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A Case for Inclusive Education  
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## INTRODUCTION

In recent history, research around education and pedagogy has supported adopting inclusive education models in both school structures and service delivery. A number of factors have culminated to create the push towards greater inclusion of students with Special Education Needs (SEN) into general education classrooms. This review of the literature looks at important factors pushing the inclusion agenda both locally and globally. It also reviews strategies supporting the inclusion of students with SEN at the system, school, and classroom levels. Although there is a gap in empirical research on the specific transition process school boards undergo when shifting from a special education to an inclusive education model, a significant amount of evidence-based research has identified successful strategies that promote quality inclusion of students with SEN.

### 1. International Principles Promoting Inclusive Education

“In almost every country, inclusive education has emerged as one of the most dominant issues in the education of SWSEN [Students with Special Education Needs]. In the past 40 years the field of special needs education has moved from a segregation paradigm through integration to a point where inclusion is central to contemporary discourse” (Mitchell, 2010, p. 121). The move towards greater inclusion closely mirrors recent shifts in disability discourse and perceptions of impairment (Oliver, 1990). Beginning in the 1970’s, disability activist and advocacy groups began challenging the social origins of disability (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999). Soon after, international attention began focusing on areas that were perceived to present barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities. One critical area of focus was education. In June, 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) drafted the *Salamanca Statement* which included the following agreements:

- every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,
- every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,
- education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,
- those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,
- regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994, p. viii-ix).

In 2006, the United Nations (UN) put forward the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) within which Article 24 addresses the principles of inclusive education:

States Parties shall ensure that:

- a. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- b. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- c. Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- d. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- e. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion (UN, 2006, article 24).

Currently, the CRPD has received 155 signatories and 127 ratifications. Canada has both signed and ratified this convention (UNenable, current website).

## **2. The Special Education and Inclusive Education Debate: Which Model Better Serves Students?**

Despite the prevalence of international principles outlining the need to adopt inclusive models of education, individual boards have struggled with the practicalities of implementation. The points of controversy seem to settle on the time students spend in general education classes and whether or not positive outcomes are achieved within inclusive settings (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). A review of studies conducted in the United States exploring whether or not inclusive settings can obtain the highest academic outcomes for students with Learning Disabilities (LD) revealed mixed results (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). On one hand, the review found that “[h]igh-quality inclusive classes provide a very good general education, which meets many of the needs of elementary students with LD” (McLeskey & Waldron, p. 52). However, the authors were unconvinced that the intensive instruction that ensures students with LD attain essential skills could always be delivered in an inclusive setting. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) were also able to conclude that congregated resource classes were not able to provide the intensive instruction students with LD required. They noted that the major concerns around congregated resource settings were that there was often lower-quality instruction and a lack of differentiation; little communication or coordination with mainstream teachers and education programming; less actual time for instruction; and unclear and lowered accountability for student outcomes (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).

Trembley (2011) undertook a comparative analysis of both inclusive and special education models. Results demonstrated that educators in both models perceived the model in which they were working to be effective in addressing the needs of students with SEN. However, in terms of students' performances within comparative student groups, the inclusive model demonstrated greater effects on student learning and outcomes (Trembley, 2011). In Mitchell's (2010) large scale, international review looking at the effectiveness of special and inclusive education models, he concluded that "[t]he evidence of inclusive education is mixed but generally positive, the majority of studies reporting either positive effects or no differences for inclusion, compared with more segregated provisions" (p. 141). Mitchell's review also concluded that "[i]n general, the presence of SWSEN in regular classrooms does not have a negative impact on the achievement of other students" (p. 141). In support of Trembley's (2011) and Mitchell's (2010) findings, a recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012) demonstrated that systems in which schools grouped students by ability fared far worse on student performance outcomes.

Successful PISA countries also invest something else in their education systems: high expectations for *all* of their students. Schools and teachers in these systems do not allow struggling students to fail; they do not make them repeat a grade, they do not transfer them to other schools, nor do they group students into different classes based on ability. Regardless of a country's or economy's wealth, school systems that commit themselves, both in resources and in policies, to ensuring that all students succeed perform better in PISA than systems that tend to separate out poor performers or students with behavioural problems or special needs (OECD, 2012, p. 4).

Although the international literature does not suggest that inclusion works best for every student all the time, the overall trend indicates that students with SEN generally fare the same or better in inclusive settings with no negative impact on students without SEN. Therefore, adopting an inclusive model of education not only brings education systems in line with international rights conventions, but has also demonstrated to maintain or improve academic outcomes for students with SEN.

### **3. Making the Change: How Boards Have Adopted Inclusive Education Models**

#### **Barriers to Research**

The hope of this review was to focus on jurisdictions that share similar characteristics to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) who have also documented the process of transition from a special education to inclusive education model (particularly around service delivery). Two barriers were encountered in collecting this nature of data.

1. Although boards were identified as previously employing a special education model and currently practice an inclusive education approach, there is a gap in available data documenting the transition process at a board or system level.

2. There are very few school boards in the world that compare to the TDSB in socio-demographic makeup, size, and challenges. Therefore, the majority of board-specific research identified in this process reflects practices of boards that are arguably smaller and more homogenous than the TDSB.

To address these gaps in available data and research, contact was made with members of the Canadian Association of Community Living who have conducted extensive research in the area of inclusive education. Discussions with other researchers reiterated the gap in board-specific research. A number of inclusive education studies employ comparative analyses of small groups of students or classes; or compare provincial or state policy initiatives. However, it appears as though cross-board comparisons have yet to be conducted.

To further investigate whether research on current practice from smaller, more homogenous boards could be relevant to the structure of the TDSB, contact was made with Dr. Gordon Porter. Dr. Porter is the Director of Inclusive Education Initiatives for the Canadian Association for Community Living as well as former Chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. When asked whether the size or demography of a system matters in the approach to implementing an inclusive model, Dr. Porter reassured that, regardless of size or demography, the approach is the same. What can be achieved in smaller, more homogenous boards can be achieved in large, urban systems. A fiscal and attitudinal commitment to shifting structure is what makes for successful implementation of an inclusive model (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013).

### **Steps to Adopting an Inclusive Education Model at the System Level**

Despite the lack of board-specific research on procedural transitions, Dr. Porter (2008) has outlined transitory steps that are applicable to all boards seeking to adopt an inclusive education model.

Let me list a few of the critical steps needed to implement this approach:

1. We need to make a plan for transition and change and accept that this will take at least 3-5 years to do properly.
2. School staff must know how to make their schools and classrooms effective for diverse student populations, and so we need to invest in training for existing teachers and school leaders as well as for new teachers.
3. Understanding that teachers need support to accept and meet this challenge, we need to work with them and their associations to develop supports they need.
4. We need to start by creating positive models of success – classrooms, schools, and communities that do a good job and can share their success and strategies with neighbors.
5. We need to identify a cadre of leaders and innovators at all levels and assist them in building networks where they can produce and share knowledge unique to their

communities.

6. We need to identify and share “best practices” from research and knowledge that is already available and can be enriched and enhanced by local experience.
7. We need to understand that innovations and changes that will make a difference will require resources. That means money and people (Porter & Stone, 1998 as cited in Porter, 2008, pg. 64).

In a personal communication with Dr. Porter, speaking specifically of the TDSB, he suggested that a cultural shift across the system is required. The current special education system has been long established and is the system with which most parents, teachers, professionals, and administrators are familiar. Dr. Porter suggested that with a board the size of the TDSB, setting up model schools of inclusion within each quadrant of the board might be a vital piece to moving the system forward. Using these schools as exemplars of an inclusive education model would help build confidence within the school community (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013).

### Values and Praxis at the School Level

Sailor and Burrello (2013) discuss the importance of jurisdictions and school communities adhering to a core set of values that promote an inclusive environment for all students. To support these set values, specific practical directives are recommended:

1. All students’ education should be accommodated within the general education setting. “The unified system is based upon five requirements: (1) all students attend their regularly assigned school; (2) all students have membership in their assigned classrooms in that schools; (3) general education teachers and school-based leaders are responsible for all student learning; (4) all students are prepared within the district curriculum with appropriate adaptations and supports as needed; and (5) all staff are fully aware of teacher and student rights and capabilities, have the freedom to pursue what is important to them and their families, and have due process protections under law” (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 31).
2. All students should have access to all available resources and benefits
3. All students should undertake training in citizenship and social development to better understand expectations as a student, but also as a citizen of the world highlighting post-school expectations.
4. “Schools should be democratically organized, data-driven, learning enhancement systems” (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 31) “Five key elements are included here: (1) the school operates a team structure, including grade-level teams and a leadership team, that considers reliable and valid sources of data to determine instructional matches (i.e., services, supports, levels of intensity, etc.); (2) all staff (i.e., all school employees) participate in at least some way in the teaching and learning process; (3) the school employs a noncategorical lexicon (i.e., special education labels are not used in school discourse); (4) the school is guided by distributed leadership (i.e., teacher leaders

assume some key leadership functions); and (5) each school has one or more learning enhancement teams that bring together the resident expertise of the school, its partnerships, and district personnel when needed to design conditions that increase student learning possibilities within and outside the school as appropriate to learning new functionings” (p. 31-32).

5. Schools should be developing capacities and partnerships with parents, families, and local businesses within the school’s community.
6. “Schools must have district support for undertaking transformative systems-change efforts” (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 32).

## Inclusion in the Classroom

Strategies and approaches to inclusion in the classroom are also important in developing a high quality, inclusive experience for students with SEN. Generally, strategies are not geared towards specific exceptionalities, but are instead designed to be implemented across exceptionality categories. Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy, and Wearmouth (2009) determined through their systematic literature review that co-operation among staff, commitment and accountability to the teaching of all students, differentiation of instruction, and recognizing “that social interaction is the means through which student knowledge is developed” (p. 17) are key to successful inclusion of students with SEN. In addition, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE) conducted two substantive international, evidence-based literature reviews. Areas of focus included evidence-based strategies to support inclusion of students with SEN in both the elementary and secondary levels (EADSNE, 2001, p. 31-32).

Evidence based strategies included:

At the **elementary** level:

- Cooperative teaching where special education teachers support general education teachers by providing instruction in the general education class.
- Peer tutoring in heterogeneous groups.
- Problem-solving as a team: teachers guide students through the processes involved in problem-solving.
- Promoting co-operation and shared responsibility by involving parents in the classroom, shared and co-operative teaching, peer tutoring, planning approached collaboratively by the teaching staff (EADSNE, 2001).

At the **secondary** level:

- Peer-tutoring within heterogeneous groups demonstrated to be effective as well as ensuring peers were working within the same curriculum although potentially different aspects of the curriculum. Accommodations were addressed through collaboration between special education and general education teachers.

- Co-teaching was also found to be greatly beneficial to students. EADSNE cite Weigel, Murawski, and Swanson's (2001) meta-analysis which determined that the essential facets of co-teaching were that special education service providers should be working with general education teachers in both practice and planning. The interventions happen in a shared space (the inclusive classroom) and classrooms are made up of heterogeneous students (EADSNE, 2004).
- Learning strategies and approaches to instruction were also a critical piece to facilitate inclusive education.
- Combined designs were classrooms that implemented a number of these strategies and also involved shifting structural elements of the school to support an inclusive environment. One such structural element was shifting class schedules to longer periods (50 minutes to 85 minute periods). Longer class periods allowed for greater blocks of time to accommodate learning differences but also facilitated planning for teachers as well (EADSNE, 2004).

NOTE: In both the elementary and secondary school level strategies, curriculum based measurement (CBM) with computer technology was noted as a tool to monitor student progress. Studies reviewing CBM were outdated so were not included above. However, they did support the use of technology in providing more accurate assessment opportunities (EADSNE, 2004).

#### 4. Inclusion of Students with Specific Exceptionalities in the Classroom

Principles and approaches to inclusion can apply to all students with exceptionalities. The divisions in practice and approaches are not often as clearly delineated as is supposed in the process of identification. Applying the above principles and approaches provides a basis to include all students with SEN. As the literature concludes, it is necessary to differentiate pedagogical approaches to inclusion based on student need as opposed to student's identification of exceptionality, as students sharing one exceptionality identification may have vastly different needs (Mitchell, 2010). However, some research has been conducted on how certain exceptionalities can be successfully included in the classroom.

**Autism:** Harrower and Dunlop (2001) conducted an evidence-based review of effective strategies on including students with Autism. Supports include antecedent procedures (priming, prompt delivery, picture schedules), delayed contingencies, self-management strategies, peer-mediated interventions (peer tutoring, utilizing peer supports, co-operative learning), and multicomponent interventions (teaching classmates about autism, augmentative forms of media for communication, rotating peer support systems – buddy systems). From the studies included in the review, Harrower and Dunlop (2001) suggest that students with Autism can be successfully included in the classroom as long as they are supported and accommodated.

**Learning Disabilities:** After a review of studies exploring effective programming for students with learning disabilities, McLeskey and Waldron (2011) concluded that inclusive classrooms offer a good basis for quality education for students with LD. However, they were unconvinced

that the intensive instruction some students with LD may require could be offered in either an inclusive OR segregated setting. They suggest that new research on instructional methods in the areas of reading and math are being developed (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). These approaches have the potential for being delivered in inclusive classrooms.

**Mild Intellectual Disability:** Research studies (Crawford, 2005; Myklebust & Batevik, 2009) demonstrate the importance of inclusion for students with low functional skills and/or intellectual disabilities. Both studies explored the correlation between students who had been taught in inclusive classrooms and their future employment and economic independence. When severity of impairment was controlled, results from both studies indicated that students who were taught in inclusive, general education classes were more likely to find employment and be economically independent post-high school.

**Behaviour Disorders:** Currently, evidence demonstrates that students with emotional or behavioral disorders are at significant risk for poor academic and post-school outcomes. Simpson (2004) argues that the reason why students with emotional or behavioral disorders appear to fare poorly within general education classrooms is that intentional inclusion, based on evidence supported strategies, has not been rigorously researched or implemented. There is a considerable gap in empirical research into the inclusion of students with emotional or behavioral disorders (Simpson, 2004).

## 5. Adopting an Alternate Service Delivery Model: Successful Strategies Identified

Through the literature review process, a number of structural and pedagogical strategies have been identified as essential or good praxis for successful inclusion of students with SEN within general education classrooms. Strategies include:

**Removing systems of categorization:** Many jurisdictions around the world are moving away from employing psychometric testing and categorizing students by ability/disability. For example: **Sweden** does not categorize students nor use psychometric testing. **Scotland** categorizes students who need additional support into a single category. **Denmark** and **England** only distinguish students who have profound disabilities (Mitchell, 2010)

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education (MOE or Ministry) supports that every student deemed exceptional has the right to an Identification, Review, and Placement Committee (IPRC). However, in its recent memorandum (December, 2011), the Ministry has clarified its position by stating that access to special education services is not contingent upon special education needs identification (MOE, 2011). Any student who is perceived as potentially benefitting from special education services is entitled to access them. “The determining factor for the provision of special education programs or services is not any specific diagnosed or undiagnosed medical condition, but rather the needs of individual students based on the individual assessment of strengths and needs (MOE, 2011, p. 2).

The current legislation around the structure of the IPRC is as follows: “Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)” (MOE, 2013, para. 3). The role of the IPRC is to: “decide whether or not the student should be identified as exceptional; identify the areas of the student’s exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education; decide an appropriate placement for the student; and review the identification and placement at least once in each school year” (MOE, 2013, para. 4).

Although the Ministry supports the continuation of the IPRC process, criticism of the process has been mounting. Calls for alternative approaches and shifts in resource allocation are being made. The Auditor General’s report (2005) identified the IPRC process as resource-intensive coupled with limited accountability.

Identification, Placement, and Review Committees (IPRCs) make significant decisions regarding the education of students with special education needs, but do not adequately document the rationale for their decisions and the evidence they relied on. As a result, information that would be of use to IPRCs conducting annual reviews and to teachers in connection with the preparation of IEPs is not available. The lack of detailed information on the proceedings also limits the ability of boards to identify areas for systemic improvement in IPRC procedures... The process for formally identifying students with special education needs—including IPRC meetings and professional assessments—is resource intensive. One school board we audited conducted fewer formal assessments to help offset the cost of additional special education teachers. The Ministry needs to compare the contribution to student outcomes made by the formal identification process to that made by additional direct services provided by special education teachers and identify the strategy that results in the greater benefits to students (Auditor General, 2005, Chap. 3).

A similar review of identification processes in the United States received parallel critiques from the *President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education* (2002). This document outlined the concerns regarding labeling children within a potentially subjective or biased process of identification. The report strongly recommended against the use of resources to identify students and instead suggests funds be used to support student learning.

The Commission could not identify firm practical or scientific reasons supporting the current classification of disabilities in IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act]...The Commission is concerned that federal implementing regulations waste valuable special education resources in determining which category a child fits into rather than providing the instructional interventions a child requires... Thus, the overall Commission recommendation for assessment and identification is to simplify wherever possible and to orient any assessments towards the provision of services (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, pp. 21-22).

Scholars have identified the process of identification as a key barrier to implementing an inclusive model. They suggest that classifying students into categories maintains a separate system of education within which students will encounter lowered expectations and less favorable opportunities after their academic tenure. "It is our contention that the assessment and sorting of students with special needs into 13 separate categories of disability has resulted in a parallel system of responsibility and care for these students. This parallel system is serviced by a cadre of specialists each with their own culture, roles, and expectations for student outcomes and, unfortunately, poor postschool results" (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 36).

In Mitchell's (2010) extensive international review of special education, he cites seven concerns with education processes that include the identification or classification of students perceived as having SEN. 1) Use an individual/deficit model in which academic failure is internal to the student; 2) there is significant heterogeneity within categories of exceptionalities; 3) many students who are identified with SEN do not appear to have disabilities; 4) research continues to show that deficit-based instruction does not adequately address student need; 5) due to the perception that impairments are often on a spectrum, individual judgment is required to determine when or if a student has an impairment/disability; 6) category boundaries are complicated by co-morbidity of multiple impairments; and 7) categories can prevent educators from approaching the student in a holistic way, further identifying the student by their impairment or disability (Farrell, 2010, p. 55 as cited in Mitchell, 2010).

Inclusive boards across Canada rarely employ IPRC processes as currently configured. Instead, a number of boards have opted to forego psychometric testing (except for in rare instances). Instead, they utilize a committee of in-school members and professionals to consult with and support teachers by focusing on student needs and setting goals for students' academic progress. Discussions prioritize unpacking strategies teachers can incorporate into their instructional delivery to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the student in question (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013). "Teachers don't need clinical diagnosis, they need practical solutions and strategies" (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013).

***Reducing congregated classrooms or ability grouping:*** One of the key proponents of inclusive education is the reduction of segregated classes and the promotion of mixed ability grouping both between and within classes. Houtveen and Van de Grift (2001) highlight drawbacks of ability grouping by stating that placement in low-ability groups imposes low expectations on students; that ability groupings often mirror social, ethnic, and class divisions; that assignment to an ability group is often a permanent allocation; that there is often less instruction delivered in lower-ability groupings compared to mixed-ability groupings; and that segregated low achieving students are further disadvantaged based on a lack of access to positive role models and social stimulation.

Furthermore, Shaddock, MacDonald, Hook, Giorcelli and Arthur Kelly (2009 as cited in Mitchell, 2010) explored the impact of individual instruction for struggling readers. Their research synthesis demonstrated that classroom effect on student learning far outweighed the effect of

individual instruction (Shaddock et al, 2009 as cited in Mitchell, 2010). Pedagogically this is important in terms of promoting inclusion. Classroom and social interactions are key to student learning (Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy & Wearmouth, 2009). When classrooms are structured in a way that prevents the natural occurrence of social interactions between students or limits participation, certain groups of students are disadvantaged.

From Mitchell's (2010) investigation into effects on student learning correlating to ability grouping and individual instruction, two critical results were uncovered:

- Research into ability grouping show that, overall, it has little or no significant impact on student achievement, although high-achieving students appear to benefit more than low-achieving students, who suffer from disadvantages in being placed in low ability groups (p. 155).
- Paradoxically, individual instruction has a low impact on student achievement, suggesting that the social context of the classroom is an important contributor to learning (p. 155).

Results from a previous systematic evidence review (see Appendix A) also highlight the importance of heterogeneous class structures on student outcomes. Three important findings resulted from the systematic review: 1) Either in an integrated or congregated classroom, students with LD had similar results in academic success (Fore, Hagan-Burke, Boon & Smith, 2008); 2) in one study, students without SEN who were educated in integrated classrooms did not appear to experience any disadvantage or advantage from being taught alongside students with SEN (Ruijs, Van der Veen & Peetsma, 2010); and 3) when ability/impairment was controlled, students with SEN who were taught in integrated settings were more likely to find employment and be economically independent post-high school (Myklebust & Batevik, 2009).

Note: In the TDSB, 65% of all students in Home School Program (HSP) or Intensive Support Program (ISP) classes are students who are identified as LD, Gifted, and students who only have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). It could be argued that these three groups are, theoretically, among the easiest to integrate into general education.

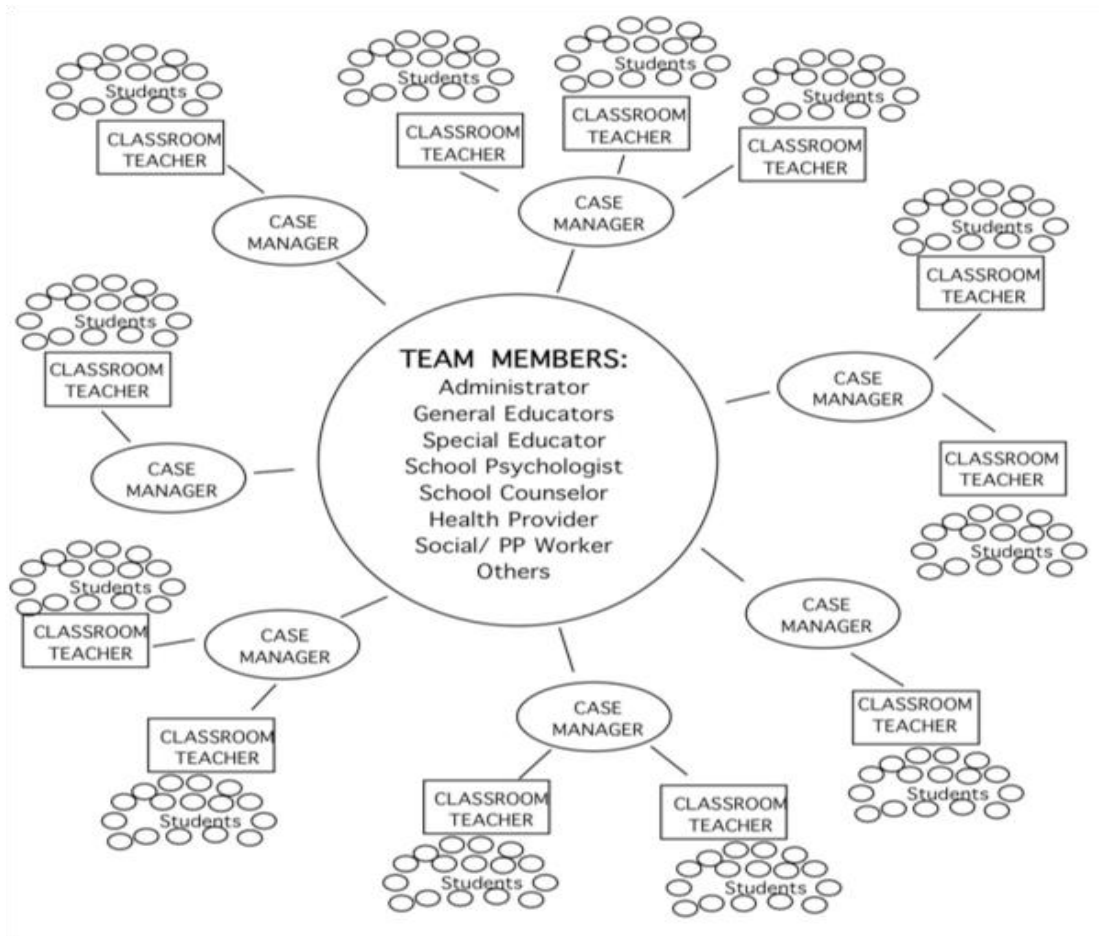
	ISP	HSP	Total # in HSP/ISP	Percentage of Total
Autism	1,217	159	1,376	8%
Deaf	146	11	157	1%
LD	1,795	2,275	4,070	24%
Language	122	32	154	1%
MID	1,780	316	2,096	12%
DD	1,090	7	1,097	6%
Blind	18	5	23	0%
Physical	384	11	395	2%
ME	6	3	9	0%
Speech	2	0	2	0%
Behav	628	72	700	4%
IEP	497	2,818	3,315	19%
Gifted	3,702		3,702	22%
			0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,387</b>	<b>5,709</b>	<b>17,096</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Research and Information Services, Toronto District School Board, June 2012

***Moving from a direct service to an indirect service delivery model:*** In a direct service model, the specialists or consultants work directly with the students identified as having a SEN. In an indirect service model, the specialists or consultants work directly to support the teacher who has identified students in their classroom (Gravois, 2013).

***Implementing an Instructional Consultation Team (ICT):*** Developed over 25 years of research and consultation, the ICT incorporates highly structured, data-driven, accountable school-based team (Gravois, 2013). “The core of the system is ensuring all resources, including classroom teachers, principals, special educators, Title 1, ESL, and so on, are equally trained in and adhere to a common process of collaborative, data-based problem solving as the primary service delivery process. Once trained, these team members operate in a Case Manager role, partnering with teachers to facilitate interactions that are consistent, uniform, and accountable” (Gravois, 2013, p. 123). Figure 1 outlines the ICT model. Over 500 schools in the United States are currently employing the ICT model (Gravois, 2013). Note: the implementation of this service delivery model does not reduce the role of professional or specialist services. The model supports the re-alignment of services, not the reduction of services.

**Figure 1: Instructional Consultation Team Model**



(Gravois, 2013, pg. 124). Image retrieved from <http://ru.ttacconnect.org/files/2010/09/Team-Meetings.png>

Successful ICT models follow the following procedures: (Gravois, 2013, p. 125-126).

- The first step is to identify student needs and assess whether their teacher's approach to instruction is a good match to address student needs. This 'instructional assessment' is completed by the ICT case manager and includes collaboration with the teacher (Gravois, 2013).
- Plans are organized by short-term, measurable goals (roughly 4-6 weeks) and are closely connected to the curriculum. The teacher, in partnership with the assigned ICT case manager, establishes student goals (Gravois, 2013).
- Prioritize strategies to support teachers in an inclusive classroom knowing that instruction will need to reflect student need (Gravois, 2013).
- The ICT serves as a rich resource to problem solve with teachers as well as provide opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from others' approach to instruction (Gravois, 2013).

- “Additional resources are aligned with the plan established by the teacher in collaboration with the IC Team case manager and are guided by the goals established as part of the structured problem-solving process that has occurred” (Gravois, 2013, p. 126).
- Monitoring is ongoing. Both the classroom teacher and case manager are required to monitor student success. Gravois (2013) recommends teachers and case managers review students’ goals on a weekly basis. Once goals are met, resources are discontinued and a new series of goals are prepared. This stage is where flexibility in resource re-alignment is essential. Due to the frequent and regular monitoring of both teachers and case managers, resources that are no longer required by one student can be quickly re-allocated to another area of student need.
- “Beyond the progress of the student(s), schools must be supported to evaluate whether resource allocation is effectively producing the desired outcomes” (Gravois, 2013, p. 126).

**School-Based Student Services Teams:** Similar in structure and purpose, some schools in Canada have adopted a School-Based Student Services Team model of service delivery. Here is an example from New Brunswick.

The school-based Student Services Team should include a school administrator, resource teacher(s), classroom teacher(s), guidance counselor(s), and/or others that have responsibility in the school for the programs and services for students with exceptionalities. As with the district team, it is expected that this school-based team would meet on a regular basis (suggested once a week, but minimum twice a month) and would keep the principal informed (if he or she is not present at meetings) of discussions and actions in progress. When a Special Education Plan is developed, it will be the responsibility of one of the members of the school-based Student Services Team to direct the planning process, to involve the parents, to monitor the effectiveness of the programs that address the goals and outcomes of the plan, and to report on its effectiveness. The school-based Student Services Team is also important in helping schools to develop toward exemplary practice in inclusion and thus promote the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of Special Education Plans for students that relate to all aspects of their school life (Department of Education (New Brunswick), 2002, p. 8).

## 6. School Boards That Have Made the Move or Currently Practice Inclusion

Inclusive education in Canada began in Hamilton, Ontario (Crawford, 2005). Crawford (2005) writes, “Today there are no special schools, fulltime special classes or part time special classes in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic system. Every student, no matter what category or degree of challenge, is in a regular classroom in that system...Several other Canadian systems have followed the Hamilton-Wentworth example. The Yukon, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories, as well as the province of New Brunswick, have passed strong policies for inclusion” (p. 8). Other recognized school boards that practice inclusion were also reviewed. Included in this review

were New York City, Syracuse City School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board, New Brunswick (provincial model), Yukon (provincial model).

**New Brunswick:** The Department of Education in New Brunswick has made a firm commitment to inclusive, quality education (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2002). Elements of the model employed include:

- Emphasis on parent involvement in both referral and assessment practices, in the development of the Special Education Plan, are part of all planning strategies and meetings
- Structured a School-based Student Services Team (description in previous section).
- Allocation of resource teachers who collaborate with general education teachers as well as take part in the development and monitoring of the Special Education Plan
- There is a de-emphasis on classification of students
- Emphasis on planning and strategies in supporting students progress towards measurable goals
- Transition planning that begins in Grade 8 to prepare students for adult life
- Alternate placements are usually behaviorally based

#### **Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board (2007)**

- Focus is on providing services, programs, and supports within the general education classroom
- Students attend neighbourhood schools
- Emphasis placed on program (development of IEP) over identification of exceptionality
- Language Resource Teacher who teaches students in Grade 1 (small groups)
- Incorporates a School Resource Team
- Eliminated segregated classrooms (all but two diagnostic, year long programs)

#### **Yukon Department of Education (1995)**

- Employs a non-categorical approach to exceptionalities
- Students identified by need, not by categorical label
- Student needs are addressed in the regular classroom (as far as possible)
- Each school has a dedicated school-based team, for planning and coordinating services and programming
- Dedicated Learning Assistance Teacher, Program Implementation Teacher, and school counselor
- Decisions and interventions guided by collected data

Two examples from the United States:

**Syracuse City School District (2011)**

- Promotes an inclusive model of education
- Demonstrates high-quality programs in early childhood
- Implemented the role of Consultant Teacher to support the inclusive model
- Dedicated special education team
- Introduced the Response to Intervention System
- Created a centralized model for overseeing planning and the IEP
- Focused professional development targeting reading programs and behaviour strategies
- Direct focus on providing equitable services across board

**New York City Department of Education** (current website) (not an inclusive school district but has adopted some inclusive strategies)

- Dedicated to providing instruction in the least restrictive environment
- Continues to use student categorization
- Have recently adopted Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) who provides direct and indirect support to students with exceptionalities in general education

## 7. The Cost of Inclusion

One of the foremost barriers to mobilizing a shift towards inclusion is the impending cost. However, research shows that systems that adopt a model of inclusion cost less to implement and maintain than systems that support a special education model (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 1997; Sreenath, Current). UNenable cites that an inclusive model of education is largely less expensive than a segregated special education model. Cost savings can be found in administration, management and transportation costs. However, UNenable warns that cutting funding for inclusive systems can be detrimental to its success. High quality, inclusive systems require committed funding (UNenable, Current, 2<sup>nd</sup> section).

In countries where this model has been implemented, important progress has been made. It has been found that if implemented properly, inclusive school programs have the potential to:

- be less expensive to implement and operate than special education services;
- In times of fiscal restraint, inclusive education services are politically and fiscally more sustainable than parallel systems of special education. It is politically more sustainable because the services are intended to benefit all students. The services are not perceived by taxpayers as an expensive "add on" which cater primarily to special interest lobbies in the disability sector. The services are fiscally sustainable because the goal of inclusive education is to achieve optimal pedagogical results for every public dollar invested in education. Overall such services cost a fraction of the

amount required to maintain a dual and distinct network of regular schools and special education schools.

- If implemented properly, inclusive education services can: be less expensive to implement and operate than special education services (Porter, 2001, Section 2.1).

Although implementing an inclusive system requires a sustained fiscal commitment, the literature points to a less expensive system to maintain overall.

## 8. Conclusion

The literature reflects favorably on adopting an inclusive education model. The inclusive education approach aligns well with international human rights principles. Although there is a deficit of research documenting the transition process school boards have undertaken to move from a special education model to an inclusive education model, there are a number of reviews of empirical evidence that can be used to guide policy initiatives at the system, school, and classroom levels. Approaches to inclusion often address student need and are designed to support student goals, therefore direct strategies connected to specific identified exceptionalities or classification of ability were not emphasized. Suggested evidence-based strategies impacting service delivery included: removing systems of categorization, reducing or eliminating congregated classrooms or ability grouping, moving from a direct service to indirect service delivery model, as well as implementing an Instructional Consultation Team or School-Based Student Services Teams. Highlighted evidence-based in-class strategies included co-teaching or collaborative teaching, group and supported planning, peer-tutoring, and shared responsibility for learning. A few exemplars of school boards in both Canada and the USA were explored in terms of strategies each board employs to promote inclusion. Finally, the review explored literature discussing the cost-effectiveness of inclusion and found that although costs associated with transitioning to an inclusive model were not found, overall, inclusive systems are less costly to implement and sustain than models that support students within a special education model.

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