complet. “She had a binder full of notes she had taken over the course of the year,” écrit Mme Richardson, “and was able to provide detailed information to all of us, including Jillian's psychologist, on what worked, what didn't, what the challenges ahead were, how she coped with difficulties both in the classroom and around the school, what she had observed, the list was endless.”

Au cours de l'année qu'elle a passé dans la classe de Mme Harrigan, Jillian a fait des progrès remarquables dans chacun des domaines présentant pour elle des difficultés. Mme Richardson attribue ces progrès à Lyne Harrigan. Elle écrit : “We know that these successes were made possible by Mme Harrigan's hard work, as well as her honest, genuine celebrations of each valiant effort made, her belief in what's possible as opposed to a focus on what isn't possible. The same genuine, honest celebration she makes for each student's individual efforts. In Mme Harrigan's class, no one gets left behind; everyone has something to celebrate about themselves.”

Voici d'autres énoncés de la lettre de Mme Richardson :

“We could not have wished for a teacher more in tune with the skills and knowledge required to deal with children with special needs.”

“The depth of her passion and dedication to teaching is something I may never witness again in my lifetime. [Mme Harrigan] not only taught and blessed 16 individual children in that classroom this year, she taught us and blessed us with hope, belief, compassion, dedication, strength, perseverance and so much more.”

“She is a role model of everything that all teachers should strive for.”

Student Award Recipient

Alex Boudreau, Grade 6 Student at École Abbey-Landry, Memramcook



Sixth grader Alex Boudreau of Abbey-Landry School in Memramcook was recognized with the Student Award at NBACL's Inclusive Education Awards Ceremony.

He was nominated by his teacher, Tanya Bellefleur, who wrote in his nomination, "Alex is a leader at school. His classmates respect him, and want to be his friend. Among his friends is a student in our class who has special needs. Alex knows this boy well. He takes note of what interests his friend and makes sure he asks him every morning how his evening or weekend was."

Mme Bellefleur went on to describe the special efforts Alex makes to assure that a particular classmate with an intellectual disability is accommodated and included both inside and outside the classroom. "The way Alex defends and protects this student is most amazing," she wrote.

According to Mme Bellefleur, Alex makes a special effort to spend time with his friend, inviting him to join his group in class, or joining his friend's group. He has even passed up on participation in certain activities to spend time with this student.

"And not only does he help out this student," Mme Bellefleur added, "He also helps another student who has great academic difficulties. He volunteers to help him with academic tasks and defends his rights, as well.

"He is certainly an inspiration and model for our class!"

Elementary Education Award Recipients

Chantal Brochu, Teacher's Aide, École Sainte-Anne, Fredericton

An Efforts toward Inclusive Education Award in the elementary education category was presented to Chantal Brochu, a teacher's aide at École Sainte-Anne in Fredericton.

Mme Brochu was recognized for the exceptional work she does with all students, and most particularly with the one for whom she has special responsibility. According to her nominators, Mme Brochu is open to all questions and concerns expressed by the classmates of her student and she involves all classmates in helping to include that student. As a result, Mme Brochu's student is well accepted and very happy in her school environment.



“It is easy to say that Chantal always gives 100 per cent for her students,” said her nominator, Véronique Arseneault, resource teacher at École Sainte-Anne. “She is a gem of a teacher’s aide!”

Nancy Béland, Physical Education Teacher, École Sainte-Anne, Fredericton

Nancy Béland also received an Efforts toward Inclusive Education Award in the elementary education category.

A physical education teacher, Mme Béland strives to include all her students at École Sainte-Anne in her class activities. As illustrated by her nominators, who cited many examples of Mme Béland’s concern for all of her students, this requires creativity and flexibility, as well as complete dedication to the philosophy of inclusion.

Some illustrations of Mme Béland’s dedication to inclusion include her request for a paved path to the playground area to make wheelchair passage easier, or a request for permission to bring a wheelchair onto the soccer pitch.

“Mme Nancy is a leader of inclusive education,” said one of her the nominators, colleague Véronique Arseneault.

SCHOOL STAFF AWARD RECIPIENT

Student Services Team, Hartland Community School, Hartland, SD 14



The Hartland Community School was one of three recipients of an Inclusive Education Award in the School Staff category. The school was nominated by Robin Crain, a learning specialist with School District 14.

Robin Crain’s nomination form for the school includes many examples of how the team there supports all students – those with behavioural issues, those with intellectual disabilities, those with physical challenges and those with no major challenges at all. Here’s one of them:

“A student with cognitive challenges was observed one day by the principal, standing on the side of the road twirling a basketball on his finger. [The principal] asked [this student] the next day about it and was treated to a demonstration. The following week at a school spirit assembly the principal announced a surprise challenge. The challenge: to see who could twirl a basketball on the end of a finger the longest. Many students rushed to the stage, including basketball stars. At the end there was one student left standing. Amidst cheers and applause and calls of encouragement this young man smiled proudly as he carried off the prize!”

Another example, again recounted by Robin Crain: “They encourage the entire staff to be involved with the students. An example of this is with three of the children with autism, who have as part of their plan to go to see the secretary each morning to greet her as part of their social skills. The bus driver is written into plans as part of a student’s social interaction goals.”

“This team thinks outside the box,” said Robin Crain in the nomination. “They start from a value base of ‘what does this child need?’ They search for ways to hook students to learning. They do not give up on kids. They truly believe in the

collaborative approach. They involve all stakeholders in problem solving around plans for children. They come from a value base of reinforcers, not punishers.

“This school has 11 children with autism plus many others with special needs,” the nomination continued. “The school consistently rises to any challenge and truly believes in an inclusive system. This is not something special they do. It is the way they do business. They truly are a school family.”

Robin Crain concludes in an accompanying letter: “This team exemplifies what we dream of when we speak about inclusion.”

Early Learning and Childhood Award The Preschool Centre, Windsor Street, Fredericton



The Efforts toward Inclusive Education Award in the early learning and childhood sector is presented to **The Preschool Centre** on Windsor Street in Fredericton. The Preschool Centre is a child care facility for children from six months to 12 years of age.

As nominator Marlene Munn put it, “The Centre is doing an excellent job of fostering a sense of family and belonging, not only with the children in the Centre, but also with the families.” Mrs. Munn’s 10-year-old daughter Aimee has been attending the Centre since March 2008.

“After seven weeks of trying to get Aimee into another after school program without success, the Preschool Centre was a dream,” Mrs. Munn recounted. “I called on Wednesday and Aimee started on Monday. She was welcomed with open arms. The Centre’s administration even looked after hiring a TA and getting the necessary funding in place. This was a big burden lifted from our shoulders.

“All the teachers and administration at the Preschool Centre work to ensure inclusion for all children. All children are treated with respect and are encouraged to treat each other with respect.”

Post-Secondary Education Award Recipient

Richard Corey, Former Executive Director, New Brunswick Community College

“Postsecondary education for people who have a disability is important for the same reasons as it is for non-disabled people; it helps to fulfill personal goals, allows for effective competition in the job market and contributes to independence and financial security. In fact, a college education is more important for people who have a disability.”

That’s a quote from a leader in inclusive education at the college level, Catherine Fichten of the Adaptech Project at Dawson College in Quebec.



It’s also the philosophy upon which NBCC’s inclusion program was built. One of the architects of that program is Richard Corey. Corey, former Executive Director of the New Brunswick Community College system, was honoured for his work in establishing and encouraging inclusive education in the province’s English community colleges.

According to his nominator and colleague, H el ene L. Martin, “Richard Corey believes that students with disabilities should be afforded an opportunity to learn and grow as individuals and as competent and worthwhile employees in the workplace.”

It is this belief that drove Richard to participate in a working group that recommended inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in community college. That was in 1996. By 2001, NBCC Connections, a pilot project to provide job training for persons with intellectual disabilities, had been implemented in three community colleges across the province. Richard Corey was part of the Management Team of the College when this pilot project was implemented.

In 2005, when the Connections pilot project was completed, Mr. Corey took inclusion to the next step and was instrumental in the establishment of a Disability Unit for NBCC. The first mandate of that Unit was to incorporate Connections into the College’s regular business processes. The result was the development of Special Admissions. In September 2008, 19 students were accepted under Special Admissions to six NBCC campuses.

Richard Corey believes that NBCC needs to build capacity within the organization in order to establish long lasting inclusion. His vision is based on training and professional development opportunities for all staff. So, to assure the ongoing success of inclusive practices, NBCC, under Richard Corey’s leadership, has succeeded in securing multi-year funding to support the work of the Disability Unit.

NBACL Intermediate Education Award Recipient

Laura Huffaker, Teacher and Band Leader, Lewisville Middle School, Riverview, New Brunswick

An Efforts toward Inclusive Education Award in the intermediate education category was presented to Laura Huffaker. She was nominated by her co-worker, methods and resource teacher Sandra Smith.



Laura Huffaker is the music teacher at Lewisville Middle School in Riverview. She is also the middle school band teacher and runs the school's beginner band program. According to her nominator, Ms. Huffaker "Works tirelessly to create and implement lesson plans that are inclusive to every child in her class, regardless of ability."

Ms. Huffaker extends the same consideration in her band program. As Ms. Smith wrote: "You don't often see students who require teacher's aides attending extra-curricular clubs and activities, but several attend Ms. Huffaker's beginner band.

"She recognizes the importance of music in a child's life and does not feel that a physical, emotional or intellectual disability should interfere with that relationship. . . . She demonstrates enormous patience by providing any and all additional instruction and practice time that her students require to fully participate in beginner band. It is a pleasure to see such an inclusive extra-curricular activity at our school."

A story recounted by parent Kim Daborn in her letter of support for Ms. Huffaker's nomination captures just how this wonderful teacher has changed at least one family's life.

Mrs. Daborn wrote, "My 12-year-old son, Brent, is in Grade 7 at Lewisville Middle School in Moncton. Brent has cerebral palsy, is confined to a wheelchair and has limited motor skills. Aside from that, Brent is a very bright and verbal young man. His biggest struggles in life are being able to do things 'like my friends do.'"

Her letter went on to recount how every year Brent would ask to sign up for various extracurricular activities like sports, drama and so on, and how disappointed he would be when he would learn that he could not.

"Since a very young age Brent has had a love for music and has shown great interest in musical instruments," the boy's mom wrote.

"Once again this year, he came home very excited. It was time for kids to sign up for band and he wanted me to sign the permission form, literally begging me to..."

"My heart broke once again to see the disappointment in his eyes when I tried to explain to him that I didn't think this would be possible. So, I wrote to Ms. Huffaker asking if there was any way that Brent could be part of the LMS band. Ms. Huffaker had no hesitation in replying 'yes, we will find something for him to play and make it work.'

“Today Brent is a very proud member of the LMS school band playing the tambourine and attending band practice once a week...”

Mrs. Daborn concluded her letter by saying, “Ms. Huffaker has made a difference in a child’s life by overlooking the disability and removing the barriers.”

Partnerships and Practical Applications for Teachers Will Move Inclusion Forward Award winner says movement needs to pull together and refocus advocacy efforts on inclusion

Friday February 20, 2009 – Camille Jensen



Beth French says its time to move from just talking about inclusive education as a theory to actively working with the education system so that the practices are in place to make inclusion work in schools.

French is the executive director of the of the Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement (BDACI), which was recently named the Ontario recipient of the Canadian Association for Community Living’s (CACL) Inclusive Education Award.

While the award is encouraging, French says recent statistics from the CACL’s national report card on inclusion highlight the reality that more work still needs to be done.

The CACL reported states that two-thirds of school-aged children who have an intellectual disability are segregated in special classes or schools some or all the time, or are not attending school at all.

“There has been some progress made over the years but there are many, many issues before us and this is a time in our movement when we have to come to grips with that,” says French.

The two main areas that the BDACI sees as instrumental to helping achieve inclusion in schools is forming partnerships with the school boards and advocating for more research and education techniques to prepare teachers to accommodate all children.

French says it’s important to work with the school board in a collaborative process. A successful partnership with the Upper Canada school board and the association has helped BDACI create inclusion in several schools in the Brockville area.

In BDACI’s experience, having a statement to clarify what inclusion means was also helpful to ensure consistency. BDACI presented the school board with a statement that identified full inclusion as having children who have an intellectual disability included in their age-appropriate classroom with adapted curriculum at their neighbourhood school.

“I think that clarity helps and consistency helps and you have to be prepared to demonstrate that you respect their expertise

and want to work with that,” says French, adding that associations can still be strong in their advocacy for inclusion.

“Convey that our expectations are high and that we do in fact see as a fundamental for inclusion later in life, inclusive education has to be in place.”

Also important is ensuring teachers are prepared to teach children who have an intellectual disability. Nancy McNamara, BDACI's president, says it's hard to make inclusion happen if teachers feel unprepared to do it.

She suggests local associations and Community Living Ontario, advocate for the province to make it mandatory that all teachers receive training on how to accommodate children who an intellectual disability.

McNamara suggests that differentiated learning is one tool that could be helpful to instruct all children. Differentiated learning recognizes that all students do not learn in the same manner and adopts an approach that provides students with different avenues to maximize their growth so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability.

“We had a great presentation on this differentiated instruction which is a perfect example of how you include kids within the same classroom,” says McNamara, who adds that differentiated learning as a practice has not yet expanded to include children who have an intellectual disability — but should be considered in the future.

“I don't think they are using that system as nearly as well as they could be.”

Does your association have a best practice when it comes to promoting inclusive education in schools?

INFO@ is a newsletter published by the Canadian Association for Community Living to provide current information on relevant topics and issues to the Association, its members & affiliates, and the communities involved. Submissions for consideration for the next INFO@ can be emailed to <mailto:inform@cacl.ca?SUBJECT=Article for Consideration>.

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