

Inclusive Education

I. Vision

An evolving and systemic model of inclusive education where all children reach their full learning potential and decisions are based on the individual needs of the student and founded on evidence.

II. Definition

Inclusive education is a pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interests of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community. These values and beliefs will be shared by schools and communities. Inclusive education is put into practice within school communities that value diversity and nurture the well-being and quality of learning of each of their members. Inclusive education is carried out through a range of public and community programs and services available to all students. Inclusive education is the foundation for ensuring an inclusive New Brunswick society.

III. Overarching Principles

The provision of inclusive public education is based on three complementary principles:

- (1) public education is universal - the provincial curriculum is provided equitably to all students and this is done in an inclusive, common learning environment shared among age-appropriate, neighbourhood peers;

(2) public education is individualized - the success of each student depends on the degree to which education is based on the student's best interests and responds to his or her strengths and needs; and

(3) public education is flexible and responsive to change.

Recognizing that every student can learn, the personnel of the New Brunswick public education system will provide a quality inclusive education to each student ensuring that:

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| <i>Student-centered</i> | 1. all actions pertaining to a student are guided by the best interest of the student as determined through competent examination of the available evidence; |
| | 2. all students are respected as individuals. Their strengths, abilities and diverse learning needs are recognized as their foundation for learning and their learning challenges are identified, understood and accommodated; |
| | 3. all students have the right to learn in a positive learning environment; |
| <i>Curriculum and Assessments</i> | 4. the common learning environment, including curriculum and instruction, is structured and adapted such that all students learn to their best potential; |
| | 5. assessment of student learning is diverse, authentic, appropriate, relevant, and sufficiently frequent to inform precision teaching; |
| <i>Educators and support personnel</i> | 6. skills, attitudes and knowledge required for the successful learning of all students are fostered in all personnel who work with students through ongoing professional development and adherence to professional standards; |
| <i>Services and Community Partnerships</i> | 7. all students are provided with a range of programs, services and resources, including transition planning, that meet their individual goals and needs, and contribute to their cognitive, social, psychological, and cultural development; |
| | 8. partnerships with parents and community groups which capitalize on the expertise and resources of these groups are cultivated; |
| <i>Government-wide Supports</i> | 9. systematic measures aimed at prevention, and early, timely assessment of need and evidence-based intervention are in place; and |
| | 10. government departments collaborate to offer responsive and integrated services of professionals and paraprofessionals beginning pre-school. |

IV. Equity

The principle of universal design is the starting point for an inclusive public education system whereby the learning needs of the greatest number of students are met by maximizing the usability of programs, services, practices, and learning environments. When this measure alone is insufficient to meet the needs of an individual student or groups of students, accommodations are required. This is both an ethical and a legal requirement. However, it is a requirement that is always exercised within a concrete context.

The New Brunswick public education system will ensure:

1. compliance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *The New Brunswick Human Rights Act*, which require reasonable accommodation of students' special needs unless they demonstrably give rise to undue hardship due to cost, risk to safety, or impact on others, particularly on other students.
2. resolution in a timely manner when the needs of students conflict such that the opportunity for some or all students to meet their learning outcomes is jeopardized, or their safety is at risk. If necessary, provision will be made for mediation, advocacy, and/or the provision of external expertise to find solutions which respect the best interests of all students involved.

IV. Accommodation

Accommodation means changing learning conditions to meet student needs rather than requiring students to fit system needs. Based on analysis, student needs may be met through individual accommodation or, in some cases, through universal responses that meet the individual student's needs as well as those of other students.

Every student has the right to expect that:

1. accommodations will be considered and implemented as appropriate in a timely manner, when evidence demonstrates that the status quo is not in the best interest of the student;
2. he or she will participate fully in the common learning environment, meaning an environment that is designed for all students, is typical for the student's age and grade, and is shared with his/her neighbourhood peers; and
3. his or her learning outcomes, instruction, assessment, interventions, accommodations, modifications, supports, adaptations, additional resources and learning environment will be designed to respect his or her learning style, needs and strengths.

The following must be respected:

- a. the ultimate purpose of schools as places for academic learning and the development of social capital must be maintained;
- b. clear and precise learning outcomes are established by the school in ongoing consultation with parents. When it is determined that students require learning outcomes other than those prescribed by the provincial curriculum, parental consultation must be on an individual basis;
- c. there is a justifiable, rational connection between the program of learning, the established learning outcomes and the assessment of learning;
- d. the student's success in achieving each learning outcome is well-documented;
- e. clear measures are in place to ensure all students are included in the social and extracurricular life of the school and exposed to a wide range of activities and people;
- f. curricular and other learning must take place in the most inclusive environment in which the learning outcomes can be achieved, meaning that:

- i. before a learning environment outside of the common learning environment can be considered, it must be clearly demonstrated that the learning outcomes could not be met in a more inclusive environment despite all reasonable efforts to provide support and accommodation, and monitored on an ongoing basis and participation in the common learning environment is reestablished when it meets the needs of the student and the other students; or
- ii. temporary situations have been created outside of the common learning environment to better assist the student to meet his or her learning outcomes within the common learning environment, and
- iii. while, type of disability and medical diagnosis provide important information, learning environments are never developed or assigned on the basis of disability or label.

V. Accountability

1. Inclusive school practices are synonymous with successful school practices, therefore indicators and targets for school success, including indicators for inclusive practices, must be clearly defined and evaluated provincially, by school districts and by schools, and areas for improvement identified and addressed.
2. Indicators of student learning and development must be created, evaluated, and publicly reported to ensure:
 - a. New Brunswick students are achieving on par with other Canadian students;
 - b. students in all school districts and schools have an equal opportunity to succeed; and
 - c. students whose characteristics are associated with vulnerable groups or who require enrichment have an equal opportunity to succeed.