

**Building a Path to Inclusion in Education**  
**Gary Bunch, Marsha Forest Centre**

Those of us who believe that inclusion of learners with disabilities, including those with Down Syndrome, are faced with a paradox. We know that learners with all types of challenges can learn effectively in the same classrooms as their typical, community peers. We know that more and more evidence is coming out that inclusive education is stronger than special education, on both academic and social levels. Many of us know this personally because we know graduates of inclusive experiences, and we know special education. We know that well-managed inclusion results in stronger progress, results in less rejection and teasing, benefits from the remarkable example of typical peers, and provides opportunity for friendships. We know that inclusive education is an example of social justice for Canadians with disabilities in action.

The paradox is that these truths seem to make little impression on the majority of politicians, educational leaders, academics in teacher preparation programs, and classroom teachers. There are some progressive leaders in each of these groups who are willing to move forward from special education thinking and structures to inclusive thinking and structures. However, these are too few and too isolated from each other.

The simple fact is that most of those who would like to choose inclusive education do not have that choice in Canada. Most of our educational systems support the special education model. Most teacher preparation programs either pay only lip service to the issue of students with disabilities and regular classrooms, or they focus on teaching about the special education model. Most school administrators grew up under the special education model and cannot conceive of another approach. Most teachers do not believe that special students are their students in the same way as are typical students. They

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believe that special students need to be taught by specialist teachers. Inclusion says that regular teachers, supported by teachers with special knowledge and by parents, can do the job.

How do we reach these people who control the educational destinies of today's learners with Down Syndrome and other challenges? They are not deliberately acting against improving education for all learners. They are not conspirators in a plot against those with disabilities. But they do tend to be ignorant of the values of inclusion – ignorant in the true sense of the word. They simply do not know. They simply cannot understand. All most know is the special education approach wherein learners with disabilities are viewed as the students of special teachers, as needing special classrooms, as needing special curricula, as needing special buses, as second-class learners, and as unable to learn well in the company of typical learners.

How then do they find knowledge and understanding? How do they learn of the changes around the globe? How do they learn that the United Nations advocates inclusion in regular schools for all? How do they learn that India has declared a policy of inclusive education? And that Malta has as well? And that the Ivory Coast in Africa has decided for inclusion? And even that New Brunswick, Nunavut, the Yukon, and the North West Territory have all enacted policies of inclusion?

Creating understanding is the focus of this session. How can we act to inform the uninformed, get their attention, lead them to progressive change? How can choice be provided to families?

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...teachers with their experience and other challenges? They are not doing very well  
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...in regular schools for all? How do they learn that there is a world of a world of learning  
...education? And that there is no reality? And that the world is not as it is, but as it  
...for inclusion? And that there is no reality? And that the world is not as it is, but as it

...learning and understanding is the focus of this session. How can we learn to learn in the  
...environment, get their attention, lead them to paying attention, and then to learning to learn to  
...be able to learn.

There are many ways, if we wish to act. You and I know that change is a challenge. We know that effort will be needed and that time will be required. Rowing against the prevailing current of education will be a challenge.

We at the Marsha Forest Centre are convinced that the prize of inclusion of Canadian learners with disabilities is worth the effort. Our focus has been on informing parents, teachers, and others of the values and strengths of inclusion, and on the development of supportive strategies. As much as possible we work in partnership with parents, people with disabilities, and other appropriate groups. Let me tell you of some of the moves we have made and are making.

- Most of you know of the inclusive strategies Circle of Friends, PATH, and MAPS, and of person-centred learning in general. These strategies were developed through the Marsha Forest Centre. All are of proven value in assisting people with disabilities, families, teachers, advocates, and others in advancing the lives of people with disabilities. Recently Jack Pearpoint and I responded to a request from inclusive educators in India to do a series of workshops on these and other strategies. Inclusive strategies developed at the Marsha Forest Centre are in use around the globe. This is one way we spread information about inclusive practice.
- The Marsha Forest Centre has developed the idea of a set of Canadian resources on inclusive education. The idea is to inform school systems, teacher educators, and others of Canadian contributions to inclusive education. Among the resources will be information on Canadian practices in inclusion, research conducted in Canada, the voices of Canadians with disabilities, social justice and inclusion, and

gives a better idea of the way the world is changing and the way we are changing.

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...and of region-oriented planning in general. These strategies have  
developed through the African Forest Councils. All use of provision related to assisting  
people with their own financial resources, technical assistance and others in developing the  
country. I have not heard that they are not responsible to a  
request from inclusive education in order to do a series of activities on their own  
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The following information was obtained from the records of the Department of Education, State of New York, Office of the Commissioner of Education, Albany, New York.

The records of the Department of Education, State of New York, Office of the Commissioner of Education, Albany, New York, show that the following persons were employed as teachers in the public schools of the State of New York during the year ending June 30, 1917:

Male Teachers: 1,234

Female Teachers: 8,765

Total Teachers: 9,999

The above figures are based upon the reports of the local school districts to the State Department of Education.

Canadian leadership in inclusion. With a set of such resources, Canadian educators and politicians will no longer be able to say that they do not have any information on inclusion; that they do not understand it. We are optimistic that the federal government will support the project.

- The Marsha Forest Centre is talking with Ashleigh Malloy and the Down Syndrome Societies of Ontario and Toronto regarding a collaborative effort to develop a resource for regular classroom teachers on inclusion of students with intellectual challenge. The knowledge of families, people with Down Syndrome, and successful teachers will be included in this resource. Ashleigh has been the leader in this partnership.
- The Marsha Forest Centre has launched a national program focussed on disability, inclusion, and social justice in partnership with the Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education, People First Ontario, and Frontier College. The project involves providing elementary and secondary schools with the opportunity to develop blended volunteer teams of students with and without disabilities, PlayFair Teams, to inform other schools and their local communities about disability, inclusion, and social justice. A school staff member and a volunteer Mentor for Disability from the local community will lead each Team.

We are working with three elementary and three secondary schools in refining the idea. We also are developing a PlayFair Team School Manual, a PlayFair Team Community Advocate Manual, a PlayFair Team DVD, and various publicity materials. Using these resources and a network among schools, we will expand

Canadian leadership in inclusion / With a view to the new resources, Committee

and successful teachers will be required to use a variety of instructional strategies in the classroom to meet the needs of all learners. This is a challenge that all teachers face, and it is one that requires ongoing professional development and collaboration with colleagues.

The People's Center has initiated a network program focused on disability, education and social justice in partnership with the Ontario Coalition for Independent Living. The project involves providing elementary and secondary schools with the opportunity to develop individualized learning plans for students with and without disabilities. The plan is to inform other schools and their local communities about disability, education and social justice. A pilot staff member and a volunteer member for responsibility from the local community will lead each team.

in working with three elementary and three secondary schools in Albany in 1970. The plan was to develop a "Library Lesson Plan" and various publicity materials. The plan was to develop a "Library Lesson Plan" and various publicity materials. The plan was to develop a "Library Lesson Plan" and various publicity materials.



across Canada this Fall. If you are interested in setting up a PlayFair Team with a school in your community, contact us and we will provide our resource materials. Requests for information on PlayFair Teams already have come from across Canada, from Germany, India, England, Scotland, Wales, and the United States. This project is supported by the federal government's Department of Social Development.

- The Marsha Forest Centre also is working with the Family Alliance of Ontario toward renewed emphasis on parent training in advocacy and action. There is much need to support the new wave of young parents as they strive to have their children with disabilities accepted fully as members of their communities. Canada still has a long way to go in this regard. We hope to take action soon.
- The Marsha Forest Centre is a partner with in a project led from York University to clarify differences and similarities in terminology used to describe the special education and inclusive education approaches in Canada. It has become obvious that some terms are being used in confused manner to the detriment of families and people with disabilities. The project does not espouse one approach over the other. The idea is to bring clarity to crucial terms as change occurs from the special education model to the inclusive education model. This project is also supported by the federal Department of Social Development.
- Lastly, the Marsha Forest Centre is partnering with Inclusion Press to develop and disseminate print and visual materials on inclusion. Inclusion Press is a partner on all Marsha Forest projects. There is a continual stream of new publications coming from the Press. Check our web page for details.

... Canada this time. It is the first time in 10 years that we have

... in your country. ... and we will provide the necessary resources

... for information. ... I am already aware of the situation

... Canada from Germany, Japan, England, Wales, and the United States

... the project is supported by the federal government's Department of Social

Development

The Ministry of Social Development is working with the Family Assistance Act

... and several projects are being carried out in various parts of the country

... need to support the new system of family payments in order to have more

... with disabilities accepted into the system of their own choice. Canada

... has a long way to go in this regard. We hope to make progress soon

The Ministry of Social Development is a partner in a project to help people with

... differences and disabilities to participate in the economy and society

... and inclusive education. ... It is a project of the Ministry of Social

... and being used in various ways in the development of the country

... and people with disabilities. The project is a response to the needs of the

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... and education model to the inclusive education model. The project is also

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... need to support the new system of family payments in order to have more

... with disabilities accepted into the system of their own choice. Canada

The Marsha Forest is a small, but active, place. Although we do not have a great deal of money nor do we have continuing employees. We do have a powerful and creative Board of Directors: Rose and Dom Galati, parents and educators; Stan Woronko, parent and activist; Kevin Finnegan, inclusive educator, Lynda Khan, inclusive educator and administrator, and Budd Hall, Dean of Education at the University of Victoria. Until recently, Patrick Worth, who some of you may know, was one of our Directors. We miss his presence and his advice. We do not do anything without involving people with disabilities, parents, and advocates. We create partnerships to do good things. We see the goal of inclusion for people with disabilities and are working toward it.

The Marsha Forest Centre welcomes invitations to discuss innovative ideas with old and new partners. We really believe that "Together we are better".

In the time left to us, I would like to focus on ideas you might have to support Canadian families and people with disabilities in terms of inclusive education. The Canadian Down Syndrome Society can be a potent force for advocacy and positive change. Can we spend a bit of time now to develop some ideas? Whether an idea is to create a sense of our issues in the minds of politicians in advance of the next election, to develop a resource for teachers or parents, to work together in advancing an idea such as PlayFair Teams, or any other idea, we need to begin to think together and work together. You are the people with the closest knowledge of what is needed in Canada. The Marsha Forest Centre would love to support you in bringing some ideas to fruition. Let us work together.

The Atlantic Forest is a small, but active place. Although we do not have a great deal

of money, nor do we have a continuing employment. We do have a powerful and creative

board of Directors, Ross and John (John's parents and co-founders) and a number of

and active staff in program, including education, health, social, economic, and

administration and health staff. Dean of Education at the University of Victoria, and

academic staff. We have some of the best people in the world. We have

his presence and his advice. We do not do anything without consulting people with

disciplinary, personal, and academic. We create partnerships to do good things. We are the

good of the nation for people in the discipline and are working toward it

The Atlantic Forest Centre continues its mission to create innovative ideas and

old and new partners. We really believe that "Together we are better."

In the time to go, I would like to thank you for your help in support

Canadian teachers and people with disabilities in terms of inclusive education. The

of course, John's Atlantic Forest Centre has been a great force for advocacy and positive

change. We have spent a lot of time now to develop some ideas. We have a lot to

create a sense of community in the minds of participants in advance of the new edition to

develop a course for teachers or parents to work together in advancing the idea and

help. The future of our other ideas we need to begin to think together and work together.

You are the people with the shared knowledge of what is needed in Canada. The Atlantic

Forest Centre would like to support you in bringing some ideas to fruition. Let us work

together