



Friends of Beverley

Comments on Motion #5: The Effective Inclusion of Students with Special Education Needs at the TDSB



Children playing drums, xylophone, and strumming guitar strings.



General Comments on Motion 5



Strengths of Inclusion

- ▶ Supported by United Nations Article 24
 - ▶ Strategy and approach that addresses major issues with disabilities
 - ▶ An effective strategy that can apply to the majority of individuals with disabilities
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Limitations of Inclusion

- ▶ Applying this strategy to all special education needs ignores the heterogeneity (diversity) of this group of children and the full spectrum of their needs
 - ▶ Ignores the threshold at which point one strategy may be better suited than another
 - ▶ Complex developmental disabilities
- 



Teachers instructing students using augmented communication technologies. Boy reciprocates the smile of his teacher. Girl smiling while her teacher holds her hand.



Strengths and Place of Congregated Schools

- ▶ Concentrated expertise
 - ▶ Educators with specialized training
 - ▶ Expertise with equipment (e.g. adaptive communication systems)
 - ▶ Implementation of latest technology and teaching strategies
 - ▶ State of the art augmentative communication systems
- ▶ Knowledge Sharing - Share best practices
- ▶ Economies of scale
 - ▶ School's design
 - ▶ Sharing of equipment and resources
- ▶ Manage complex medical needs
- ▶ School programs and curriculum set up with complex special needs in mind



Parental Choice

- Cuts both ways
 - Choose for inclusion or choose for congregation
 - Informed
 - Options available
 - Removing this option takes away parental choice
 - A choice for current and future parents
- 



Friday afternoon music is one among many other opportunities throughout the year for Beverley School community to gather and enjoy their time together and with their guests. In the pictures families sing along old tunes with Choir Choir Choir and other Beverley favourites.



Community



- ▶ Students
- ▶ Teachers
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Community of inclusion, support, and understanding
 - ▶ Not unlike community experienced at the Afrocentric Alternative Schools or the Triangle Program for students that identify as LGBT
- ▶ Intangible side benefit

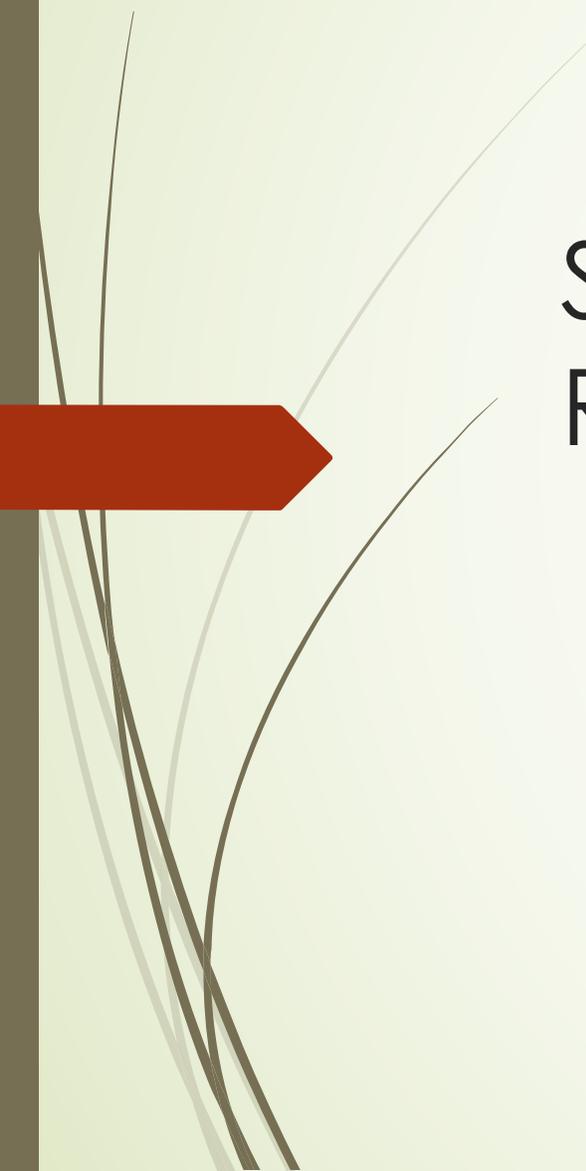


Disabilities as a Broad Spectrum and Multiple Impairments

- ▶ Motion fails to address
 - ▶ Diversity and degrees of severity (e.g. complex developmental disabilities)
 - ▶ Different ways of learning, thinking, and making sense for each student
 - ▶ Diverse needs, limitations and coping mechanisms
- ▶ Motion appears to focus on and address a segment of students with disabilities
 - ▶ Those with physical disabilities and those that are high functioning
- ▶ Assumption about students' minimal learning capacity
 - ▶ Does not account for low-functioning students
 - ▶ Does not address the need to teach children to learn how to learn



Girl at a smartboard in a classroom. Boy in the swimming pool and another boy practicing basketball in the gym with a help of his teacher. Girl and her teacher smiling. A group of students in wheelchairs pushed by their teachers make the city their classroom (from a film by Kelly O'Brian, *Walk with Me*).



Specific Comments on the Recommendations in Motion 5



Background



- Special education classes
 - Motion is unclear if this is specific only to disabilities or also pertains to gifted students
 - Different treatment of gifted children from those children with disabilities?
- More cost effective for the TDSB
 - Inclusive education – is an educational system based on four interrelated features: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability*
 - Implementation and maintenance is expensive
 - UN urges States to develop new funding models to implement and maintain inclusive education

*United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Article 24, Right to Inclusive Education: General Comment No. 4 (2016), #20-25)



Recommendation 1: Adopt an Effective Definition of “Inclusion”

- ▶ The definition and aims of inclusion may be appropriate for some students
 - ▶ More should be done in the motion to emphasize that inclusion and its aims may not be appropriate or necessary in all situations
- ▶ Inclusion as a strategy may erode the concept that congregation may also be an acceptable and appropriate approach for specific special education needs and circumstances
- ▶ Career development goals will not be applicable to all students
- ▶ Age-appropriate may not be applicable
 - ▶ Physical age
 - ▶ Ability age
 - ▶ Implicit recognition that segregating (by age) is appropriate to meet the needs of groups (children of different ages)



Recommendation 3 a): *Placement in a Special Education Class a Last Resort*

- ▶ We recommend removing this recommendation
 - ▶ Fails to recognize value of congregated schools
 - ▶ Fails to recognize difficulties that parents have getting their children into congregated schools where this is the best environment (including those who have in response opted out of the TDSB)
 - ▶ Uses term “last resort” which may be used against parents wishing to have their child placed in a congregated environment
- ▶ If the recommendation is retained we suggest the following wording:
 - ▶ “3(a) Consistent with the Education Act, TDSB should offer to parents of children with special needs an optimal education option for their child, whether it be an inclusive or congregated setting, with appropriate special education services and supports being implemented.”



Recommendation 3 c)

- ***“Parental choice should prevail in such placement decisions”***
 - In order for there to be a choice, different options need to be offered
 - Congregated schools should be an option
 - Corollary to example should also apply
 - There should be fewer barriers to a parent choosing a congregated school and more congregated schools should be made available to parents that want that as an option
- Anecdotally, we know about parents in Toronto who were not aware of schools like Beverley and/or withdrew their child from the TDSB because a congregated option like Beverley was not offered



Recommendation 3 e)

- ▶ ***“TDSB should provide a multi-year plan aiming at progressing to eventual placement in a regular class”***
 - ▶ Language implies special education classes being “forced on” parents
 - ▶ Consider characterizing this as two streams of special education choices that are available as informed choices to parents
 - ▶ Stream 1 is inclusion
 - ▶ Stream 2 is congregation both of which can continue as placements indefinitely.



Recommendation 4 c): Major Organizational Change Transition Plan

- ▶ ***“Strong, monitored transition safeguards to ensure that no students with special education needs are put in a worse position as a result of the new Inclusion Strategy”***
 - ▶ Difficult to imagine how a child forced to leave Beverley could be better served
 - ▶ What guarantee for children who will enter the TDSB in the future that they will receive an equivalent of what Beverley offers now



Recommendation 7: Phase Out Schools that Are Entirely Segregated

- This recommendation should be removed entirely
- The motion should reflect the fact that congregated schools are an essential part of a comprehensive inclusion strategy
- Unrealistic to suggest that intensive educational and build environment supports that are provided by schools like Beverley can be replicated in all (or really any) other TDSB schools

Beverley School



Thank you