



Ontario
Association for
Community Living



Louise
Down Syndrome
Association of Ontario

JOINT PRESENTATION BY THE DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO
AND THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING ON BILL 4 TO
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 8, 1993
QUEEN'S PARK

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ISSUES OF CONCERN IN BILL 4:

1. Sections 15 and 16 (repeal of Hard-to-Serve): We support this revision.

new { 2. Section 8 and subsequent sections that remove reference to "trainable retarded child" and "trainable retarded pupil": We support these revisions. But we want further safeguards to make sure that the students will not continue to be treated as if they still bore the "TR" label, and that boards of education will not be allowed to invent euphemisms for the "TR" label, nor to sub-categorize students with developmental disabilities into two or more further classifications. For example, it is common practice in some boards to label students as EMR (Educable Mentally Retarded) or TMR, or Educational Support (ES) and Functional Life Skills (FLS). Such designations are not required to serve students with developmental disabilities; what is required is a commitment to quality educational programming based on individual needs.

3. Subsection 11(3) and sections 44 -47 regarding responsibilities of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board: We support the notion of returning the responsibility for educating students now served by the M.T.S.B. back to the local Metro boards. However, we believe that the resources to do so should also be reallocated to the local boards and that every measure be taken to ensure that these students become valued members of their local neighbourhood schools.

OUR QUESTIONS TO YOU:

1. In view of

= the public commitment to inclusion by the last 3 Ministers of Education

= their persistent promises to take the first steps towards inclusion by September, 1993

= the fact that Bill 4 is the first piece of legislation dealing with education in over 10 years

= the fact that an amendment to the Education Act to provide for inclusion was drafted by ARCH (Advocacy Resource Centre for the

Handicapped) and given to the Ministry in January, 1991

- the widespread public consultation on the Proposed Amendments to the Special Education Legislation in 1986 and the Consultation Paper on the Integration of Exceptional Students in 1992

- the policy memorandum on Integration now under consideration, and the meeting of stakeholder groups to discuss it in May, 1993

- the intervention of the Attorney General to support Alixe Hysert's right to inclusion in March, 1991, which resulted in a school board changing its approach to inclusive education,

we are now asking why Bill 4 is so limited in its scope. Why is this government dragging out the process instead of streamlining it? Why does Bill 4 not include provisions to entitle all students to quality education in regular classes in their home schools with appropriate supports to ensure a successful school experience?

2. When is this government going to bring its education policies into line with its Human Rights Code?

3. When is this government going to bring its education policies into line with the policies of the Ministry of Community and Social Services? (Deinstitutionalization and community living must be accompanied by acceptance in regular classrooms.)

4. What provisions is this government taking to ensure that resources are allocated on the basis of student need, not on the basis of student label? (In one board, special education resource teachers are allocated to schools on the basis of .2 extra teachers for each student in the school with the label "Functional Life Skills", a thinly disguised euphemism for "TMR". This kind of pressure on principals and parents is intolerable.)

5. When is the policy memorandum on integration going to be approved and circulated to schools? Will it guarantee that students will be entitled to attend their local, neighbourhood schools (the school the student would attend were it not for the designation "exceptional")?

6. When will legislation be passed to guarantee the entitlement of all students to quality education in their local neighbourhood schools in regular classes with supports to ensure success?

7. Will members of this committee recommend that the Attorney General redirect her lawyers to support Becky Till's right to inclusion?

8. What guidelines will accompany Bill 4 to ensure that school boards do not replace the "TR" label with any other label? What

procedures will be enacted to ensure that students formerly labelled "TR" will continue to receive adequate resource support? Will this government ensure that students formerly labelled "TR" will be welcomed into their local neighbourhood schools in regular classes?

9. Will guidelines be developed to accompany Bill 4 to guarantee that it will transfer FULL responsibility for students formerly served by the M.T.S.B. to the local Metro boards? What provisions will be made to transfer resource support directly to the local boards?

OUR RECOMMENDATION:

WE RECOMMEND THAT BILL 4 BE AMENDED TO INCLUDE THE ENTITLEMENT OF ALL STUDENTS TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN THEIR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOLS (the schools that they would be eligible to attend were it not for the designation "exceptional") IN REGULAR CHRONOLOGICALLY AGE APPROPRIATE CLASSES WITH SUFFICIENT SUPPORTS TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

SCHOOL INTEGRATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME (D.S.)

The terms "integration", "mainstreaming" and "inclusion" are currently used by different people and groups to mean different things. The Down's Syndrome Assoc. of Ontario tends to favour the word "integration", however, we consider the terms "mainstreaming" and "inclusion" to be synonymous.

SCHOOL INTEGRATION IS DEFINED AS:

- full-time placement in a regular, chronologically age appropriate class, in the neighbourhood school (the school the student would be attending if s/he were not labelled "exceptional") with whatever programme modifications and support services are required to meet the student's needs. (Programme modification may include short periods of withdrawal from the classroom to meet individual needs, but it most emphatically does not include placement in a special education class for students currently labelled Educable Mentally Retarded (Slow Learner), Trainable Mentally Retarded, or Multi-handicapped.)

THE GOALS OF SCHOOL INTEGRATION ARE:

- to ensure that students with D.S. receive a quality education to help them develop to their fullest potential academically, socially, spiritually, physically and emotionally.
- to ensure that students with D.S. are part of a community in which each student is valued as an integral member, and experiences a sense of belonging.
- to provide the foundation for equality of opportunity for people with D.S. as they enter adulthood.

SCHOOL INTEGRATION WORKS WHEN IT INCORPORATES THE FOLLOWING CONCEPTS AND ACTIONS:

- the belief, set in law, enforced in attitude and action, that students with D.S. are entitled to integrated education, ensured by due-process protections, as an equal benefit under the law.
- Boards of Education actively support integration by consulting meaningfully with the Special Education Advisory Committees and provide training in integration for school personnel and monitor the process.
- the school staff, from the principal to the caretaker, work to support the integration of the student into the social fabric of the school.

- the teacher takes responsibility for all of the students in his/her classroom, modelling respect for diversity and the principle that all students are equally valuable to the group.
- the programming for students with D.S. is based on a strengths and needs assessment rather than on traditional testing and labelling.
- teachers receive appropriate training, support and help to meet their students' needs.
- parents collaborate as respected members of a team working for the best interests of their child.

In the words of George Flynn, Director of Education for the Waterloo Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board, "Integration then means the process of making whole - of uniting different parts in a new totality - in this case a new community".

INTEGRATION IS

- ♦ All children learning together in the same schools and the same classrooms with the services and supports necessary so that they can be successful there.
- ♦ All children having their unique needs met in the same setting they would attend if they had no disability.
- ♦ All children participating in all facets of school life.
- ♦ An important part of every child's education program.
- ♦ Children with and without disabilities having opportunities (and support when needed) to interact and develop friendships with each other.
- ♦ Children who have disabilities attending their neighbourhood school (the same school they would attend if they did not have a labeled disability).
- ♦ A method of schooling which emphasizes collaboration by melding special and regular education resources (staff, materials, energy, etc.)
- ♦ Supporting regular education teachers who have children with disabilities in their classrooms.
- ♦ Children learning side by side even though they may have some different educational goals.
- ♦ Regular education teachers using innovative strategies for the varied learning styles of children in the class.
- ♦ Integrating related services (such as speech, physical therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral support, etc.) in the regular classroom.

INTEGRATION IS NOT

- ♦ Dumping children with disabilities into regular classes without the supports and services they need to be successful there.
- ♦ Trading off the quality of a child's education for integration or the intensive support services the child may need.
- ♦ Doing away with or cutting back on special education services.
- ♦ Ignoring each child's unique needs.
- ♦ All children having to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way.
- ♦ Expecting regular education teachers to teach children who have disabilities without the support they need to teach all children effectively.
- ♦ Sacrificing the education of typical children so that children with disabilities can be integrated.

WHAT DO PARENTS WANT FOR THEIR CHILDREN?

What parents want is really quite simple. They want equality for their children. In more specific terms this means they want:

1. The right to have their sons and daughters receive an education at public expense.
2. Continuity in schooling. Parents do not want their children tossed about like political footballs, from one school or program to another depending on where there is space or funding.
3. Real integration in the mainstream of school life. Parents of handicapped children do not want to feel that their children are attending public school on an experimental basis.. They want to feel they have the right to be there, that they are accepted as "regular" members of the school.
4. Parent integration. Parents of students with disabilities want to participate in school events and activities alongside parents of typical students. They do not want to be made to feel different, unusual, freakish.
5. Their sons and daughters to be treated as individuals and not as stereotypes of "the disabled".
6. Their children to be regarded as assets not burdens. No parent feels good about his or her child being cast as a burden on the taxpayer or as an impediment to other children's speed of learning. Parents of students with disabilities want other parents, schools, and the public to regard special education and mainstreaming as in the societal interest and not just in the interest of their children.
7. Open dialogue. Parents of students with disabilities want to have people ask them questions about disabilities and about their children's needs. They want people to be willing to learn about disabilities and about their sons and daughters who have disabilities. They do not want people holding them at arm's length with such seemingly kind, but actually hurtful, phrases as "I don't know how you do it. I could never do it."
8. A shared commitment to rooting out prejudice. Parents of disabled students do not generally feel that the mission of rooting out prejudice toward people with disabilities, what we have called "handicapism", belongs to all. The goal of equality for people with disabilities should be a goal everyone shares.