

The Canadian Association for Community Living: A National Initiative on Inclusive Education

What Is Inclusive Education?

As communities in their own right, inclusive schools share the same characteristics and principles as inclusive communities. Thus, inclusive schools welcome and value all members of the community.

They ensure that all students participate in classrooms with their age peers and are able to learn and to develop emotionally, socially, intellectually, physically and spiritually to their fullest potential.

Inclusive schools put into place measures to support all students to fully participate in the life of the school with their age peers. Where barriers to full participation exist, inclusive schools change the way they are organized, adapting the physical premises and/or programmatic elements within classrooms to the needs of students.

- *Moving In Unison Into Action: Towards a Policy Strategy for Improving Access to Disability Supports*, The Roeher Institute, 2001.



School is where community happens for children and youth. When schools are inclusive, communities become inclusive too. Schools help young people develop their knowledge, promote citizenship, and build relationships. Educating our children is not only a basic human right; it is also a vehicle for social inclusion and social change.

Schools, of necessity, must meet the needs of the communities they serve. Diverse communities require schools that can accommodate diversity. We know that schools, as a whole, do not do this well. In fact, our schools are increasingly challenged to more effectively respond to the growing diversity of the student population. For the last two decades, advocates for students with intellectual disabilities have led the demand for inclusive schools. The reason is simple. They have been the group excluded by the practices of “traditional special education” where their needs have been met mainly in segregated classes, segregated schools and, in some cases, residential institutions. This all started to change 20 years ago, and indeed we can credit students, parents, and educators with tremendous progress in this period.

However, in far too many Canadian schools today, those who fall outside the norm are still sent away to segregated special education services. Indeed over 40% of children with disabilities in Canada age 5-14 remain in special classes or segregated schools. It is time to end this archaic practice and put to use for every child what we have learned about the positive impact of inclusive educational practices. Our children need to be educated in heterogeneous classrooms where the diversity of students is welcomed, celebrated and nurtured. Canada’s schools need to become inclusive and reflective of the values of the society they serve.

What do we mean by “inclusive education?” It’s simple: children go to their community or neighbourhood school and receive instruction in a regular class setting with non-disabled peers who are the same age. This approach is the only way we can provide education to a diverse population in a way that respects the complex fabric of our society in the 21st century. Inclusion is now a Canadian value that needs to be practiced in our schools.

CACL's National Initiative

Creating inclusive schools and education systems across Canada will take time. It will be complex, and always challenging. So a national effort is required. Through consultations with educators, governments, and Provincial and Territorial Associations for Community Living, CACL is creating an initiative that links local-to-national efforts, and engages many partners in the education system in Canada. A variety of partnerships, networks and dialogues are being launched to move commitments to human rights and inclusion into actual policies and practices in communities across Canada.

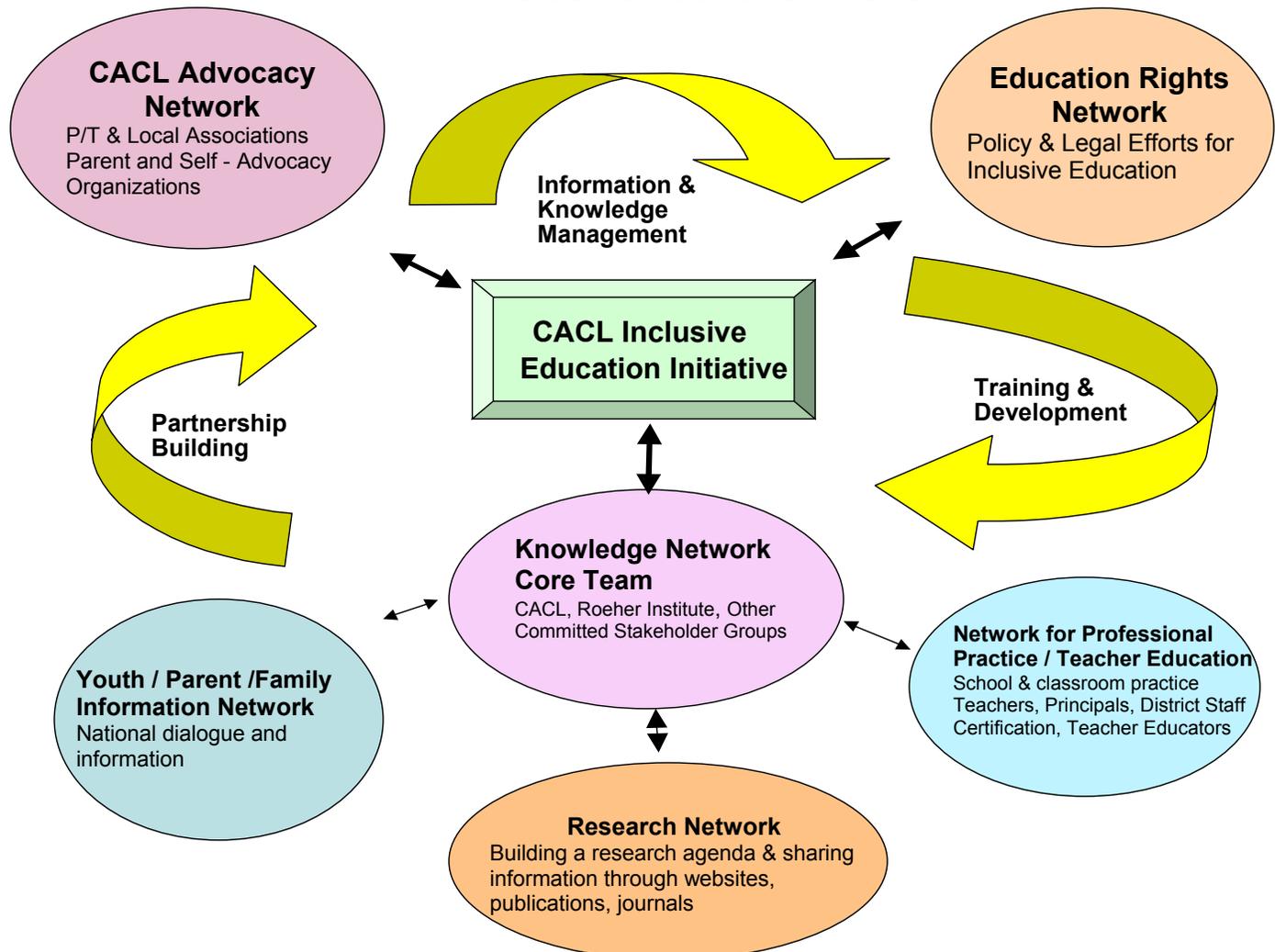
CACL's Inclusive Education Initiative consists of three networks:

- CACL Advocacy Network - sharing information & linking ACLs and their networks on this issue
- Education Rights Network – linking human rights advocates in common efforts
- Knowledge Network – creating and sharing a knowledge base on inclusive education

Common objectives link the partners and the networks in joint activities and efforts to:

- **Build partnerships** for dialogue on inclusive education
- **Develop information and manage knowledge** for inclusive education policy and practice
- **Train and develop capacities** of teachers, parents, advocates, governments, researchers, and policy makers to support inclusive education policy and practice

CACL Inclusive Education Action



Inclusive Education Activities and Events

ADVOCACY NETWORK ACTIVITIES

National Inclusive Education Week November 2 – 8, 2003

National Inclusive Education Week

is a time for members of the Community Living movement to promote and raise awareness about inclusive education in the local school, the community, the province /territory and indeed in Canada as a whole. We invite parent groups, local ACLs, as well as Provincial/Territorial Associations for Community Living to join us in this effort from November 2-8, 2003. Let the spotlight shine on positive experiences that can be shared in your community!

Inclusion Watch: Monitoring Progress Toward Inclusive Education in Canada

CACL will develop a newsletter, in conjunction with the provincial and territorial ACLs, which will highlight best practices in inclusive education across Canada. It will also serve as a watchdog on educational policies and practices in each province and territory.

EDUCATION RIGHTS NETWORK

Building inclusive education systems will take change in policy and practice. CACL is beginning to establish a network of policy analysts and legal experts to point the way to legal and policy change. This network will provide much needed information on trends and directions in inclusive education in Canada.

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK ACTIVITIES

Regional Consultations

Regional consultations are taking place across Canada, bringing together parents of students with special needs – specifically those with intellectual disabilities and other children traditionally represented by the ACLs; representatives of the teachers associations; and officials responsible for special education, support service or student services in the provincial ministry of education to identify areas of common concern and to develop strategies for joint efforts for inclusive education.

Summer Institutes in Inclusive Education

CACL promotes a series of summer institutes that bring together teachers, administrators, and community representatives to explore issues, strategies, and common agendas for inclusive education. These Institutes are sponsored by Universities and Associations for Community Living in various provinces. For more information, visit our website.

A National Research Network on Inclusive Education

By partnering with the Roeher Institute and other research institutes, such as the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick, CACL is supporting the creation a national network of researchers to ensure key information and knowledge gaps are being identified and addressed.

National Inclusive Education Summit

Building on partnerships with educational professionals, families, and ACLs, CACL will convene a National Summit on Inclusive Education in late November, 2004. The purpose of the summit will be to bring major national and provincial/territorial educational partners together to review the findings from the regional forums and provincial activities, and lay the groundwork for a national strategy on inclusive education. The event will bring together political leadership, school administrators, school boards, students, teacher federation representatives, and representatives of the parent and family/disability movements for inclusive education and public education.

Inclusive Education Websites

The following websites are good resources for educational professionals, families, disability organizations and researchers interested in information and material on inclusive education in Canada and abroad.

Enabling Education Network (EENET)

www.eenet.org.uk

EENET provides access to a unique and broad-based body of expertise and experience in the practice of inclusive education worldwide. It is committed to prioritizing the needs of countries/organizations/individuals who have limited access to basic information and resources.

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)

<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk>

CSIE gives information and advice about inclusive education and related issues. The Centre, which was set up in 1982, is fully committed to working towards an end to segregated education.

J. P. Das Developmental Disabilities Centre

<http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/INDEX.html>

The JP Das Developmental Disabilities Centre at the University of Alberta has an annotated bibliography on inclusive education as well as useful links to other inclusive education websites in Canada, the U.S. and in the United Kingdom.

British Columbia Ministry of Education

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/>

The British Columbia Ministry of Education maintains this site and offers a large section of “tips for teachers” and case studies on inclusive education.

Renaissance Group

<http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/>

This web site is designed for general education teachers, special education teachers, parents, and school staff to help provide some answers about how inclusive education can be accomplished. Resources for making accommodations are included as well as links to other web sites and resource lists for learning more about inclusive education.

Inclusion International

www.inclusion-international.org

Inclusion International is a grassroots human rights organization of families, self-advocates and committed citizens, dedicated to the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities. They work to better the lives of the 60 million people with intellectual disability around the world.

Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education

<http://www.inclusive-education.ca/>

The Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education is comprised of organizations that are committed to supporting individuals who have a disability, their families, friends and advocates. The primary focus of the Coalition is the achievement of quality education in the province of Ontario.

For more information about CACL and its Inclusive Education Initiative, please contact us at:



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