

Submission On:

***Inclusive Education: A Review of
Programming and Services in New Brunswick***

**New Brunswick Association for Community Living / Association du Nouveau-
Brunswick pour l'intégration communautaire**

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Introduction

The New Brunswick Association for Community Living / Association du Nouveau-Brunswick pour l'intégration communautaire (NBACL/ANBIC) was formed in 1957 for the purposes of improving the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. At the time, our children were refused entry into public schools in New Brunswick and no alternative education services were provided. Subsequently, a network of auxiliary classes grew up around the province, most which were run by local branches of our Association. Later, provincial legislation (the *Auxiliary Classes Act*) provided a policy framework for these segregated classes. Under this framework, children with intellectual disabilities were labeled "uneducable" so that by law, auxiliary classes could not provide education, only "training and instruction". With this policy framework, government provided funding for auxiliary classes, although their operation required fundraising by local branches by our Association.

The advent of the *Charter Rights and Freedoms* in 1982 (and the coming into force of the equality rights provisions of the *Charter* in 1985) paralleled some progressive thinking on the rights and benefits of providing education to children with disabilities in regular schools and classrooms. The movement towards "integration" of children with disabilities in our school system was receiving considerable attention in New Brunswick and elsewhere. During the early to mid 1980s, NBACL/ANBIC and our families were at the forefront of the integration movement, having recognized that the exclusion and segregation of our children in the education system was harmful and counter-productive, and a denial of our children's basic rights and freedoms.

The integration movement (which was supported by progressive thinkers within the Department of Education) culminated in the 1986 amendments to the *Schools Act* – commonly known as "Bill 85". In essence, this Bill (which also repealed the *Auxiliary Classes Act*) not only reflected a change in education pedagogy, but recognized and encouraged the rights of children with disabilities to receive their education in regular classrooms alongside their peers. Although met with considerable resistance, this change was a bold move on the part of the government of the time to codify the rights of all children to receive a quality public education together. A subsequent government review (conducted in 1987) confirmed that this was the right decision.

In the years subsequent to 1986, many individuals came to understand the difference between "integration" – the appropriate term when children originally excluded from the

education system are inserted into it – and “inclusion” – the appropriate term when all children are considered to belong inside the education system.

With this understanding, came the realization that while many children were being integrated to varying degrees, many were still not included. In other words, they were in schools and in classrooms but were not always welcomed or accommodated or made to feel that they belong.

With the developing knowledge of inclusive education, it has become clear that inclusion is less about children with disabilities and more about how our education system is designed and implemented so that all children belong and receive a quality education. While we have a particular interest in children with intellectual disabilities, the recommendations in this submission will, we believe, lead to a stronger and more positive education system for all children. This belief is based on real experience in New Brunswick and in other jurisdictions that tells us that when education systems are truly inclusive all children benefit. In this sense, inclusive education recognizes that all children are in their own way “special” and unique. While some students require more support to learn and participate than others, there is no need to talk about children with “special needs” as being distinct from other children, and there is no need or value in talking about “special education” as being something distinct from regular education. An inclusive education system is one education system for all students who have diverse backgrounds, abilities, goals and circumstances.

An Education System for the 21st Century

The Terms of Reference for the review identify a number of important challenges that will need to be addressed in the coming months and years. The province’s *Quality Learning Agenda* (policy statement on K-12) sets out on a number of specific actions to improve the education system and to ensure “individual learner success”.

Against this background, we believe that there are broader challenges that must be addressed. We know that students spend most of their waking hours at school for 13 or more years of their lives. Many people have always referred to these as the “formative” years. Today, if you were to ask students how well the system is meeting their needs, a great number of them will tell you that its not even coming close. Many students seem unhappy, bored, unchallenged and simply not interested in what schools offer in their curriculum package. The small percentage of students bound for university show some interest in the subjects that are required for entrance purposes. But, they too complain about the lack of real challenge. Vandalism, bullying and theft are common practice in many school buildings as students take out their lack of interest, satisfaction and caring on other people and on school property. A lack of connection to school and its business is obvious in these daily problems. A different way of thinking about and delivering education must be developed if we are to meet the needs of New Brunswick students.

Generally, there are two ways to look at models for education. One is to think of the school system as a “model” or microcosm of our society – with its hierarchies, diversities, imperfections, and codes of conduct, ethics and morality. Or one should think of the school system as a “blueprint” for how we think a society should look. The first reflects or imitates that which exists, while the second seeks to inform what could be.

An effective, accountable and inclusive school system will fall into the latter category and will include plans to bring the school system into the 21st century. Such a model will have at its core a vision of how schools for the new millennium should look and plan for ways for which those schools would contribute to the development of a truly democratic society. An education system for the 21st century would have the following goals and objectives:

- To be truly effective, the school system must accomplish that which it sets out to do. It must have clear and concise goals. Those goals and objectives, whether academic or social, must be of some benefit to the society in which we live. They must be readily available to the stakeholders of education and a monitoring system must be put in place to measure whether or not the goals and objectives have been met.
- Schools for the 21st century would focus on a set of basics that have their roots in democracy. Basics such as diplomacy, acceptance, responsibility, participation and contribution would be the goals of education, and academic and natural subject matter would be the tools through which the goals could be achieved. (For too long, we have attempted to measure school success solely on artificially contrived academic standards, with mediocre success and much pupil and public disenchantment).
- Schools for the 21st century need to be accountable to the stakeholders they serve. In order to measure whether the system is accountable, it is necessary to recognize who the stakeholders and participants really are. In the past we have recognized taxpayers, parents, universities and a multitude of others as the stakeholders of public education. Too often, however, we have overlooked the fact that students should be first and foremost on the list.

An education system for the 21st century will recognize the value of inclusion to whole school improvement and reform. In this regard, discussions about creating “whole schools” are about “seeking ways to create schools that promote justice and enhance the learning and performance of all children” (*Whole Schooling Research Project*, 2000). Whole schools are created when “diversity is valued and children of great differences learn together”.

Tamor and Peterson (2001) note that a society or community ostensibly committed to social justice cannot be built on a foundation of “exclusion and elitism”. Schools must operate on the belief that “all students must be educated to take their places as active participants in a democratic society”. In this sense, disability must be viewed as one of

the many “normal dimensions of human diversity”. As such, inclusion has to be seen primarily as a human rights issue that requires schools to be “democratic at every level”.

The question remains: how does this happen? This submission outlines NBACL’s/ANBIC’s recommendations for the development of an education system that is inclusive. (A complete list of the recommendations is contained in Schedule ‘A’).

While the provision of a quality inclusive education for students with disabilities is critical, whole schools must be inclusive of, and effective for, all students. This means that any approach to change must not view inclusive education as a disability issue. Rather, inclusive education must be seen as the foundation for building an effective and accountable quality education system for all students.

A Framework for Inclusive Education Policy and Practice in New Brunswick

The Terms of Reference for this review calls for recommendations for the elements of a policy statement on inclusion that will include a definition of inclusion, vision and values for inclusive education, and a model for an effective, accountable, inclusive education system. Within this context, there are many aspects that need to be considered.

NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the following components be incorporated into a framework for inclusive education policy and practice in New Brunswick:

- Clear vision and values for inclusive education and “whole schooling” in New Brunswick.
- A clear understanding, promoted consistently throughout New Brunswick, of what inclusive education means and does not mean.
- Effective leadership at all levels.
- A culture of hospitality, willingness and creativity in all public schools.
- Knowledge and effective implementation of inclusive schooling practices (including inclusive curriculum, flexible learning experiences, collaborative learning and a focus on strengths and abilities).
- Effective partnerships between schools, parents and communities.
- Adequate and sustainable resources and support for teachers and students.
- An effective accountability framework and accountability mechanism.

In this submission, we will provide recommendations on each of these elements, although we will try to follow the order as laid out in Part IV (Deliverables: What Will be Produced) in the Terms of Reference. NBACL/ANBIC will not provide recommendations on all of the aspects outlined in Part IV of the review's Terms of Reference.

Vision and Values for Inclusive Education in New Brunswick

NBACL/ANBIC's vision is an inclusive New Brunswick within an inclusive Canada, where what we now call "disability" is recognized as a normal part of the human experience and where the barriers which currently prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating and contributing to their communities no longer exist. In an inclusive society, this vision extends to and includes all people, particularly those who are currently marginalized and excluded.

Recommendation # 1: In the education context, NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following vision of inclusion:

Inclusion in a school environment means the unambiguous and unconditional acceptance of all children in all their diversity so that they all learn together, with and from each other, and interact positively with each other in co-curricular and extra-mural activities. This vision requires the recognition, understanding and acceptance of the individual ability of every child; of the variety of learning styles, interests and abilities present in every classroom; and of the variety of skills, techniques and knowledge which, when used creatively will foster:

- ***a love of learning in every child and the achievement of potential for every child; and***
- ***positive interaction among students and also among educators and students inside and outside the classroom and in all aspects of school life.***

This vision recognizes that in an inclusive school, each classroom is an inclusive community and that the school itself is a community of inclusive communities. All students (and their parents) feel welcomed, respected and accepted and that they "belong". Students work with and support each other; working with parents, teachers supports students and other teachers; principals and vice-principals supports students and teachers; district staff and councils supports schools, principals and teachers – which also means ensuring full accountability.

Recommendation # 2: NBACL/ANBIC recommends the adoption of the following values for New Brunswick's education system:

- ***Citizenship, Acceptance and Belonging.*** These values are central to the concept of inclusion and speak about the opportunities that people have to be actively involved within their community. In the education context, schools have a duty to promote, encourage and sustain initiatives which enhance and

broaden these values for all students in all aspects of school life and to discourage whatever is inimical to them.

- ***Equality.*** This value, with its basis in human rights law, underscores the importance of recognizing the diversity that exists within schools and the importance of providing equal access to a quality public education. In the context of inclusive education, equality extends beyond a core value to a positive duty to make accommodations for all students who may require some kind of support and assistance to be successful in school.
- ***Dignity and Respect.*** The values of dignity and respect are at the heart of the nature of the relationships that must exist within an inclusive education system. Inclusion means that there are positive and supportive relationships between students, between teachers and other education staff, between teachers and students, between teachers and parents and so on. Where dignity and respect exists at all levels, relationships within the education system support the success of everyone involved.
- ***Individualization.*** Under this value, education policy and programs are based on determining and enhancing individual strengths and capacities and on providing education programs that seek to maximize each individual's potential and opportunities for success. This value does not mean that individual students are isolated within the school system. Rather, it means designing and implementing curricula, teaching methods, assessment methods, so as to recognize the broad diversity of abilities and interests that exist within the student population.
- ***Participation.*** Central to inclusion, this recognizes that all students will be afforded the right and opportunity to participate, and to be invited to participate, in all aspects of school life (including academic, social, extra-curricular, and so on).
- ***Self-Determination and Autonomy.*** This value recognizes that all students, including those considered to have disabilities, require the means to maximize their independence and to enhance their own well being. While schools must still exercise authority over their students, this is done in a positive way that seeks to enhance decision-making skills and personal responsibilities.

Defining Inclusive Education

In defining inclusive education, it is important to be clear about what inclusion in the education context means and does not mean.

Recommendation # 3: As a working definition of inclusive education, NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following:

Inclusive education means developing and designing all schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Schools that are inclusive are those in which all students, regardless of pre-conceived notions of ability, are welcomed to, and learn together in, heterogeneous classrooms. They are all considered to be valued as equal members of the school population and as such have access to all programs and services offered. Inclusion also means that our schools help to develop positive relationships and mutual respect between all students.

Recommendation # 4: In addition to the working definition, NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the following key elements of an inclusive school be adopted as part of education policy and practice in New Brunswick:

- **The unconditional acceptance of all children into regular classes and the life of the school;**
- **Students receive as much support as necessary to be successfully included in their neighborhood schools and in regular classes;**
- **A commitment to taking parents seriously and especially parents' dreams and goals for their child's future;**
- **A commitment to looking at all children for what they can do rather than what they cannot do;**
- **Accepting and understanding that children do not have to have the same educational goals to be able to learn together in regular classes;**
- **Strong leadership from school principals and other administrators;**
- **Schools are restructured in ways that focuses on individual achievement and student learning;**
- **A recognition that all students are individuals who have different ways of learning, different strengths, abilities and weakness, different backgrounds and values, and that helping them all learn to their capacity requires knowledge of a broad range of pedagogical approaches and techniques;**
- **A commitment to continuous improvement throughout the school and district;**
- **Teachers are supported in the classrooms, and schools are supported as necessary;**
- **Systematic in-service training and other learning mechanisms are provided to all educators (and other staff as necessary);**
- **A formative accountability mechanism that is effective and strong.**

It is also important to recognize that inclusive education is not about “special education” or about having a “range of learning options”. Maintaining a distinction between “regular” education and “special” education is counterintuitive to the vision, values, and practices of inclusive education. Special education developed in a different era and has no place in the context of a fully inclusive education system. In New Brunswick, there

should be one education system for all students that seeks to support student success at all levels.

Inclusion is not about having a range of “service options” or “placement options”. These approaches were a part of the old “cascade model” that predated inclusive education in New Brunswick. The foundation for inclusive education is the regular classroom for all students, which is designed to reflect the diversity of the student population. It is clear that the popularity of French Immersion has had an impact on the goal of having heterogeneous classrooms in the core English program. Ways to address this need to be explored, including supporting more students with disabilities to participate in French Immersion programs, and implementing, where necessary, mixed grade classroom strategies and providing additional supports within the classroom.

It is also clear that inclusive education does not require that all students remain in the classroom at all times. Inclusion does not mean that schools or classrooms are “prisons” for students. There may be good reasons why specific students leave the regular classroom for specific reasons and for limited time periods specified in advance. In some instances, people may require one-on-one assistance in a particular subject matter. Other students may leave the classroom to participate in group projects, work experience activities, and enrichment activities.

Schools must “engineer” a positive learning environment for each child. We recognize that for a small number of students (at certain points in their schooling) the regular classroom may not be a positive learning environment. For these students a different learning environment must be engineered at these times (typically at the start of their school career). This process must be planned and implemented with the goal of enabling the student to return to the regular classroom and to interact with his or her fellow students as soon as possible.

The critical aspect in an inclusive education model is that serious thought is given to how often a pupil may be outside of the regular classroom and the reasons that this may happen. Certainly, this does not mean that students with certain characteristics (for example, those who have disabilities) are grouped together in separate classrooms for all or part of the school day. In addition, an inclusive education system does not separate certain students within the regular classroom (for example, in the back corner of the classroom) but rather designs classrooms and classroom activities so that all students learn together. It needs to be clear that we are no longer just talking about inclusion as education “philosophy”, but rather good educational practice for all students.

Recommendation # 5: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **The use of “special education” concepts, language, and practices be removed or eliminated from New Brunswick education laws, policies, and documents.**
- **A generic system of support services to education be adopted and implemented in all schools throughout New Brunswick.**

- **In situations where student-focused educational planning is required, it be referred to as a “Student Education Plan” or simply as an “Education Plan”.**
- **Clear guidelines be established and promoted that set out the circumstances in which a student may be removed from the regular classroom, and the planning process to be undertaken to ensure that the student returns to the regular classroom as soon as possible (unless very exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated).**

Leadership at all Levels

Effective leadership is crucial for the broad and consistent implementation of inclusive education. This leadership must exist at various levels including the Department of Education, within individual school districts (including District Education Councils, superintendents, directors of education and district supervisors) and at individual schools (with a particular focus on the leadership qualities of school principals).

Effective leadership is particularly important at the school level. In inclusive schools, principals are the educational leaders who demonstrate by example what inclusion is, and who assist teachers through observation and follow up consultation. (For example, in one school in the Moncton area, the principal has led the implementation of a whole schooling approach using the strategies outlined by noted educational expert, William Glasser.)

In addition, principals are given the time and resources necessary to play this role. At present, principals are very involved in managing their schools and are caught up in the administrative end of the system. Many schools do not have full-time secretaries and many principals have to spend time with paper work. Few principals have adequate time to visit and observe in classrooms and to consult with teachers on a one-to-one basis.

Leadership also requires knowledge and a clear understanding of the ways in which inclusive education is effectively implemented. This knowledge must also exist at different levels of the education system and it must be used to identify, on an ongoing basis, needs and opportunities for improvement.

Recommendation # 6: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that effective leadership for inclusive education is provided by:

- **Developing a leadership development strategy that would target key positions within the education system, including the Department of Education staff, District Education Council members, district superintendents and directors of education, district student service supervisors, and principals.**

- **Developing and implementing hiring policies and practices that will ensure that people in key positions (including district superintendents, directors of education, student services supervisors, and school principals) have sound knowledge of, and a commitment to, implementing an effective and accountable inclusive education system within their areas of responsibility.**
- **Giving sufficient support to school principals (including administrative support) so that they may take more active measures to observe classroom instruction and other school activities and to consult with teachers individually on inclusive education issues.**

Implementing Inclusive Schooling Practices

Effective pedagogy for inclusive education that reflects the diversity of learning abilities and styles has been well known for some time. In New Brunswick, this knowledge may not be all that wide spread and well understood, which leads to inconsistent implementation of inclusive education strategies throughout the province. In part, this has resulted from a lack of adequate training on these issues at some New Brunswick universities. Issues of educator training and professional development will be dealt with in a later section in this submission.

Some of the difficulty with current education models stems from the fact that schools are structured along grade levels. The reality, of course, is that students at any given grade will have diverse abilities and diverse ways of learning. In inclusive schools, educators and other staff will embrace this diversity of ability and “make it a part of a design of instruction” (*Whole Schooling Research Project, 2000*). This means that educators must teach inclusively at various levels of ability. The Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation has developed good curricula that are not always used adequately to teach inclusively. In inclusive schools educators:

- Design and teach lessons that include all learners in the classroom.
- Provide support so students can push ahead to their own next level of learning.
- Use authentic teaching strategies that engage students in learning through activities that relate to their lives at home and in the community.
- Engage the multiple learning styles of children so that multiple pathways for learning and demonstrating that achievement are available.
- Involve students in collaborative, peer or group work where they draw on each other’s strengths. (*Whole Schooling Research Project, 2000*).

In an inclusive school system, therefore, schools would offer a flexible, creative and inclusive curriculum that would offer students a course of learning that:

- Reflects choice and a sense of responsibility.
- Contributes indirectly and directly to community and society.
- Reflects the growing body of scientific and academic research about the human brain and its need for diversity, novelty, and higher-order thinking skills, the making of personal meaning and the need for motion and emotion.
- Rejects the notion of elitism – that only the university-bound have merit or status in the school and community.
- Draws upon the physical and human resources of the community to reach its goals.
- Embraces different abilities, interests, cultures, creeds, genders and gender orientation as a natural part of the school community.
- Teaches the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a free and democratic society.
- Teaches the skills necessary to accept, respect and welcome new ideas and new forms of learning.
- Encourages innovation, invention and free discourse.
- Contributes not only to potential economic growth but to a healthy social economy as well.
- Contains elements of community maintenance and enterprise.

In addition, inclusive education requires alternate types of assessment. Any attempts to evaluate student performance must reflect the notion of diversity. The current overuse of written tests and examinations does not mirror the teacher's mandate for differentiated instruction.

Recommendation # 7: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **A school by school and district by district audit take place to determine the level of knowledge and competencies of educators in the New Brunswick education system to implement effective inclusive education practices. It is further recommended that such audits be conducted in a formative way that is developmental in design and that key stakeholders (including external stakeholders) be included on district audit committees.**

- **The implementation of inclusive education practices becomes part of a standards and accountability framework (see recommendations below on accountability).**
- **Key competencies for implementing effective inclusive practices are identified.**
- **Within 5 years, all educators in New Brunswick schools receive adequate training and professional development to effectively implement inclusive practices. (See recommendations below on Teacher Training and Professional Development).**

Creating the Culture of Hospitality, Willingness, and Creativity

Successful inclusive schools are typically schools that intentionally attempt to create a culture of hospitality, willingness and creativity. In our long experience with public education in New Brunswick, parents will know fairly quickly whether they (or their child) are welcomed without question. In talking about her son's experience in one school, a parent recently noted:

In slightly over 2 years, he was able to make incredible progress. The methods and resource teacher was wonderful. She and all of his other teachers worked very hard to keep him in school. Although he did not grow up in that community, everyone worked to make him feel like he belonged. For the first time in his life he was treated with unconditional regard. ...I believe that school was partially responsible for teaching my son social skills.

The biggest lessons they taught him were about having a sense of community and being a responsible citizen. They taught him accountability. They taught him to feel pride in something and they fostered a sense of success. (Fredericton Daily Gleaner, February 24, 2005)

It is obvious that this sense of hospitality, willingness and creativity is based on the commitments that school principals, educators, and other school staff make to their school environment. It also depends largely on the quality of the leadership that exists within the school. It is difficult, if not impossible, to mandate that this culture be in place. It typically has to be nurtured through understanding, awareness and commitment.

Recommendation # 8: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the government of New Brunswick and New Brunswick school districts recognize the critical aspect of school culture to effective inclusive education and that measures be identified and implemented to promote and foster a culture of hospitality, willingness and creativity within all New Brunswick schools.

Partnering With and Involving Parents

In effective inclusive schools, parents are invited to play active roles in their child's education and in helping to foster a strong inclusive school culture. At the individual level, parents participate by:

- Helping educators and others to understand their child's gifts, strengths and needs, strategies that work, and so on.
- Remaining fully involved in the development of education plans and the evaluation and modification of these plans as required.
- Being invited to become involved in the full life of the school in ways that make sense for the parents.
- Helping schools to address issues related to whole school improvement, including issues related to the improvement of inclusive education practices and to whole school involvement on the part of all children.

School-parent committees can also play an important role in working with school and district officials to develop and implement whole school improvement plans. In this regard, it is important that such plans require a specific focus on effective and accountable inclusive education that is consistent with the vision, values, and practices that have been articulated in this submission and in many other documents.

Clarification of the Responsibilities of Government, and the Respective Roles of Parents and Partner Departments

In response to the Terms of Reference for the review, NBACL/ANBIC offers the following suggestions for outlining the roles and responsibilities of government, parents and partner departments. We have also included suggestions on the roles of schools, school districts, and students. In providing these suggestions, we assume that "supports for student learning" includes school buildings, system staff and so on. We also note that in inclusive schools, supports are provided for the participation for all students in all aspects of school life, as well as "student learning", and that students have a life outside of school.

- **Roles and Responsibilities of Government**
 - To ensure that all government actions, practices, policies, laws and regulations are consistent with the vision and values of inclusive education, and promote inclusive communities.
 - To ensure that all students have equal access to an inclusive, adequate, and appropriate education and to all other aspects to school life and that they receive the supports and services which are adequate and appropriate to their

situation and which enable them to benefit equally from all aspects of school life.

- To provide in a manner consistent with the vision and values of inclusive education, adequate funding to enable schools and school districts to provide appropriate and inclusive curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular school and school related activities for all students; to maintain buildings, facilities and equipment in an adequate, appropriate, accessible and safe condition and to replace these when appropriate. Further, to provide an adequate and appropriate accountability mechanism for this funding.
 - To ensure that all staff employed in the education system (including senior administrators, principals, teachers, teacher assistants, school bus drivers, and professionals from other fields) are adequately and appropriately qualified and trained to do jobs in a manner consistent with the vision and values of inclusive education. Further, that all staff receive adequate and appropriate in-service training throughout their term of employment and that their performances are appropriately monitored and evaluated.
 - To ensure that there is a transparent, effective and appropriate system to monitor and evaluate the success and performance of individual students, groups of students, individual and groups of staff members at all levels of the public education system, and to ensure that it continues to improve and become more inclusive.
 - To promote a better understanding of the vision and values of inclusion in general and inclusive education in particular among all New Brunswickers, and to encourage New Brunswickers to act in accordance with that vision and those values.
 - To promote and encourage closer links between schools and their communities, and in particular to recognize that parents are equal partners in education and have the duties and responsibilities as well as the rights and privileges inherent in that role.
- **Role of Families/Parents**

To do what ever they can, in equal partnership with schools, to:

- Encourage, support and promote their child's success in learning and their child's positive participation in, and contribution to appropriate aspects of school life.
- Provide what information and guidance they have which will help the school to provide an adequate and appropriate inclusive education to their child.

- Work with government and non-government providers of supports and services that are appropriate, and to facilitate the appropriate provision of non-school and school supports and services which will benefit their child.
 - Work with school to encourage, support and promote an inclusive spirit and inclusive practices in the school and the community.
 - Encourage, support and promote their child's successful transition from the public school system to further education, work, adult life and community participation.
 - Encourage support and promote the child's successful transition into the public school system and between schools in that system.
 - Cooperate with public school system's monitoring and accountability mechanism.
- **Role of Students**
 - To take full advantage of the learning and development opportunities offered by all aspects of school life in an inclusive public education system.
 - To the extent possible, given the student's age and development, accept responsibility for his or her actions, consistent with the values of citizenship, equality, dignity and respect, individualization and autonomy.
 - To the extent possible, given the student's age and development, understand, accept, adopt and promote the vision and values of inclusive schools and inclusive communities.
 - To the extent possible, given the student's age and development, cooperate with actions and initiatives which promote the vision and values of inclusive schools and inclusive communities, and to refuse respectfully to cooperate with actions and initiatives which are inconsistent with that vision and those values.
- **Role of the School**
 - To provide an adequate and appropriate education to all students.
 - To cultivate an ongoing respectful and equal partnership with families and all students.
 - To ensure that all school staff understand, accept and act in accordance with the vision and values of inclusive schools, and that they are supported

adequately and appropriately, using school, district or other external resources as appropriate.

- To ensure that all aspects of school life are organized to be inclusive of, and equally accessible to, all students.
 - To ensure that adequate and appropriate efforts are made to improve the school and to make its operations more inclusive.
 - To work with the community in which the school is located to ensure that the inclusive spirit and practice is matched by the community and that the vision of inclusive communities is realized.
 - To facilitate the adequate and appropriate provision of supports and services to students by external government and non-government providers of supports and services.
- **Role of the School District and District Education Council**
 - To ensure that all schools in the district have the human and financial resources to fulfill all aspects of the roles identified by schools (see above).
 - To ensure that all staff employed in the district are adequately and appropriately qualified and trained to do the jobs in a manner consistent with the vision and values of inclusive education, and that they receive adequate and appropriate in-service training throughout their term of employment, and that they are adequately supported. Further that the performance of all staff is adequately monitored and evaluated.
 - **Role of Other Government Departments**

Later in this submission, NBACL/ANBIC proposes that support services to education fall under the jurisdiction of the school system. Whatever roles other government departments may play in the education system, steps must be taken to ensure that such roles are carried out in ways that are consistent with the vision, values, and practices of inclusive education.

Defining Service Levels

For the most part, NBACL/ANBIC does not believe either that it is possible or desirable to define service levels in an inclusive education system. Simply put, in the case of each student, the “service level” must be what enables that student to have equal access to, and to have equal benefit from, an adequate inclusive education and all aspects of school life. This “service level” will, of necessity, vary from student to student and vary over time with the respect to the same student. Some students will require high levels of support

through out the school career; some will require high levels at some times and low levels, or no support, at other times; some will require low levels of support either consistently or occasionally; some will require little or no support through out their school career. None of this is predictable and some of it may depend on developments outside the control of the education system.

The concept of “defined service levels” is inconsistent with the vision and values of inclusive education and with good pedagogy. NBACL/ANBIC recognizes that human judgment is fallible and that its exercise requires careful monitoring so that its mistakes can be rectified promptly. We also recognize, however, that defining service levels would lead to potentially negative consequences that have been encountered over the past years with similar attempts to “define levels of need for services”. Experience has taught us that when too much attention is drawn to “services levels”; often little or no attention is paid to adequacy and suitability of the service or its relevance in the life of the person receiving it.

We do recognize, however, that certain types of services need to be provided in a timely manner. Presently, various types of professional services (such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and services for the identification of learning disabilities) face problematic delays that are detrimental to the students who require these services. In these circumstances, service levels should be clearly defined and adhered to.

Recommendation # 9: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that New Brunswick’s inclusive education system confine the definition of service levels to those services that are provided by non-teaching professionals. We further recommend that no student be required to wait any longer than one month for such services to be delivered regardless of the place of residence of the student.

Defining Exceptional Students

In NBACL’s/ANBIC’s opinion, an inclusive education system has no need for the label or definition of “exceptional student”. An inclusive education system provides each student with an adequate and appropriate education and the supports to learn and contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of school life.

We are also of the view that such definitions and labels are a relic of the exclusionary pre-1986 special education service model. These labels tend to have primarily negative and exclusionary consequences, rather than benefit students. It is also our experience that the New Brunswick school districts which label the highest number of students as “exceptional” are those in which inclusion is least well understood and practiced. In short, NBACL/ANBIC sees no place in a modern inclusive public education (based on the vision, values and key elements described earlier) for such labels and definitions as “exceptional student”.

Recommendation # 10: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that there be no definition of “exceptional student” and a process be established to remove the term progressively in an appropriate manner (including the provision of any retraining that might be required) from all laws and other documents used in the New Brunswick public education system.

The removal of “exceptional student” terminology would require a refocusing on a more generic system of support services to education. These supports could still include individualized educational planning, modifications to curriculum and differentiated instruction, short or longer term interventions, a variety of accommodations, resource teacher assistants, para-professional assistance, and so on.

If, following this review, the Department of Education concludes that a definition of some kind is required, then we suggest using more progressive and better descriptive language that would seek to minimize the impact of labeling specific students.

Recommendation # 11: As an alternative definition, NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following:

“Student who requires additional planning and/or support” means a student whose opportunities to succeed and to be included in school are deemed such as to require individualized educational planning and/ or specific on-going or short-term interventions, accommodations, and/or other supports from teachers, other professionals or paraprofessionals.

This alternative definition is obviously broader in scope than the current definition of “exceptional pupil” contained in the *Education Act*. It is, in many ways, more inclusive in that it acknowledges that there is a broader range of students who might benefit from individualized educational planning and or other types of supports. In this sense, the definition may well include students who do not have a recognized disability but who may otherwise benefit from a variety of educational supports.

Supporting Inclusive Education (Service Delivery Model)

As part of the overall framework for an effective inclusive education system, a solid and supportive infrastructure is critical. NBACL/ANBIC sees this infrastructure as having several key components as follows:

- The development of knowledge and competencies of educators on inclusive education practices.
- Embedding of professional support services to education within the education system.

- Greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of teachers, resource teachers and paraprofessionals.
- Effective student service teams within each school.
- Support to teachers through effective consultative assistance.
- Effective and positive responses to behaviour challenges which recognizes that “challenging behaviour” is normally an attempt to communicate something important.
- The development of knowledge and competencies of paraprofessionals on inclusive schooling practices.
- A comprehensive guidance model.
- Building structures in the schools and classrooms for students to support one another.

This submission will outline ideas and recommendations in each of these key components.

Development of Knowledge and Competencies for Educators on Inclusive Schooling Practices

In an effective, accountable inclusive education system, there would be a commitment to ensuring that all educators have the knowledge and competencies to teach all students within a diverse school population. Inclusive schools do not ask students to change in order to be a regular member of a grade or class. Rather, educators are required to know what they must do in order to offer quality education opportunities to all of their students.

Over the past 20 years we have learned that the education system (including universities given the responsibilities to prepare teachers) has failed to ensure that educators have the required knowledge and competencies to teach effectively in inclusive schools. The *Quality Learning Agenda* has addressed this issue and steps are being taken now to address the short fall in pre-service training for educators.

Identifying the key competencies of educators in inclusive schooling practices is an important first step (currently, the Universite de Moncton is developing a list of competencies). The College of Education at the University of Northern Iowa has identified the following competences that teachers require in order to be confident inclusive teachers:

- The ability to problem-solve, to be able to informally access the skills a student needs (rather than relying solely on standardized curriculum).

- The ability to take advantage of students' individual interests and use their internal motivation to developing needed skills.
- The ability to set high but, in some situations, alternative expectations that are suitable for students. This means developing alternative assessments.
- The ability to make appropriate expectations for each student, regardless of the student's capabilities.
- The ability to determine how to modify assignments for students; how to design classroom activities with as many levels as are required so that all students have a part.
- The ability to learn how to value all kinds of skills that students bring to a class, not just academic skills.
- The ability to provide daily success for all students.
- A realization that every child is their responsibility. Teachers need to find out how to work with each student rather than assuming that someone else will tell them how to educate a student.
- A knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies and how to use them effectively. This includes the ability to adapt materials and re-write objectives for students as required.
- The ability to work as a team with parents, resource teachers, and paraprofessionals.
- The capacity to view each student in the class as an opportunity to become a better teacher rather than a problem to cope with or have someone else fix.
- Flexibility and high tolerance for ambiguity.

In addition to difficulties with pre-service training, there are also problems with in-service training. At present, there is some provision for training but it has not been consistent across districts or time. Teachers in the province work in isolation most of the time. In those schools in which teachers do have common planning time, teachers are more likely to feel supported, encouraged and valued. This tends to have an overall and positive effective on classroom instruction.

It must be made clear that we are not talking about educators needing to be experts in “disability” or needing to learn everything about being effective inclusive educators before they are hired. Much learning continues after teachers are hired as part of “on the job” training that is common in many professions. It is important, however, that teachers have a good base of knowledge on inclusive schooling practices from their pre-service training. It is also critical that teachers have the knowledge of how to find the information or assistance they may need in the course of their work and that they learn the basic skills of problem solving in collaboration with others.

Recommendation 12: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **Clear teacher competencies be identified through a collaborative process involving community stakeholders, as requirements for teachers employed in New Brunswick’s public education system.**
- **The licensing of new teachers be based on the acquisition of the skills and competencies identified.**
- **A 3 to 5 year strategy be developed to ensure that all educators in New Brunswick’s public education system receive the appropriate education and training to develop the competencies and skills identified.**
- **Adequate resources be provided to school districts and schools to ensure that educators receive quality in-service training on inclusive schooling practices throughout the school year.**
- **As part of an overall strategy, opportunities for teacher-to-teacher mentoring be developed and implemented (this should include opportunities for teachers to spend time at schools that are recognized as successful inclusive schools in New Brunswick).**
- **Teachers who attend in-service training, summer institutes, and workshops be provided the opportunity to use this training toward academic credit at a university.**

We are of the strong view that given appropriate attention and investments in developing educators’ competencies in inclusive schooling, other types of resource issues will be addressed. In other words, there will likely be collateral benefits for the education system if we ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to teach effectively in inclusive schools. (For example, there may need to be less reliance on resource or paraprofessional support as teacher competencies increase). Experience in New Brunswick within inclusive schools has already demonstrated this.

Imbedding Professional Support Services to Education within the Education System

NBACL/ANBIC is of the opinion that the current Support Services to Education Agreement has not served the education system as well as it needs to. Currently, professional support services are spread out under the Departments of Health and Wellness, Justice, and Family and Community Services. Professionals such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, school psychologists, and educational consultants need to be working in the education system and given the mandates to support all students who are a part of the public education system.

Recommendation # 13: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that all professional support services to education be housed in school district offices or in schools and that school district administrators be responsible for their work.

Effective Student Services and Support Teams

Inclusive schools typically have effective student services and support teams. In practice, the team would have regular weekly meetings and would also arrange other meetings on an as-needed basis. The team would be comprised of an administrator, a resource and methods teacher, a guidance counselor, a student intervention worker and any other representatives appointed by the principal. The team would discuss academic, vocational or behaviour issues that arise and would make plans to deal with these issues as expediently and effectively as possible. This team would be there to support all students, and not just those who are considered to have a disability. We see that the responsibility for establishing of such teams rests with school principals who will ensure that appropriate re-structuring will take place.

Along with effective student services and support teams, schools would have a sustained problem-solving orientation. This would mean that there would be strategies for dealing with problems that arise during the day. All staff should be aware of these strategies and practice them diligently. There should also be mechanisms for dealing with problems that arise suddenly. Rather than feeling frustrated and alone with their problems, teachers need to know that there are people and supports available to help them when needed. There are few problems that cannot be solved if there are people and strategies in place to lend support. This collaborative approach will require that teachers have adequate time to plan and work together during the school day or week.

Recommendation # 14: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **Under the responsibility of school principals, all public schools in New Brunswick be required and supported to establish student service and support teams and that appropriate training is provided on strategies to operate such teams effectively.**

- **All public schools in New Brunswick adopt a sustained problem solving orientation, and that appropriate training be provided on problem solving techniques and strategies.**
- **Teachers be afforded adequate time for collaboration with each other during the school day or week.**

Supporting Teachers through Effective Consultative Assistance

A supportive infrastructure for inclusive education will include in-school consultants who are responsible for working with teachers to develop strategies and materials to support students in heterogeneous classrooms. In New Brunswick, this role has been assigned to resource and methods teachers, although it appears that these resources are not always used appropriately or that the teachers in these roles may not have the required knowledge and competencies. In a number of schools, resource teachers end up being responsible for students who are placed in “resource rooms” for part or all of their school day. This practice should no longer be accepted or tolerated in an inclusive education system.

Recommendation # 15: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **The skills and competencies of in-school consultants (resource teachers) on inclusive schooling practices be clearly identified and that each school district be required to undertake a review of current educators holding these positions to determine their level of competency to effectively provide consultative assistance on inclusive schooling practices.**
- **Within two years, and through the provision of appropriate education and training opportunities, all in-school consultants on inclusive schooling practices be required to demonstrate that they have the skills and competencies to effectively play these roles in the schools to which they are assigned.**
- **School districts be provided with resources adequate to allow each school in the district to employ one or more in-school consultants on inclusive schooling practices. In addition, schools and school districts must be required to account for the use of funding for the purposes of providing in-school consultants.**
- **Through appropriate guidelines and training, in-school consultants on inclusive schooling practices be required to focus a majority of their time on supporting and encouraging classroom teachers in their work to provide a quality education to all students in their classrooms (rather than working directly with students).**

Developing Positive Responses to Behavioural Challenges

Issues surrounding student behaviour are often identified as reasons to “re-think” inclusion as education policy for New Brunswick. Media reports and opinions often mistakenly identify students with intellectual disabilities as being “behaviour problems”. To the contrary, education officials have told NBACL/ANBIC that behavioural challenges in public schools are not a disability issue, but rather a broader issue that has many dimensions and underlying causes.

We believe that much more needs to be done to increase the capacity of those who work within the school system to develop more positive responses to behavioural challenges. This will require a shift from thinking that students have to be “controlled” to understanding that in most circumstances behaviour is communicating a message about something that is wrong. The challenge for the school system is to figure out what that message means and how it should be dealt with in a positive and respectful way.

Effective inclusive schools will have the knowledge and skills to deal with behavioural challenges in a positive way. This does not mean that all these challenges will be easily solved. At times, some students may be required to leave the regular school system because of limits on our ability to deal effectively with their particular circumstances. But this should not happen because schools themselves are “defective” to the extent that their lack of ability to be truly inclusive in effect causes some of the behaviour that is considered challenging.

Over the years, much research and thinking has gone into determining the most effective and positive ways to address behavioural challenges. Typically, strategies involve clarifying behaviours that are problematic, why they are occurring, and then developing strategies to address the circumstances in positive ways. In most instances, strategies are developed with the input of the student and his or her family.

Recommendation # 16: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **The Department of Education undertake a short-term project to research and identify current best practices for addressing behavioural challenges in positive ways, and in ways which respect the individual as well as the vision, values and expectations of an inclusive education system.**
- **Following the research project, a training strategy for educators and other school staff be developed for implementation over a two-year period. This strategy would best be implemented on a district-by-district basis and involve the use of known experts on these issues from New Brunswick and elsewhere.**
- **The Department of Education develop a provincial protocol for addressing behaviour challenges that will include clear guidelines setting out the circumstances in which a student may be removed from the regular**

classroom, as well as the planning process to be undertaken to ensure that the student returns to the regular classroom as soon as possible.

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities and Developing Knowledge and Competencies of Education Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals have assumed some important roles in New Brunswick's education system. While the value of paraprofessionals is not in dispute, NBACL/ANBIC has some serious concerns about the use of paraprofessionals in current school practice. These concerns were identified in a recent NBACL/ANBIC document entitled *Position Paper on the Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Assistants within an Inclusive Education System* (July 2004). The concerns outlined by NBACL/ANBIC have been identified in formal research studies conducted elsewhere. In brief form, they are as follows:

- Some students receive most of their planning and instruction from the teacher assistant that allows teachers to become “disengaged” from the education process for these students, and to forfeit their responsibility.
- Some parents and educators equate inclusion with teacher assistant support, leading to increased demand for teacher assistants to support the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- There is often unnecessary and excessive proximity between students and teacher assistants, leading to isolation from other students and over-dependence on the teacher assistant.
- Teacher assistants receive little or no training on their roles in an inclusive education system and teachers have not received training on how to supervise the work of paraprofessionals.
- In some instances, there are scheduling issues and a lack of consistency in assignment of paraprofessional support.

The NBACL/ANBIC position paper (which has been provided to the Review's consultant) outlines a number of recommendations that we also propose for this Review. The details of these recommendations are contained in the position paper and will not be repeated here. They are summarized as follows:

- Provide for consistent implementation of inclusive school practices (that incorporates effective roles for paraprofessionals).
- Provide clarification of the important roles of classroom and subject teachers, resource teachers and teacher assistants.

- Provide education and training for educators to build capacity in dealing with the diversity of student ability and learning styles.
- Provide direct education and training for teacher assistants.
- Provide education and awareness for parents so that they may be able to better understand the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.
- Promote and implement peer support strategies.
- Develop greater flexibility in assignment of teacher assistant (paraprofessional) support.

In this submission, we would like to expand on the recommendations dealing with developing knowledge and competencies for education paraprofessionals. We believe that this is an area that has been sadly lacking, given the variety of roles and responsibilities that are placed on paraprofessionals within our system. It must be clear that we do not expect paraprofessionals to take on the roles of trained professional educators. At the same time, however, it is clear that the use of paraprofessionals in public schools has often “outpaced conceptualization of team roles and responsibilities, as well as [their] training and supervision needs” (Giangreco et. al., 1997).

Enhancing the knowledge and competencies of paraprofessionals must be based on the roles that these employees are expected to play within an inclusive school system. In this sense, paraprofessionals must effectively work to support teachers in classrooms, and not simply specific students with disabilities. This does not mean that paraprofessionals should not provide direct support roles to students, but this must be done in the context of promoting true inclusion and participation in academic learning and in non-academic activities. In this regard, paraprofessionals (like educators) must see themselves as facilitators of inclusion. This will require particular knowledge and skills in areas such as promoting student independence and interdependence and supporting students seen to have challenging behaviours in positive and inclusive ways.

Recommendation # 17: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that a three-pronged approach to developing the knowledge and competencies of paraprofessionals be adopted and implemented in New Brunswick, as follows:

- **Each school in New Brunswick be required and be supported to carry out an evaluation of the way that paraprofessionals are being used as well as school improvement planning for the provision of paraprofessional supports. It is further recommended that this evaluation and planning process be conducted pursuant to a process developed by the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion at the University of Vermont (see, Giangreco, Edelman and Broer, *A Guide to Schoolwide Planning for Paraeducator Supports*, 2001).**

- **Both informal and formal in-service training opportunities be provided to paraprofessionals in all New Brunswick schools. This training should be provided in the following ways:**
 - **Informal training opportunities should be developed and implemented as part of the regular work of paraprofessionals in their interactions with educators. This means establishing times and mechanisms to allow for opportunities for paraprofessionals to be orientated to teacher plans, report on student progress, ask questions, and so on. This will require extending the collaborative model of inclusive education to ensure that paraprofessionals are a regular part of the process.**
 - **Within each school district, formal in-service training opportunities should be provided to paraprofessionals on an annual basis. Paraprofessional development days should held in tandem with professional development days for educators. Such opportunities should be used to improve knowledge and skills on various aspects of inclusive schooling practices that relate specifically to roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.**
- **New Brunswick introduce requirements for pre-service training for paraprofessionals based on the establishment of a training program (preferably offered through the regular community college network). Such a program should consider other informal and formal in-service training opportunities that are regularly provided. In addition, any pre-service education requirements should include training on the nature of inclusive education and inclusive schools, inclusive school practices, and on fostering student independence and interdependence.**
- **In addition to pre-service and in-service training for paraprofessionals, the Department of Education develop and implement a training program for teachers on being effective supervisors of education paraprofessionals. It is suggested that this training take a “train-the-trainer” approach by identifying key resource people from each school district who can offer training to teachers within their districts. It is further suggested the Department of Education review the “mini course” and training materials developed for teachers by the University of Vermont (see Giangreco (2001), *Teacher Leadership: Working with Para Educators*).**

Comprehensive Guidance Model

We have seen that a well-developed comprehensive and developmental guidance model provides additional support for students and teachers in their efforts to provide effective, accountable and inclusive education. In some areas, however, guidance counselors are only appointed to high schools in order to help students with course selections and

university entrance requirements. Expanded roles for guidance counselors, that would include participation at the elementary and middle school levels, could provide greater opportunities for supporting inclusive education.

Recommendation # 18: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the Department of Education explore the feasibility of assigning guidance counselors to each school and of developing expanded roles for guidance counselors to support teachers and students on such issues as citizenship, appropriate behaviour, a sense of responsibility to and for others.

Building Structures in Schools for Students to Support One Another

Students can and do play significant roles in supporting one another and in creating a culture of hospitality and inclusion within their schools. There are already many good examples of student involvement through such strategies as peer support or peer partners, Circle of Friends, school inclusion committees (that organize inclusive activities) during the non-academic parts of the school day, and “peace makers” (a program for conflict resolutions where students are taught to resolve conflicts among one another under teacher supervision and guidance). It is been our experience that students have a lot to offer to the inclusive schooling process. At times, however, students need to be encouraged and supported to become pro-active and involved.

Recommendation # 19: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **School districts in New Brunswick, with the support of the Department of Education and other organizations as required, develop and implement strategies that will promote student-provided support, student interdependence, and student-led initiatives in promoting inclusive schools.**
- **The Department of Education make available on an annual basis a small amount of money for promoting student-to-student support and student involvement in fostering inclusion.**
- **School personnel, including teachers and paraprofessionals, receive information and training on student peer support strategies as part of their training on inclusive schooling practices.**

Standards and Accountability Framework

Recommendations Regarding the Creation of Objective, Measurable Outcomes to Provide Data on the Effectiveness of Educational Programming for Students with “Exceptional Needs”

While understanding the desire for objective data on the effectiveness of educational programming and the use of funding, NBACL/ANBIC respectfully suggests that the

search for such data specific to one identified group of students (those labeled as having exceptionalities) is fundamentally inconsistent with an inclusive education system. The kinds of effective data being sought will not help the students in question.

Our research leads us to believe that there is no generally accepted method that will generate the kind of effectiveness data being sought. We might also note that serious doubts continue to be raised to the usefulness of standardized testing that is now widely used to create objective data on the effectiveness of education programming in general. In our view, outcome measures can only be justified when they have been properly tested for validity and reliability. We also know that no validated and tested outcome measures similar to those being sought through this review are currently available.

Even if New Brunswick reverted to the “special education” paradigm and targeted this population for specific outcome measures, we doubt that validated and reliability tested outcome measures can be developed. Students labeled as having an exceptionality typically have individualized education plans, which are based on the best guess as to what he or she can learn at any given time. The goals for one such student should not be the same as the goals for another, even if they share a diagnosis. If it is the same, there is something seriously wrong with the education planning process. The goals of these individual education plans are intended to be changed during the year, on the basis of experience with the student’s learning. It is not possible to predict with any accuracy what a student in this targeted group can learn in a given year. So it is not possible to develop valid and reliable outcome measures for that single student, let alone for a group of such students.

NBACL/ANBIC would very much like to find ways for valid and reliable outcome measures for students with intellectual disabilities in New Brunswick, as this would result in some sorely needed accountability within our public school system. Unfortunately, for the reasons given above, we have concluded that continuing to search in that direction is a waste of time and effort.

NBACL/ANBIC has concluded the best available way to monitor the inclusiveness of a school or school system is by process measures. We recognize the weaknesses of process measures but have concluded there is nothing better. Our experience to date suggests that in inclusive schools all students learn more and better. In an inclusive school, all students are encouraged to cooperate, differences are celebrated, stress is reduced, student and staff feel that they belong and are motivated to achieve together. In an inclusive school, all students are considered important and are respected for what and who they are; they are not seen as “exceptional” and a burden.

Good practices for educational planning and for reviewing and evaluating education plans already exist. Good educational plans contain clear goals, and regular reviews are held (involving parents and students) to determine how well these goals are being met. The implementation of these practices is not consistent. Accountability mechanisms need to ensure that the practices are being followed within each school, with the main responsibility for this accountability resting with school principals.

Recommendation # 20: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that efforts to create objective, measurable outcome to provide data on the effectiveness of educational programming for students with exceptionalities be abandoned because:

- **Such efforts are inconsistent with the concept of inclusive education; and**
- **Valid, reliable, objective, outcome measures cannot be created for a small group of students, all of whom will have individualized education plans which are intended to be subject to change over the course of a school year.**

Strategies and Indicators for Determining the Inclusiveness of Public Schools

NBACL/ANBIC strongly supports the Review's goals for recommendations on strategies and indicators for determining the inclusiveness of our schools. Since 1986, there has been a high level of inconsistency on the extent to which schools and school districts have adopted the vision, values and practices for inclusive education.

A strategy to determine the inclusiveness of public schools must have clear goals. NBACL/ANBIC believes that the overall goal of the strategy is to ensure to the fullest extent possible that all children in New Brunswick public school receive a quality education that challenges them, that instills in them a level of learning that continues through their adult life, and that prepares them for the future. This is most likely to happen in schools that soundly demonstrate the key elements of inclusive schooling noted earlier. In these schools, all students are respected, welcomed, learn to cooperate, feel that they belong and are motivated to learn. In these schools, diversity and individuality are celebrated and educators have the knowledge and skills to effectively teach all children and to work in close cooperation with each other and with families.

An accountability framework to determine the inclusiveness of public schools must identify the factors which are common to inclusive schools and find ways to show whether or not these factors are present in a particular school. These factors or indicators must also serve as a guide to how well students are being encouraged to learn, especially (but not only) students whose learning cannot be assessed by methods such as standardized testing.

Fortunately, much thought has already been given to the indicators of successful and inclusive schools. The Ontario Association for Community Living (2003) has developed the following summary of indicators of success that we share:

- Committed leadership
 - Leadership comes from all the stakeholders.
 - There is a long-term commitment to a change process.
- Shared direction
 - Inclusive education values are articulated and visible.

- There is a clear vision that is compelling, achievable and reinforced.
- The vision is owned by all stakeholders.
- There are clear and manageable plans.
- Sense of community
 - Diversity is respected and valued.
 - Friendships are nurtured, not contrived.
 - School is linked to the broader community.
 - All parents actively participate in the life of the school.
- Flexible learning experiences focus on individual students
 - There is a focus on strengths and capabilities.
 - Set high expectations for all students.
 - The teaching of the curriculum fits the abilities of each student (the student does not need to fit into the curriculum).
- Learning supports are available and properly utilized
 - Teachers are supported in the classroom.
 - Students are enabled to participate.
- Innovative creative environment
 - Everyone is encouraged to take risks, question and challenge.
 - Successes are celebrated.
 - Professional development for teachers (and other staff) is supported
 - There is a solutions orientation
- Collaborative approach
 - Everyone participates in finding solutions.
 - Parents are embraced as equal and essential partners.
 - The school takes responsibility for transition.
- Open and responsive communication
 - Ongoing and constructive dialogue takes place regularly.
 - The education planning process is transparent.

In addition, successful inclusive schools will have other indicators that reflect “**whole school**” success. These indicators will address such measures as:

- the number of drop-outs;
- the number of students suspended or expelled for poor behaviour;
- the number of students (including students with disabilities) enrolled in school activities;
- the number of students (including students with disabilities) who are achieving personal and academic goals; and
- the number of students (including students with disabilities) who are accepted in universities, colleges and workplaces after graduation.

Recommendation # 21: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the indicators for determining successful inclusive schools include committed leadership, shared direction, a sense of community, flexible learning experiences focusing on individual students, learning supports available and properly utilized, an innovative and creative environment, a collaborative approach, and open and responsive communication. We further recommend that “whole school” success indicators be established and that a process be initiated whereby a clear set of detailed indicators of inclusive schooling be developed for implementation in all New Brunswick schools.

In addition to clear indicators of success, a strategy must include mechanisms to promote the indicators and to evaluate on an ongoing basis whether indicators for inclusive schooling are present at each school. A strategy must also include by design what immediate action will take place should it be discovered that schools are not inclusive or are failing to produce outcomes that are consistent with the identified indicators.

The precise mechanisms for addressing these important issues need to be developed as a collaborative process between the Department of Education, school districts, and external stakeholders. The mechanisms must be understandable, simple enough to be implemented effectively, and accountable.

Recommendation # 22: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the following strategies are incorporated into a planning process to develop an overall strategy for determining the inclusiveness of public schools:

- **School districts, as part of their requirements for developing district education plans, incorporate whole school improvement planning that is based on achieving and demonstrating indicators of successful inclusiveness.**
- **All schools in New Brunswick be required, as part of their whole school improvement planning, to develop specific action plans aimed at achieving and demonstrating indicators for successful and inclusive schooling.**
- **The Department of Education invest in providing external consultative support for developing whole school improvement planning with a focus on indicators for successful inclusiveness. This consultative support should be available to both school districts and to schools within districts.**
- **A clear evaluation mechanism be developed that will allow schools and school district themselves, as well as external evaluators, to determine the degree of success in achieving indicators of inclusiveness in all public schools. An evaluation mechanism should include annual satisfaction questionnaires for students, parents, and school staff. Further, we recommend that evaluation be an ongoing process as part of the *Quality Learning Agenda* for New Brunswick public schools.**

- **Specific action steps be identified to address deficiencies in achieving indicators of successful inclusiveness within public schools as a measure of successful schools.**

Recommendations for Consistent Accounting Practices in Schools and School Districts to Facilitate the Collection of Cost Data Pertaining to Students with Exceptionalities.

NBACL/ANBIC has no recommendations to make on this part of the review with the possible exception of certain types of professional services (such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc.). We do not believe it is possible in an inclusive education system to identify “services provided to students with exceptional needs”. In an inclusive school system, teachers are hired to teach all students, resource teachers are hired to support and consult with all teachers, and paraprofessionals are hired to support teachers in their classrooms. As such, the collection of cost data should not pertain at all to a certain group of targeted students. In our opinion, to attempt this would be counter productive to inclusive schools and practices (but certainly more consistent with the old paradigm).

It might be viewed that certain types of transportation services are provided to students with exceptionalities. While this may be the case, the goal of an inclusive education system should be to ensure that as many students as possible rely on the regular student transportation system.

Proposed Funding Model

The funding model adopted by New Brunswick’s school system in 1986 was years ahead of its time and a brilliant choice of which this province should be proud. The two level census-based model, one base grant and one grant for “student services”, is generally simple, fair, transparent and highly cost-effective. It also gives schools and districts the flexibility to adapt to local situations and the local context and to try new and innovative approaches. However, appropriate accountability measures have not been developed and over time this has allowed some undesirable practices to continue.

NBACL/ANBIC knows the implementation of the *Quality Learning Agenda* has seen targeted funding of specific initiatives, outside the census-based funding model. We further note that this funding has been tied to specific outcome objectives, the attainment of which is the focus of evaluation and testing. The results of this model for additional funding seem to date to be positive. We also note, however, that continuing to target funding to a specific outcome after that outcome has been attained is not good practice. We suggest that all targeted funding initiatives have a “sunset clause”.

NBACL/ANBIC strongly opposes the adoption of an overall targeted funding strategy for the education of discrete groups of students, such as those currently designated as “exceptional”. Such targeted funding would emphasize differences and promote

exclusion where census-based block funding emphasizes similarities and promotes inclusion.

NBACL/ANBIC has not seen or heard any solid evidence that there is anything significantly wrong with the current block-funding model in New Brunswick. On the contrary, we believe that it has served New Brunswick well and that those who proposed and implemented it in 1986 showed remarkable foresight. When teachers know how to teach inclusively and principals and senior administrators know how to administer inclusively, the block-funding model provides the flexibility required for maximizing success and achievement. The main problem that we have encountered over the years is with the lack of knowledge, skill and willingness to create a truly inclusive education system.

That said, we recognize that as student enrollment declines, so does the funding for student services. School and district administrators have noted that this has put additional strain on their budget for student services. Much of this demand stems from an increasing demand for teacher assistants in New Brunswick classrooms. While some of this demand may be legitimate, we firmly believe that efforts to enhance the knowledge and skills of educators and paraprofessionals should lead to more realistic and sustainable requirements for paraprofessionals.

Some school districts claim that they have significantly more students with exceptionalities or “special needs” than the provincial norm. NBACL/ANBIC finds that the evidence for this is unconvincing at best. We do, however, recognize that there may be external factors that increase the costs of providing student services in certain school districts and regions, and that identical treatment may lead to unequal treatment. In particular, we suggest that schools districts that are predominantly rural, or that have a higher than average incidence of illiteracy and/or poverty, may face levels of expenditure on student services that other school districts do not face. In these school districts, supplementary per capita grants could be provided based on identified external factors. We believe that such grants would go a long way towards providing extra funding needed by schools districts that may be disadvantaged under the current funding model, without departing from the per capita funding mechanism that we consider essential to an inclusive education system

NBACL/ANBIC also recognizes that there may be times when it is legitimate for schools to request and have access to additional funds for student services. These circumstances may involve emergencies, addressing the specific needs of students who are considered to be “medically fragile” and with the movement of students from one school to another or from one district to another within a school year.

Recommendation # 23: NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following funding model for inclusive education in New Brunswick:

- **The current block-funding model be maintained in New Brunswick as a key foundation to inclusive education.**

- **That as a minimum, the current budget allocations for student services be maintained and not decreased on the basis of declining enrollments.**
- **That serious consideration be given to adding supplementary per capita grants to the existing per capita student services grant to school districts where there is significant difference between:

 - a) **the incidence of illiteracy;**
 - b) **the incidence of poverty or low socio-economic status; or**
 - c) **the rural/urban balance in the school district;**

and the provincial average or median for these factors.**
- **A portion of the student services budget be held in reserve to deal with difficult circumstances encountered from time to time such as emergencies, addressing the situations of “medically fragile” students, and the movement of students from one school to another or from one school district to another within the school year.**
- **Funding be made available for innovative projects and initiatives that will support inclusive education within various schools and schools districts.**
- **Additional supports be provided to teachers as may be required to provide teachers with adequate time for planning and collaboration and for providing students with additional teaching time.**
- **Allocate adequate funding for teachers to buy resources (teachers in New Brunswick are currently spending their own money to buy classroom supplies such as pens, paper, markers, and resource material).**
- **Implement a monitoring system to ensure that money allocated for student services is being used for the purposes stated and not used for other educational related costs.**

Schedule 'A' Outline of Recommendations

Recommendation # 1: In the education context, NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following vision of inclusion:

Inclusion in a school environment means the unambiguous and unconditional acceptance of all children in all their diversity so that they all learn together, with and from each other, and interact positively with each other in co-curricular and extra-mural activities. This vision requires the recognition, understanding and acceptance of the individual ability of every child; of the variety of learning styles, interests and abilities present in every classroom; and of the variety of skills, techniques and knowledge which, when used creatively will foster:

- *a love of learning in every child and the achievement of potential for every child; and*
- *positive interaction among students and also among educators and students inside and outside the classroom and in all aspects of school life.*

Recommendation # 2: NBACL/ANBIC recommends the adoption of the following values for New Brunswick's education system:

- ***Citizenship, Acceptance and Belonging.*** These values are central to the concept of inclusion and speak about the opportunities that people have to be actively involved within their community. In the education context, schools have a duty to promote, encourage and sustain initiatives which enhance and broaden these values for all students in all aspects of school life and to discourage whatever is inimical to them.
- ***Equality.*** This value, with its basis in human rights law, underscores the importance of recognizing the diversity that exists within schools and the importance of providing equal access to a quality public education. In the context of inclusive education, equality extends beyond a core value to a positive duty to make accommodations for all students who may require some kind of support and assistance to be successful in school.
- ***Dignity and Respect.*** The values of dignity and respect are at the heart of the nature of the relationships that must exist within an inclusive education system. Inclusion means that there are positive and supportive relationships between students, between teachers and other education staff, between teachers and students, between teachers and parents and so on. Where dignity and respect exists at all levels, relationships within the education system support the success of everyone involved.
- ***Individualization.*** Under this value, education policy and programs are based on determining and enhancing individual strengths and capacities and on providing education programs that seek to maximize each individual's potential and opportunities for success. This value does not mean that individual students are isolated within the school system. Rather, it means designing and implementing curricula, teaching methods, assessment methods, so as to recognize the broad diversity of abilities and interests that exist within the student population.
- ***Participation.*** Central to inclusion, this recognizes that all students will be afforded the right and opportunity to participate, and to be invited to participate, in all aspects of school life (including academic, social, extra-curricular, and so on).
- ***Self-Determination and Autonomy.*** This value recognizes that all students, including those considered to have disabilities, require the means to maximize their independence and to enhance their own well being. While schools must still exercise authority over their students,

this is done in a positive way that seeks to enhance decision-making skills and personal responsibilities.

Recommendation # 3: As a working definition of inclusive education, NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following:

Inclusive education means developing and designing all schools, classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Schools that are inclusive are those in which all students, regardless of pre-conceived notions of ability, are welcomed to, and learn together in, heterogeneous classrooms. They are all considered to be valued as equal members of the school population and as such have access to all programs and services offered. Inclusion also means that our schools help to develop positive relationships and mutual respect between all students.

Recommendation # 4: In addition to the working definition, NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the following key elements of an inclusive school be adopted as part of education policy and practice in New Brunswick:

- The unconditional acceptance of all children into regular classes and the life of the school;
- Students receive as much support as necessary to be successfully included in their neighborhood schools and in regular classes;
- A commitment to taking parents seriously and especially parents' dreams and goals for their child's future;
- A commitment to looking at all children for what they can do rather than what they cannot do;
- Accepting and understanding that children do not have to have the same educational goals to be able to learn together in regular classes;
- Strong leadership from school principals and other administrators;
- Schools are restructured in ways that focuses on individual achievement and student learning;
- A recognition that all students are individuals who have different ways of learning, different strengths, abilities and weakness, different backgrounds and values, and that helping them all learn to their capacity requires knowledge of a broad range of pedagogical approaches and techniques;
- A commitment to continuous improvement throughout the school and district;
- Teachers are supported in the classrooms, and schools are supported as necessary;
- Systematic in-service training and other learning mechanisms are provided to all educators (and other staff as necessary);
- A formative accountability mechanism that is effective and strong.

Recommendation # 5: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- The use of "special education" concepts, language, and practices be removed or eliminated from New Brunswick education laws, policies, and documents.
- A generic system of support services to education be adopted and implemented in all schools throughout New Brunswick.
- In situations where student-focused educational planning is required, it be referred to as a "Student Education Plan" or simply as an "Education Plan".
- Clear guidelines be established and promoted that set out the circumstances in which a student may be removed from the regular classroom, and the planning process to be undertaken to ensure that the student returns to the regular classroom as soon as possible (unless very exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated).

Recommendation # 6: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that effective leadership for inclusive education is provided by:

- **Developing a leadership development strategy that would target key positions within the education system, including the Department of Education staff, District Education Council members, district superintendents and directors of education, district student service supervisors, and principals.**
- **Developing and implementing hiring policies and practices that will ensure that people in key positions (including district superintendents, directors of education, student services supervisors, and school principals) have sound knowledge of, and a commitment to, implementing an effective and accountable inclusive education system within their areas of responsibility.**
- **Giving sufficient support to school principals (including administrative support) so that they may take more active measures to observe classroom instruction and other school activities and to consult with teachers individually on inclusive education issues.**

Recommendation # 7: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **A school by school and district by district audit take place to determine the level of knowledge and competencies of educators in the New Brunswick education system to implement effective inclusive education practices. It is further recommended that such audits be conducted in a formative way that is developmental in design and that key stakeholders (including external stakeholders) be included on district audit committees.**
- **The implementation of inclusive education practices becomes part of a standards and accountability framework (see recommendations below on accountability).**
- **Key competencies for implementing effective inclusive practices are identified.**
- **Within 5 years, all educators in New Brunswick schools receive adequate training and professional development to effectively implement inclusive practices. (See recommendations below on Teacher Training and Professional Development).**

Recommendation # 8: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the government of New Brunswick and New Brunswick school districts recognize the critical aspect of school culture to effective inclusive education and that measures be identified and implemented to promote and foster a culture of hospitality, willingness and creativity within all New Brunswick schools.

Recommendation # 9: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that New Brunswick’s inclusive education system confine the definition of service levels to those services that are provided by non teaching professionals. We further recommend that no student be required to wait any longer than one month for such services to be delivered regardless of the place of residence of the student.

Recommendation # 10: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that there be no definition of “exceptional student” and a process be established to remove the term progressively in an appropriate manner (including the provision of any retraining that might be required) from all laws and other documents used in the New Brunswick public education system.

Recommendation # 11: As an alternative definition, NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following:

“Student who requires additional planning and/or support” means a student whose opportunities to succeed and to be included in school are deemed such as to require individualized educational planning and/or specific on-going or short-term interventions, accommodations, and/or other supports from teachers, other professionals or paraprofessionals.

Recommendation 12: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **Clear teacher competencies be identified through a collaborative process involving community stakeholders, as requirements for teachers employed in New Brunswick’s public education system.**
- **The licensing of new teachers be based on the acquisition of the skills and competencies identified.**
- **A 3 to 5 year strategy be developed to ensure that all educators in New Brunswick’s public education system receive the appropriate education and training to develop the competencies and skills identified.**
- **Adequate resources be provided to school districts and schools to ensure that educators receive quality in-service training on inclusive schooling practices throughout the school year.**
- **As part of an overall strategy, opportunities for teacher-to-teacher mentoring be developed and implemented (this should include opportunities for teachers to spend time at schools that are recognized as successful inclusive schools in New Brunswick).**
- **Teachers who attend in-service training, summer institutes, and workshops be provided the opportunity to use this training toward academic credit at a university.**

Recommendation # 13: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that all professional support services to education be housed in school district offices or in schools and that school district administrators be responsible for their work.

Recommendation # 14: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **Under the responsibility of school principals, all public schools in New Brunswick be required and supported to establish student service and support teams and that appropriate training is provided on strategies to operate such teams effectively.**
- **All public schools in New Brunswick adopt a sustained problem solving orientation, and that appropriate training be provided on problem solving techniques and strategies.**
- **Teachers be afforded adequate time for collaboration with each other during the school day or week.**

Recommendation # 15: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- **The skills and competencies of in-school consultants (resource teachers) on inclusive schooling practices be clearly identified and that each school district be required to undertake a review of current educators holding these positions to determine their level of competency to effectively provide consultative assistance on inclusive schooling practices.**
- **Within two years, and through the provision of appropriate education and training opportunities, all in-school consultants on inclusive schooling practices be required to**

demonstrate that they have the skills and competencies to effectively play these roles in the schools to which they are assigned.

- School districts be provided with resources adequate to allow each school in the district to employ one or more in-school consultants on inclusive schooling practices. In addition, schools and school districts must be required to account for the use of funding for the purposes of providing in-school consultants.
- Through appropriate guidelines and training, in-school consultants on inclusive schooling practices be required to focus a majority of their time on supporting and encouraging classroom teachers in their work to provide a quality education to all students in their classrooms (rather than working directly with students).

Recommendation # 16: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- The Department of Education undertake a short-term project to research and identify current best practices for addressing behavioural challenges in positive ways, and in ways which respect the individual as well as the vision, values and expectations of an inclusive education system.
- Following the research project, a training strategy for educators and other school staff be developed for implementation over a two-year period. This strategy would best be implemented on a district-by-district basis and involve the use of known experts on these issues from New Brunswick and elsewhere.
- The Department of Education develop a provincial protocol for addressing behaviour challenges that will include clear guidelines setting out the circumstances in which a student may be removed from the regular classroom, as well as the planning process to be undertaken to ensure that the student returns to the regular classroom as soon as possible.

Recommendation # 17: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that a three-pronged approach to developing the knowledge and competencies of paraprofessionals be adopted and implemented in New Brunswick, as follows:

- Each school in New Brunswick be required and be supported to carry out an evaluation of the way that paraprofessionals are being used as well as school improvement planning for the provision of paraprofessional supports. It is further recommended that this evaluation and planning process be conducted pursuant to a process developed by the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion at the University of Vermont (see, Giangreco, Edelman and Broer, *A Guide to Schoolwide Planning for Paraeducator Supports*, 2001).
- Both informal and formal in-service training opportunities be provided to paraprofessionals in all New Brunswick schools. This training should be provided in the following ways:
 - Informal training opportunities should be developed and implemented as part of the regular work of paraprofessionals in their interactions with educators. This means establishing times and mechanisms to allow for opportunities for paraprofessionals to be orientated to teacher plans, report on student progress, ask questions, and so on. This will require extending the collaborative model of inclusive education to ensure that paraprofessionals are a regular part of the process.
 - Within each school district, formal in-service training opportunities should be provided to paraprofessionals on an annual basis. Paraprofessional development days should held in tandem with professional development days for educators.

Such opportunities should be used to improve knowledge and skills on various aspects of inclusive schooling practices that relate specifically to roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.

- New Brunswick introduce requirements for pre-service training for paraprofessionals based on the establishment of a training program (preferably offered through the regular community college network). Such a program should consider other informal and formal in-service training opportunities that are regularly provided. In addition, any pre-service education requirements should include training on the nature of inclusive education and inclusive schools, inclusive school practices, and on fostering student independence and interdependence.
- In addition to pre-service and in-service training for paraprofessionals, the Department of Education develop and implement a training program for teachers on being effective supervisors of education paraprofessionals. It is suggested that this training take a “train-the-trainer” approach by identifying key resource people from each school district who can offer training to teachers within their districts. It is further suggested the Department of Education review the “mini course” and training materials developed for teachers by the University of Vermont (see Giangreco (2001), *Teacher Leadership: Working with Para Educators*).

Recommendation # 18: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the Department of Education explore the feasibility of assigning guidance counselors to each school and of developing expanded roles for guidance counselors to support teachers and students on such issues as citizenship, appropriate behaviour, a sense of responsibility to and for others.

Recommendation # 19: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that:

- School districts in New Brunswick, with the support of the Department of Education and other organizations as required, develop and implement strategies that will promote student-provided support, student interdependence, and student-led initiatives in promoting inclusive schools.
- The Department of Education make available on an annual basis a small amount of money for promoting student-to-student support and student involvement in fostering inclusion.

Recommendation # 20: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that efforts to create objective, measurable outcome to provide data on the effectiveness of educational programming for students with exceptionalities be abandoned because:

- Such efforts are inconsistent with the concept of inclusive education; and
- Valid, reliable, objective, outcome measures cannot be created for a small group of students, all of whom will have individualized education plans which are intended to be subject to change over the course of a school year.

Recommendation # 21: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the indicators for determining successful inclusive schools include committed leadership, shared direction, a sense of community, flexible learning experiences focusing on individual students, learning supports available and properly utilized, an innovative and creative environment, a collaborative approach, and open and responsive communication. We further recommend that “whole school” success indicators be established and that a process be initiated whereby a clear set of detailed indicators of inclusive schooling be developed for implementation in all New Brunswick schools.

Recommendation # 22: NBACL/ANBIC recommends that the following strategies are incorporated into a planning process to develop an overall strategy for determining the inclusiveness of public schools:

- School districts, as part of their requirements for developing district education plans, incorporate whole school improvement planning that is based on achieving and demonstrating indicators of successful inclusiveness.
- All schools in New Brunswick be required, as part of their whole school improvement planning, to develop specific action plans aimed at achieving and demonstrating indicators for successful and inclusive schooling.
- The Department of Education invest in providing external consultative support for developing whole school improvement planning with a focus on indicators for successful inclusiveness. This consultative support should be available to both school districts and to schools within districts.
- A clear evaluation mechanism be developed that will allow schools and school district themselves, as well as external evaluators, to determine the degree of success in achieving indicators of inclusiveness in all public schools. An evaluation mechanism should include annual satisfaction questionnaires for students, parents, and school staff. Further, we recommend that evaluation be an ongoing process as part of the *Quality Learning Agenda* for New Brunswick public schools.
- Specific action steps be identified to address deficiencies in achieving indicators of successful inclusiveness within public schools as a measure of successful schools.

Recommendation # 23: NBACL/ANBIC recommends the following funding model for inclusive education in New Brunswick:

- The current block-funding model be maintained in New Brunswick as a key foundation to inclusive education.
- That as a minimum, the current budget allocations for student services be maintained and not decreased on the basis of declining enrollments.
- That serious consideration be given to adding supplementary per capita grants to the existing per capita student services grant to school districts where there is significant difference between:
 - d) the incidence of illiteracy;
 - e) the incidence of poverty or low socio-economic status; or
 - f) the rural/urban balance in the school district;

and the provincial average or median for these factors.
- A portion of the student services budget be held in reserve to deal with difficult circumstances encountered from time to time such as emergencies, addressing the situations of “medically fragile” students, and the movement of students from one school to another or from one school district to another within the school year.
- Funding be made available for innovative projects and initiatives that will support inclusive education within various schools and schools districts.
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- **Allocate adequate funding for teachers to buy resources (teachers in New Brunswick are currently spending their own money to buy classroom supplies such as pens, paper, markers, and resource material).**
- **Implement a monitoring system to ensure that money allocated for student services is being used for the purposes stated and not used for other educational related costs.**

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