

Disability and Inclusion in Canadian Education

Policy, Procedure, and Practice

Helena Towle





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Executive Summary

COMPARED TO ADULTS without disabilities, adults with disabilities in Canada have lower levels of education, higher rates of unemployment, and lower household incomes in addition to challenges accessing affordable housing, health care, and transportation.¹ This is why children with disabilities must be given opportunities to learn in an accepting environment with their peers: so they can go just as far as their peers.

This report provides a general picture of special education policies across Canada. Its intended audience is mainly parents and other family members of children with disabilities. Because they are the primary advocates for their children, it is important for them to have as much information as possible about the policies supporting their children's right to education in every province and territory.

The right to education of a child with a disability is protected by multiple pieces of international legislation on human dignity and the need to respect diverse needs. However, Canada has no federal legislation protecting a child with a disability's right to inclusive education, because education comes under provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

Although every province and territory has some form of policy on inclusive education, they vary widely from one another in how they define inclusion, how they put inclusive education into practice, and how they fund it.

In the first section of the report the author provides an overview of three key themes of the inclusive education policy landscape of each province and territory. In the second section of the report, the findings of the policy

comparison along with a literature review and informant interviews form the basis for a number of recommendations to improve special education policy, implementation, and delivery:

- Ensure that education policy is inclusive, in accordance with international covenants.
- Provide teachers more resources and support.
- Provide adequate support to students with disabilities and their families both inside and outside the classroom.
- Improve stakeholder engagement and increase awareness of transitions from school to community life.

A detailed overview of inclusive education policy and funding in each province and territory is provided in Annex 2.

The author concludes that truly inclusive education needs to become a priority for all of Canada's communities, because educational outcomes for people with disabilities have a long-lasting impact on everyone. Investing in better understanding and supporting inclusive education will benefit us all, because it will create a more understanding society.

Residential institutions have been closed, so let's not keep students with disabilities separate and segregated any longer.

Introduction

History and Legal Context of Inclusive Education

MORE THAN FOUR decades ago, the *One Million Children* report called for Canadian society to stop isolating and segregating children with disabilities from their peers and families.² The authors argued that a successful education system required teacher training and supportive remedial service for both teachers and children with disabilities.³ At the time the report came out, 10–15% of the child population in Canada (between 840,000 and 1,260,000 children) had an emotional or learning disorder.

One Million Children also presented an in-depth discussion of attitudes and labels, arguing that the tensions often associated with the caring professions can affect the outcome of a child's experience in the classroom. A child with a disability should be treated as a whole person, not fragmented by labels and diagnoses. Instead, treatment and management should be vantage points of analysis, not stereotypes based on medical diagnoses.⁴

The right to education of children with disabilities is protected by several pieces of international legislation: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966),⁵ the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines the importance of social integration and its impact on the development of children with disabilities.⁶ The preamble to the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities recognizes “that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”⁷ Additionally, Section V states “the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”⁸

These pieces of international legislation outline human dignity and the need for respect, but they provide little to no guidance in the actual implementation of policy protecting vulnerable populations across all cultures and boundaries.

Nor does any guidance come from the federal level. Education in Canada is under provincial or territorial jurisdiction, which means that each child’s right to an education is protected by the province or territory in which they live. Although the policies that define special education in each province and territory are a vast improvement from the historical segregation and institutionalization that children with disabilities have historically experienced in Canada, they still have a long way to go before they are truly inclusive.

Two Canadian legal cases depict the evolution of how children with disabilities are perceived: *Eaton v. Brant County Board of Education* [1995] and *Moore v. British Columbia* [2012]. In both cases, parents advocated directly for their child’s right to education; in other words, the parent represented the child’s right to be treated equally in their school. For example, Emily Eaton’s parents did not agree with the Individual Placement Review Committee (IPRC) that required their daughter to move from a regular, inclusive classroom to a segregated classroom, which also meant moving her from the school that she attended with her siblings.

The Eaton case is significant because it demonstrates the extent of a school board’s authority to decide on the placement of children with disabilities. It started a conversation between school boards and parents about what serves as the “best interests” of their children with disabilities. For example, school boards must provide empirical evidence of the child’s experience in both a segregated classroom and a regular, inclusive classroom in order to override the parents’ and child’s versions of best interests. But the definition of “best interests” is still subjective.

Although the Supreme Court of Canada ultimately ruled that the placement of Emily Eaton in a special education class did not violate the equality

guarantee outlined by Section 1 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, it did conclude that each child should be considered individually.⁹

In *Moore v. British Columbia* [2012], Jeffrey Moore's parent-advocates filed a complaint to the British Columbia Human Rights Commission when they found that their child, diagnosed with dyslexia, was not provided with adequate schooling options after the school district closed the program Jeffrey attended without creating an alternative.¹⁰ The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the Moore family and required school districts to provide individualized programs based on appropriate assessment.

Both the Eaton and Moore cases stress individual programming and entitlements, reinforcing the notion that all children with disabilities are entitled to education. The Supreme Court of Canada made the distinction that what is effective classroom placement for one group of students with disabilities may *not* be effective for another group of students with disabilities.¹¹

The Eaton case recognized that disability is individual and contextual, shifting the focus away from group needs and focusing instead on the specific context of an individual.¹² In both the Eaton and Moore cases, school boards and special education tribunals made decisions in the best interest of each child. However, when it comes to practical application, not all schools are properly equipped to have children with disabilities in their classrooms.

Language and Concepts Around Disability

The type of model used to conceptualize disability has an impact on how special education policies are created and implemented. The medical model of disability defines the individual as having the challenge, while the social model of disability emphasizes the ways in which a person's experience of disability is shaped by their environment.

In other words, "the social model defines disability as the product of specific social and economic structures and aims at addressing issues of oppression and discrimination of disabled people, caused by institutional forms of exclusion and by cultural attitudes embedded in social practices."¹³ In contrast, the medical model of disability pathologizes the individual, constructing disability as a personal and familial tragedy that requires medical intervention.¹⁴ There is also a "cure" ideology associated with the medical model of disability – the idea that disability is an adversary to be overcome.¹⁵

Furthermore, there is a difference between "impairment" and "disability." Impairment could be having the use of only one leg, whereas disability

ity is the restriction of activity that is caused by having the use of only one leg and the exclusion from society that this creates.

Analyzing these models of disability is important to the discussion of special education because it influences perceptions of the special education system and participants in it.

Language, medical diagnoses, and definitions of disability are also constantly changing. The language used to describe disability and disability experience and the way “special needs” are defined varies greatly from one jurisdiction to another. The terms “disability,” “special needs,” “exceptionality,” and “intensive needs” are used interchangeably in various inclusive education policies across Canadian provinces and territories; however, this report will use “child(ren) or student(s) with a disability” to encompass all of the above terms.

Disability Rates in Canada

DISABILITY AND INCLUSIVE education are evolving concepts. Inclusive education practices require consistent monitoring and measures of accountability in order to determine their success. But it can be difficult to make meaningful comparisons about the experiences of disability and availability of services across Canada — not only is the severity of disability classified differently by each province and territory, there is also a dearth of current and/or comparable statistics that accurately represent the type, severity, age, and location of children with disabilities across the country. This following summarizes the information we *do* have about disability rates in Canada.

In the past, Statistics Canada has conducted two national surveys analyzing the experience of people with disabilities. The first of these was the Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) in 1991. HALS identified the number and distribution of people with disability residing in Canadian “health-related non-penal institutions” and the barriers they experienced. The second was the Participation Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), done most recently in 2006. PALS collected information on adults and children whose everyday activities are limited because of a condition or health problem.

In 2006, the disability rate was 14.3%, meaning that there were more than 4.4 million Canadians (about one in seven) with a disability. Disability rates vary across Canada’s provinces and territories, and also steadily increase with age. In 2006, 174,810 children between the ages of 5 and 14 across Can-

ada had an identified disability — a disability rate of 4.6%. The most common types of disability reported for children aged 5 to 14 were chronic conditions and learning and/or communication disabilities.¹⁶

From 2007 to 2012, Statistics Canada conducted surveys of headcount enrolments in public schools for special needs education across Canada. However, it cancelled this survey in 2014, citing concerns about the quality of data in CANSIM (Statistics Canada’s key socioeconomic database) and describing the area of special needs as complicated and difficult to survey.

In 2012, Statistics Canada conducted its Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), which only looked at Canadians aged 15 and over. The CSD reported that about 3.8 million (13.7%) of Canadians in this age group have disabilities. The rate of the disability among the 15–24 age group was 4.4%, with mental/psychological, pain, and learning disabilities as the most reported.¹⁷ However, because CSD and PALS used different categories of classification, their data sets are not comparable.

The Canadian Teachers’ Federation conducted a national survey of approximately 3,800 teachers of 9,900 classes at both English and French schools, which found the following:

- The average class size was 21.3 students.
- The average number of students with disabilities per class was 3.5 students (16.3% of the total students in the surveyed classrooms). The survey considered students who were formally identified as having behavioural challenges, mental or physical disabilities, gifted students, and ELL/FLL students. It did not include students with learning disabilities or those waiting to be identified.
- Of the surveyed classrooms, around 80% had at least one student formally identified as having a disability, and about 28% of the classes contained five or more students with disabilities.¹⁸

Overview of Inclusive Education Policies and Funding Across Canada

ALL OF CANADA'S provinces and territories have policies on inclusive education, but both the policies and the way they are implemented vary from one jurisdiction to another, as does the method used to fund education in general and special education in particular.

Because each province or territory is composed of unique populations with unique needs, it makes sense that, to some degree, their education policies would differ. However, when the same diagnostic label is used, access to services and programs that meet the needs of this identified label should also be the same, regardless of jurisdiction. Unfortunately, the variation in inclusive education policies, their implementation, and the way that they are funded means that, currently, a student with a disability in one part of the country may receive a considerably different amount of support than a student with the same type of disability in another region.

To illustrate this, the following section provides a snapshot of three policy themes, each a common concern of parents and other family members of children with disabilities: Individual Education Plans, funding allocation method, and transition planning. For a more comprehensive description of the inclusive education policy in each province and territory, please see Annex 2.

Individual Education Plans

While every province and territory defines “special needs” differently, most inclusive education policies generally describe the philosophy of inclusion and the tools that assist in implementing that philosophy.

One such tool is an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is used across Canada to make sure that schools design and implement special education programming to meet individual needs. Depending on the region it may be called an Individual Student Support Plan, Inclusion and Intervention Plan, Individual Program Plan, or Personalized Learning Program, but the basic aim is the same.

The IEP process in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Yukon calls for the student to first be assessed or identified in order to determine their strengths, and then for their education programs to be adjusted accordingly. In Saskatchewan, a formal assessment is not mentioned in the policy, but a “holistic” analysis of the student’s needs should be conducted to determine their needs in the classroom. In New Brunswick, the Personalized Learning Program (PLP) process notes that a student may receive services even if there is no identification through formal assessment, although it is expected that informal and/or formal assessment information be provided with a pupil’s referral to the resource teacher and/or school-based student services team for consideration.

In every province and territory, IEPs are enforced by the school principal, who must inform the student’s parents of their and their child’s rights.

Funding

The varying needs of students with disabilities must be supported financially; resources must be in place to ensure there are appropriately trained staff in inclusive classrooms (discussed more fully in the Recommendations section of this report).

Most, but not all, jurisdictions distribute funding in what is called a block formula model, usually based on student enrollment, where a block of funds is allocated by the province or territory to be used at local school boards’ discretion. The amount of funds — and therefore the number of staff that should be hired — is based on the number of students. This is the challenge of resource allocation: if there are not enough financial resources to

hire the appropriate number of staff, the educational program for the student with a disability may not be delivered.

The goal of this overview is to look at the different funding considerations used in each province and territory, not to compare financial money allotted to students as provinces and territories, because they do not allot money to special education in the same way:

- **British Columbia:** The province budgets grant funding for public education and allots this money according to a funding formula. These funds are used to operate the public K–12 system using data collected from school districts (such as the number of enrolled students). Additional funding for students with disabilities is provided according to a three-level system. For example, Level 3 funding includes diagnosed students who require intensive behavioural interventions or students with serious mental illness. All funding levels are distributed based on the type and severity of disability and the student’s full-time enrollment status.
- **Alberta:** The Minister of Education determines each school board’s education-operating budget using the province’s allocation formula. Differential funding is distributed in addition to this base funding, depending on the individual characteristics of each school board’s needs, such as inclusive education needs and First Nations, Metis, and Inuit student populations.
- **Saskatchewan:** School division operating funding in Saskatchewan is allocated through a K–12 funding distribution model based on projected enrollment and school data. School divisions (or boards) are responsible for sharing Supports for Learning (SFL) funding based on student-support needs.
- **Manitoba:** Like British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, the province of Manitoba provides a base layer of funding for operations. Each school division (or board) provides a unique continuum of supports for students with disabilities. Additional sources of funding for students with special needs are provided to each school division in the form of Level 2 and Level 3 grants.
- **Ontario:** Ontario funds education on a per-pupil basis. The various grants included in the province’s education funding formula determine the amount of money that each school board receives.

Funding categories include basic funding (for general costs, such as staff salaries and textbooks); unique student needs (ESL programs, special education); and funds for building maintenance or new schools.

- **Québec:** Section 275-277 of Quebec's *Education Act* states that funding shall be distributed among school boards in an equitable way. Each school must have their budget approved by their school board, specifically, the exact financial resources allocated to students with social maladjustments, handicaps, or learning disabilities. Quebec allocates base funding for organizational services (for example, administration of schools) and educational services, which takes into consideration the needs of the specific school board's population.
- **New Brunswick:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development uses a direct funding model for programs and services offered in both Anglophone and Francophone school districts. The amount of funding received for special education programs and services is based on enrollment in both types of school districts.
- **Nova Scotia:** In addition to a program formula-funding grant, a special education formula-funding grant (targeted funding) for students with disabilities is allotted to each school board in Nova Scotia. A standard resource grid is applied against the number of enrolled students to determine the amount of funding.
- **Prince Edward Island:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development allocates funding using a formula based on the needs of the registered student population; this is divided between high-needs students and general-needs students. School boards (both English and French) are required to allocate staff and resources equally among schools.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** Funding in Newfoundland and Labrador is applied directly to school boards. Base funding is allocated to teacher and education staff positions based on student enrollment. An additional student support services allocation is meant to provide the resources for the development, implementation and evaluation of programs for students with disabilities, including salaries, supplies, transportation, etc.

- **Nunavut:** The Department of Education in Nunavut uses a block model to allocate funding to each District Education Authority to meet students' needs.
- **Northwest Territories:** School funding contributions are calculated based on enrollment data to cover annual operating and maintenance costs. This funding allows education authorities to provide support systems and services to enable all students to be included as full participants in regular, age-appropriate classes in their home communities.
- **Yukon:** Section 178 of Yukon's *Education Act* states that each school board shall receive sufficient funding to meet its approved annual operations. A base allocation is granted on the basis of overall school enrollment. For example, 1.5 educational assistants are provided for every 261 students. Superintendents and principals of schools will consider the base administrative needs of their school in addition to the needs of their enrolled students with disabilities.

Transition Planning

As children with disabilities grow older, parents may become increasingly concerned about their post-school lives and their future in the community as adults. It is in both parents' and students' best interests to plan ahead – in some cases as early as grade nine¹⁹ – for the transition from school to community life. Transition planning varies from one province to another because the age at which a student must leave school is not the same everywhere. For example, in Saskatchewan a student can stay in high school until age 22, while in PEI a student cannot stay past age 20.

Although all the provinces and territories note that transition plans should be incorporated into a student's Individual Education Plan, transition planning is handled differently in each area. Transition planning is important. Creating and implementing a transition-planning policy, or at least a process around transitioning, and ensuring that it is followed by everyone involved is the surest path to creating positive outcomes for students with disabilities, such as affordable housing and potential employment opportunities.

The following overview outlines whether or not each province or territory has a separate transition planning policy, or where it is incorporated into a more general inclusive education policy or other ministry resource:

- **British Columbia:** Transition planning is addressed in multiple documents outlining the province’s view that this is a crucial time. The Department of Education has developed a *Cross Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs*.²⁰
- **Alberta:** Transition planning is addressed in Chapter 8 of the Learning and Teaching Resources Branch’s document *Individualized program planning (IPP): ECS to grade 12*.²¹
- **Saskatchewan:** The province does not have a specific policy on transition planning, but a section in its *Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures for Functional Integrated Programs* from the Ministry of Education addresses transition planning.²²
- **Manitoba:** Manitoba has an interdepartmental protocol on transition planning called *Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community*.²³
- **Ontario:** The Ministry of Education requires transition planning to be a part of the Individual Education Plan for every student who has one, regardless of whether they have been identified as having a disability by the school board’s Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). The Ministry has also published a resource called *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide*.²⁴
- **Québec:** Transition planning is addressed in a document called *Guide for Supporting a Successful School Transition*, which is a joint initiative of the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés, and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux du Québec.²⁵
- **New Brunswick:** The Department of Education’s Educational Programs and Services Branch has created a *Resource for the Transition of Students with Exceptionalities From School to Work or Secondary Education and Adult Life*.²⁶
- **Nova Scotia:** Transition planning is considered even if the student is not identified as having a disability or does not have an Individual Program Plan. The Department of Education’s Student Services section created the document *Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years through Adult Life*.²⁷

- **Prince Edward Island:** Transition planning is addressed in a document called *Secondary Transition Planning: A Framework for Successful Transition Planning for Young People with Special Needs*.²⁸
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** The province has no specific transition planning policy, however, the subject is addressed in a document by the Department of Education's Division on Student Support Services called *Programming for Individual Needs: Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*.²⁹
- **Nunavut:** The territory does not have a specific transition planning policy, but the subject is discussed in the policy *Foundation for Inclusive Education Inuglugijaittuq in Nunavut Schools*.³⁰
- **Northwest Territories:** The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment covers transition planning in its document *Individual Education Plans: Guidelines for Development*.³¹
- **Yukon:** While there is no specific policy on transition planning, it is addressed in detail in the Department of Education's *Student Support Services Parent Handbook*.³²

Recommendations

FOR EDUCATION POLICY to be fully and truly inclusive, it must address the diverse needs of *all* participants in the education system, including groups who have been historically disadvantaged.

This principle of inclusion is well established at the international level. Article 23.1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states: Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.³³ Article 24.2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities asks that all parties who signed the convention demonstrate the following with respect to education:

- “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.
- Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the community in which they live.
- Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided.
- Persons with disabilities receive the support required within the *general education system*, to facilitate their effective education.

- Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.”³⁴

Many provinces and territories have not updated their special education policies in over 10 years; consequently, not all inclusive education policies are up-to-date with current educational standards, or with the international covenants of which Canada is a signatory.

The following recommendations are suggested in order to address the ways in which students with disabilities have been historically disadvantaged by the current education system; update existing policy where necessary; and change the way disability is understood by special education policies and in schools and communities across Canada.

Ensure that Education Policy is Inclusive, in Accordance with International Covenants

The two above-quoted international covenants — to which Canada is a signatory — provide us with a useful measure of accountability at the federal level on the right of each child with a disability, regardless of their location, to an inclusive education program. Within this federal frame, provincial and territorial governments are responsible for ensuring that their populations have their needs met in accordance with these international covenants.

So-called inclusive education policies — including practices around standardized assessment — that leave space for classroom segregation and separate programming divide students with disabilities from their peers. This reinforces a lack of understanding about diverse needs that will likely be perpetuated by future generations. This is not progress.

Furthermore, inclusive education policies are still largely dictated by expectations of “normal” human development,³⁵ and most are still largely categorical in their implementation. This needs to be re-examined.

This report acknowledges that integration is at all times beneficial; however, there are challenges that need to be addressed. All students and their parents or guardians are entitled to the resources and supports they need to ensure their child has the opportunity to be integrated into the education program of their choosing. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Eliminate opt-out mechanisms

A classroom that is truly inclusive is one where peers from all types of backgrounds have an opportunity to interact and feel a sense of group belonging and acceptance. This type of inclusion is important to a student's development and sense of worth, which in turn improves academic achievement.³⁶

Inclusive classrooms are not just better for students with disabilities. Children in classrooms that include students with disabilities demonstrate stronger communication skills and leadership skills, are more accepting of diverse needs, and may show stronger reading and math skills than their peers in classrooms without children with disabilities present.³⁷ A recent paper found that when inclusive practices were successfully implemented, other students in the classroom were more likely to be accepting and empathetic towards the needs of students with disabilities. The students with disabilities did not hinder their fellow students' learning, an often-cited concern with true inclusion philosophy.³⁸

However, inclusion varies from policy to practice. There appear to be three types of so-called inclusion happening in classroom across Canada: "inclusion" in which students with disabilities participate in the class; "inclusion" in which students with disabilities participate in a classroom but are pulled out at certain times; and "inclusion" in which students with disabilities are together in their own separate classroom.

Currently, most provincial and territorial policies have an "opt-out" option. In other words, a part of the policy says that if the school feels it has made exhaustive attempts to include a student with disabilities in the classroom without success, it may change the child's education plan and move the student to another classroom or school for special needs. As long as options for alternative programs and segregated classrooms are available, school staff may recommend placing students with disabilities into these classrooms, especially when an educator believes that the support that they are providing is inadequate³⁹ and that better support exists elsewhere.

Removing opt-out options and operating non-categorically, as Prince Edward Island currently does,⁴⁰ creates less of an opportunity for the separation of students and services, and more of an incentive for classrooms to be truly inclusive.

Change the format of general student assessments

With some exceptions, student assessment models are generally normative and designed with the majority in mind as a measure of accountability. But as the education system struggles to face the challenges of adapting to meet the diverse needs of students, it is counter-productive to, at the same time, require students to meet prescribed outputs on standardized assessments.⁴¹

Students who are newcomers to Canada or whose first language is not English and students who are socioeconomically marginalized are disadvantaged and particularly poorly served by standardized assessment mechanisms, especially when compared to some of their peers.⁴² The inadequacy of standardized assessment is further compounded when considering students with disabilities. Classroom-based assessments are to be designed by teachers; the diverse accessibility of these assessments is to support student learning and as a result they are preferable to standardized options. For this reason, forms of authentic assessment that recognize the diverse needs of the entire student body, including students with disabilities, should be pursued and prioritized.

Reduce class sizes

For classrooms to be truly inclusive, class size must be considered in conjunction with class composition and students' diverse needs. Researchers have found that students who have previously been disadvantaged in the school setting make more progress – which carries positively into later grades – when their primary-school class sizes are smaller.⁴³

Class size reduction was ranked as the highest spending priority in seven of the eight Canadian Teachers' Federation surveys conducted between 1995 and 2008. In the early school years, it is recognized that the benefits of smaller classes are greater when class sizes are reduced to 20 or less.⁴⁴ In a survey of about 3,800 teachers representing 9,900 classes in English and French schools across Canada, English schools (including those with French immersion) had an average class size of almost 22 students while in French schools the average class size was just over 19 students.⁴⁵ Interview respondents noted that teachers could be better supported by having more resources available to reduce class size and to give them more time for preparation.

Provide Teachers More Resources and Support

In their recent study on perceptions of the concept of inclusion, Thompson et al. found that, although teachers universally endorsed inclusion, they were frustrated by the different perspectives held by their teachers' associations and the Ministry of Education in their province or territory on how to *implement* inclusion policy.⁴⁶ Teacher federation respondents referred to the uneven implementation of policy and discrepancies between the ways that different levels of the education system (the Ministry, school boards, within schools) deliver services. For example, according to one respondent, changing a classroom from segregated to inclusive can lead to confusion for both students and educators if it is not well supported.

An overwhelming majority of the interview respondents noted a strong disconnect between the philosophy behind inclusion policies and their everyday classroom implementation. Regardless of the specific concern, which included long wait times and lack of services for students with disabilities and their families, and lack of support for the teaching role, respondents used the term “resources” — both in and out of classroom — in reference to all of these situations.

Interview respondents cited a general lack of support; some specifically mentioned a need for more human resource support. Respondents felt capacity-building for education staff was necessary to create the expertise and confidence needed to address more diverse classrooms. It was noted that expertise in this area rested with a small number of staff, and that there was therefore a need to build capacity in more individuals.

Work with teachers to ensure they have the training they need to support students with disabilities

Because classroom teachers create the in-school context for learning, they are key to student success. Teachers may only be involved in a student's life for as little as a year, but if the student is not adequately supported during that time, there may be long-term negative repercussions. This is especially true of inclusive education.

All of the interview respondents noted the significant role of educators, but if most teachers feel unprepared teaching to the increasing diversity of their classrooms, how can they adequately support their students? And if students are not able to learn certain skills, they may be unable to make up

for this discrepancy later, as there is an age-based limit for how long they can stay in the education system.

When asked about the types of support they were looking for, almost all the respondents identified their need for more expertise, understanding, and training to be better equipped for teaching students with disabilities. Others expressed a desire for more professional development on how to implement special education programs, to help them build capacity and increase their confidence in this area.⁴⁷

A recurring theme in their responses was the idea of teachers learning through real and ongoing hands-on training throughout their entire careers rather than attending theoretical workshops (which is the main form of professional development currently available to practicing teachers). An analysis of the research literature concluded that while training on inclusion for teachers completing their schooling is positive, it does not prepare them for real-life classrooms because its focus is too theoretical and not practical enough.⁴⁸ Increasing the amount of practical training may help address teachers' concerns about building capacity and confidence.

One very tangible effect of the labeling and stigmatization of students with disabilities is the extra administrative work it creates for teachers. The teachers in Crawford and Porter's study on supporting teachers in the delivery of inclusive education saw this additional work as a source of stress — one that could easily be minimized by ensuring classroom teachers have extra preparation time and other resources required to better support students with disabilities.⁴⁹

Use a collaborative approach

Rather than seeing students with disabilities as having a deficiency, truly inclusive education policy would give teachers the tools and resources to recognize the positive “abilities” of students to learn when provided with the appropriate accommodations or modifications. In their paper on teachers' strategies for including children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream classrooms, Lindsay et al. found that an interdisciplinary-team approach led to more successful outcomes.⁵⁰ When the teachers in the study collaborated with educational assistants, occupational therapists, and resource teachers to implement inclusive learning strategies, they felt more confident in their approach, a finding that was echoed by interview respondents. Here, too, teachers and school teams need adequate resources and support.

Operate non-categorically

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a collaborative approach to instruction that promotes participation in and access to the curriculum for all learners, including those with diverse needs. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines universal design as the following: “the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.”⁵¹

This model has a proven positive impact on students’ self-concepts and their degree of inclusion and engagement (students who are excluded often become disengaged).⁵² Using the UDL means a classroom is operating “non-categorically” — this means there are fewer labels differentiating students and their needs from one another, which helps ensure true inclusion. An example of a UDL approach is to share the same information that is being taught in class using digital text or materials to increase the accessibility of information to the students; for example, closed-captioning text on a YouTube video.

Provide Adequate Support to Students With Disabilities and Their Families, Inside and Outside of the Classroom

The persistent lack of “resources” — broadly defined — also came up repeatedly when interview respondents described their concerns about the system as a whole and how services were delivered to students with disabilities and to their families.

Respondents noted the lack of financial support, both in general and in specific application to the costs associated with assessing children with disabilities, and how services are not provided until a child has received a diagnostic assessment. Also identified was the idea of systemic support and the challenge of departments competing for shared resources — again, specifically with regard to the backlog of referrals for the diagnostic assessments that are required in order for children with disabilities to begin receiving services.

Reduce wait-times for diagnostic assessments

Under the system currently operating in almost every province and territory, children with disabilities cannot begin to receive the programs and services they need until they have been diagnosed with a categorical disability to

show that they are eligible for those services. Since there is often a backlog of referrals for diagnostic assessments, children with disabilities and their families face long wait times for services. This problem would be eliminated if the education system were to shift to operating non-categorically, but in the interim more resources should be allocated to reduce wait-times for students with disabilities to be assessed and diagnosed.

Wait-times are also affected by location. Students who live in rural areas generally are not assessed in a timely manner. Further, the amount of funding that is allocated, whether by block method or per-pupil, is not always enough to cover for the number of students waiting to be diagnosed in order to receive services that will require specific funding.

Ensure adequate supports and services are in place after diagnosis

Too often, parents are asked to remove their child with a disability from school for short periods of time because the school does not have the appropriate resources and supports in place for the child to attend for a full day. Along with the other types of support (discussed in previous recommendations), consistent language to match the diagnostic labels of disability, and accountable financial resource allocation to provide enough staff with training are some of the steps required to keep all students with disabilities (as well as those who are still in the process of being identified as having a disability) in school all day, every day, with their peers.

Consistent language around the diagnostic labels used to describe disability is needed across school boards as it has a direct impact on the allocation of resources and funding for students' needs. For example, in British Columbia, boards give money to schools attended by students with disabilities. The amount of money given to the school is dependent on the type of disability that the child has; for example, the "Level 3" funding category includes students who require intensive behavioural interventions or students with serious mental illness (in 2014, 7,093 students were enrolled and diagnosed at a rate of \$9,200/FTE student).

Special education funding is allocated by either block-funding or census-data funding across Canada. Block funding is a set amount allocated by the provincial or territorial budget to education services each year then distributed to the school boards to be assigned to schools based on the needs of each.

Ontario is in the process of building on its census-data funding allocation to make it flexible enough to recognize the differences among school

boards. This means that the statistical data used to inform funding decisions can be used to calculate the probability of students having different disabilities and impairments. Ontario's new funding model is to be accompanied by the Special Education Statistical Prediction Model, which will include information about parents' education, recent-immigrant status, median income, whether a family is below the low-income cut-off, unemployment, Aboriginal status, and whether the student and their family have moved recently. This model would provide a more complete picture of families' circumstances in addition to their child's disability, and a more comprehensive overview of their funding needs.

Improve Stakeholder Engagement in Inclusion Philosophy and Increase Awareness of Transitions From School to Community Life

Improve stakeholder engagement

Many provinces, such as British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan have policies in place that engage the different ministries that provide services to children with disabilities and their families. By having multiple ministries involved, families should (in theory) receive a continuum of disability services and programming throughout their child's lifetime. Although the record-keeping involved may present certain challenges, and some provinces have more successful outcomes than others, better communication among the ministries delivering services would provide a more complete picture of a person's disability needs overall and should help improve service delivery.

School advisory councils are part of every provincial/territorial education policy. Since parents are the key advocates for children with disabilities, their participation in these councils is desirable. However, it is often impossible for them to attend council meetings because of the time commitment demanded by their child's full-time and often complex care. Possible short-term solutions to this problem could include online surveys or remote participation in meetings.

While school advisory councils are undoubtedly an important resource for community stakeholder engagement, their impact is uncertain with respect to whether or not parents' opinions about inclusion of students with disabilities are being heard at their child's school. All parent and school councils should make measuring their impact a priority.⁵³ Ideas for doing so include determining the value of the council's input and tracking any tan-

gible changes that result from council engagement. Acting on these ideas should be a priority for all provinces and territories.

Cross-district communication is another area that requires improvement. For example, in Ontario, a student's Individual Placement Review Committee (IPRC) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) can be transferred *within* the same school board, but not *across* school boards.⁵⁴ This is unnecessary: the definition/diagnosis of disability is standard and determined by an outside authority and therefore holds the same meaning and weight regardless of where a child is located in the country. There is no reason that IPRCs and IEPs should not be transferable across school boards or across provinces and territories.

Facilitate a smoother transition to adulthood

Parents of children with disabilities often worry about what will happen to their children after they finish school and move into the community. These worries were echoed by interview respondents, who cited the lack of community services for adults with disabilities, and said they were concerned that the current transition times dictated by provincial or territorial education policies may not be long enough if they are not implemented properly.

Most provinces and territories have specific policies to guide the transition process, specifically checklists and timelines for school teams and parents to follow to ensure that the transition is successful. This report recommends that, if no specific policy exists, the province or territory create a separate policy about transition planning with supporting documents to better inform parents and school teams. For example, British Columbia has a transition plan process for a child with special needs involving multiple ministries (the Ministry of Health Services and the Ministry of Housing and Social Development in addition to the Ministry of Education). This speaks to an awareness of how challenging it can be for people with special needs to move from school to community life.

The type of transition a person with a disability has from childhood to adulthood has a lifelong effect, and the positive impact of the successful transition from school to the community is immeasurable. The 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability indicated that 45% of 25-to-64-year-old survey participants identified as having a disability or impairment before completing post-secondary school said that their disability or impairment influenced their choice of courses or careers. A little over a third (34%) reported that they took fewer courses/subjects; 30% reported that it took them longer to

achieve their present level of education; 30% did not continue their studies; and 23% reported that their education was interrupted for long periods. About 40% indicated that people avoided or excluded them at school, and 27% experienced bullying.⁵⁵

Participation in the workforce is also affected by the type and severity of disability. For instance, 29% of people between 15 and 64 with mild disabilities and 68% of people with very severe disabilities reported that they were not working.⁵⁶ These results underscore why investing in a successful transition into community life is so important.

Conclusion

THE MAJORITY OF special education policies in place across the country are more than 10 years old. While some provinces are beginning the process of conducting reviews or reports assessing their special education approaches, the fact remains that many of these policies are out of step with current practices around inclusive education.

As long as they are not fully included in the education system, it is students with disabilities and their families who will pay the price. Compared to adults without disabilities, adults with disabilities in Canada have lower levels of education, higher rates of unemployment, and lower household incomes, and face challenges accessing affordable housing, health care, and transportation.⁵⁷ It is time for *all* provinces and territories to revisit inclusive education policies and make the necessary investments to make them truly inclusive.

Residential institutions have been closed. Let's not keep children with disabilities separate and segregated any longer.

Annex 1: Methodology

THREE METHODS WERE used to gather data for this report about Canadian children with disabilities and their participation in the inclusive school system in their province or territory.

The first method was a literature review completed to conceptualize the existing research and recognize current trends, as inclusive education philosophies and practices are in evolution. With a few exceptions, the literature reviewed was from the year 2000 onwards. Key word and idea searches were conducted on Google and Google Scholar; key data was gathered from provincial and territorial government websites, peer-reviewed journals, chapters in books, and teacher association or federation publications. Literature gathered on the history of inclusion in Canada, current inclusive education practices by teachers and administrators, and perceptions of inclusion from parents' perspectives provide a philosophical context to this report.

The second method used was a review of provincial and territorial websites⁵⁸ to answer the following questions:

- How is inclusion defined?
- Does the province or territory have an explicit policy about inclusion or special education?
- How is education funded in the province or territory?
- What are the approximate monetary amounts allotted to special needs students (if data is available)?

The final method was key informant interviewing. Interviews were conducted with teacher federations/associations and their representatives. An inductive approach was used. In other words, data was collected and then a theory was developed and supported by the results of the key informant interviews. Interview participants were sought from all provinces and territories. They were recommended by contacts in the education system or sought through cold calling or emailing. All nine participants stated their consent to participate in the report and were invited to verify their answers prior to analysis. Interviews were conducted over the phone using a tape recorder and then transcribed, except for two conducted by email.

A thematic analysis was conducted to code the qualitative information. The themes analyzed were policy practice and interpretation, parental concerns presented to teachers, teacher concerns, type of disability challenges in daily school attendance, and interpretations of teacher needs. This method of analysis is interpretive, seeking connections between participants' responses and explaining them; however, a restriction of this method is that research results cannot be replicated.

Another research limitation of this report is that the information consulted for it is only as complete as could be garnered from interviews and from various documents located through website searches. Informant interviews were helpful in identifying other potential sources, but it is entirely possible that some sources may have gone undiscovered.

Annex 2: Inclusive Education and Funding Across Canada

British Columbia

How inclusion is defined

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S MINISTRY of Education defines inclusion as follows:

Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.⁵⁹

Policy overview

The province's special education policy is aimed at ensuring that students have equitable access to learning and opportunities to achieve the goals of their educational programs. With respect to integrated settings, a child with special needs should be placed into classrooms with other students who do not have special needs and are of a similar age, unless the education team determines that a separate setting is determined to be a more appropriate setting.

Parents are expected to be involved at all stages of their child's education planning and goals; this expectation is managed by the *Special Needs Students Order M150/89*.⁵⁹ The *Individual Education Plan Order M638/95* sets out the requirements for school boards to design and implement individual education plans for students with special needs.⁶¹ *The Ministerial Order 149/89* defines the specific health support services available for students in schools, for example a board shall provide speech and language therapy services for students whose learning is affected adversely by oral communication challenges.⁶²

A review of special education in British Columbia published by the province's Ministry of Education⁶³ recommended that school boards ensure that each student's educational program is based on the actual educational needs of that student and not the funding allotted to them. The review also recommended that teachers should have to take at least one course on special needs as part of their certification, since teachers are the pivotal role in the successful implementation of inclusion and that implementation would be hampered if teachers were not prepared to teach diverse students.

British Columbia outlines a transition planning process for a child with special needs involving multiple ministries, for example, the Ministry of Health Services and the Ministry of Housing and Social Development in addition to the Ministry of Education. This speaks to an awareness of how challenging it can be for people with special needs to move from school to community life.

How funding is allocated

The province budgets an amount of grant funding for public education and allots this money according to a funding formula. This funding operates the public K–12 system using data collected from school districts, such as the number of enrolled students.⁶⁴

British Columbia's 2014–15 education budget assigned 79% of funds to a basic allocation in the form of individual funding for every full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled by school type. Standard schools receive \$6,900

per student, Continuing Education schools receive \$6,900 per school-age FTE student, Alternate Schools receive \$6,900 per school-age FTE student and Distributed Learning Schools receive \$5,851 per school-age FTE student. The basic enrollment funding total for 2014–15 was \$3,603,157,130; the total operating grants for the province were \$4,642,747,085 (this includes all supplementary funding.)⁶⁵

Unique student funding (for students with disabilities) makes up 12% of BC's education budget. This funding is separated into the following levels:⁶⁶

- **Level 1** (total funding: \$21,045,000): includes students with multiple needs who are dependent handicapped or deaf/blind; 575 students are enrolled and diagnosed at a rate of \$36,600/FTE student.
- **Level 2** (total funding: \$328,430,100): includes students with moderate/profound intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or chronic health impairments, visual impairments, autism spectrum disorder, or students who are deaf or hard of hearing; 17,947 students are enrolled and diagnosed at a rate of \$18,300/FTE student.
- **Level 3** (total funding: \$65,255,600): includes students who require intensive behavioural interventions or students with serious mental illness; 7,093 students are enrolled and diagnosed at a rate of \$9,200/FTE student.

The remaining 9% of the education budget is allocated for uniqueness-of-district factors, such as rural schools and funding protection to buffer the effects of declining student enrollment.⁶⁷

Alberta

How inclusion is defined

Alberta defines inclusive education as follows:

the opportunity to be fully and meaningfully integrated into a typical learning environment. Inclusion also refers to an attitude of acceptance of, and belonging for, all students such that they feel valued as part of the school family.⁶⁸

It defines the inclusive education system as follows:

a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for, all students. Inclusive education in Alberta means a value based approach to accepting responsibility for all students. It also means that all students will have equitable opportunity to be included in the typical learning environment or program of choice.⁶⁹

Policy overview

Alberta's definitions of inclusion have been noted as being problematic because the first, inclusive education, is standard with other definitions of inclusion around the world while the second definition, the inclusive education system, is interpreted by some school districts as meaning that segregated settings are acceptable so long as placement in an inclusive setting was considered first.⁷⁰ This potentially segregating interpretation has not been challenged by the Ministry of Education, which means that, in practice, segregation is in place.

Despite being Canada's wealthiest province, Alberta faces similar challenges to other provinces and territories when it comes to policy implementation. It has had difficulty putting into place the recommendations made by its own government's review of special education policies.⁷¹ The *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools*, released in September 2014, notes that most teachers do not know or have time to review any of the few structural changes that the department has implemented as part of their strategic directions.⁷²

McGhie-Richmond et al.'s study⁷³ examining teacher interpretations of support and inclusive education operation found differences in the way policy is implemented between urban and rural areas of Alberta. Teachers who taught elective subjects told the researchers that they do not feel they need specialized training in inclusive practices, which McGhie-Richmond et al. noted was a cause for concern because the success of inclusive education success relies on collaboration and teamwork.⁷⁴ The province has a decentralized service delivery model that is designed to respond to community needs and priorities; however, because regional authorities (school districts) determine which services will be offered, not all services are available in all regions of the province.⁷⁵

How funding is allocated

In Alberta, basic funding for instructional purposes is provided for all students from kindergarten through Grade 12, including students with disabilities. School boards are expected to allocate funding for children with special needs based on the needs of individual school populations. Additional funding is provided to children with disabilities who are not in a regular education program. For additional funding to be provided to children with complex disabilities, they must be assessed and have an Individualized Program Plan in place.⁷⁶

Alberta funding for the public education system comes from two sources. In 2014, total operating funding for K–12 was \$4.4 billion (68%) from general government revenues and \$2.1 billion (32%) from education property taxes. Funding for K–12 has increased from \$4.8 billion in the 2004/2005 fiscal year to \$7.4 billion in 2014/2015 — a 54% increase. During the same period, student enrolment increased by 12%.⁷⁷

Differential funding is distributed in addition to base funding, depending on the individual characteristics of the school board's needs, such as inclusive education needs and First Nations, Metis, and Inuit rates of the student population. In 2014, the inclusive education portion of the budget received a 2% grant rate increase, bringing total support for this area to more than \$402 million.

The Equity of Opportunity Grant, \$113 million in 2014, is used to provide services to rural schools and their students. Additionally, the Regional Collaborative Service Delivery Grant, \$61 million in 2014, supports families who have children with complex needs.⁷⁸ Alberta also has a school jurisdiction allocation formula for children with disabilities:

Inclusive education = amount of supports and services allocation + differential modifiers allocation + program equity allocation + additional per-student allocation.⁷⁹

Saskatchewan

How inclusion is defined

Saskatchewan defines inclusion as “the commitment to educate children in inclusive schools.” It considers inclusive schools to be the following:

schools that embody effective principles and practices that coordinate and unify educational programs and supports in order that all children, including those with diverse needs, belong and can learn effectively.⁸⁰

Policy overview

Saskatchewan has a cross-departmental policy framework aimed at supporting children with disabilities and their families through services. The result is a disjointed delivery of services that places the burden on parents to ensure their children receive the services that they require.⁸¹ In other words, if a child's needs are complex and require services from multiple departments, the onus is on the parent or family to ensure that each department has the correct information about the child.

The province identifies students with disabilities as “students requiring intensive supports.” These supports, whether they are determined to be extra staff or assistive technology, are determined by creating an Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP), a written document outlining the supports, strategies, and interventions necessary to achieve student success. The provincial policy *Actualizing a Needs-Based Model to Support Student Achievement* focuses on a needs-based model to support all types of learners. The premise of this service delivery model is that a student's needs are more important than a categorical label of disability for determining the programming and supports they need. Intervention strategies are classroom and school-based and can be both individual and group-focused.⁸²

How funding is allocated

School division operating funding in Saskatchewan is allocated through a K–12 funding distribution model, with education property taxes and the province's General Revenue Fund as the two major sources of revenue. The total funding to school divisions in 2014–15 was \$1.82 billion.⁸³ The base instruction funding for 2014–15 was \$759.5 million dollars, or 42.2% of total education funding in the province. This funding is allocated to boards of education for basic instructional services, such as the salaries of classroom and school-based teachers, non-school-based instructional support (e.g. specialists), and administrative staff (e.g. principals).⁸⁴

Saskatchewan's supports for learning (SFL) subcomponent of instructional funding in 2014–15 was \$276.6 million dollars – 15.4% of total provincial education funding. This subcomponent is allocated for salaries of teachers and professionals that provide programming and services to ensure that all students have equal access to an inclusive education environment. Funding is based on projected enrollment and school data. Instead,

school divisions (or boards) are responsible for sharing SFL funding based on student-support needs.⁸⁵

Manitoba

How inclusion is defined

Manitoba defines inclusion as follows:

a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

It defines “inclusive schools” as follows:

Inclusive schools provide a learning environment that is accessible to all students as a place to learn, grow, be accepted and enjoy all the benefits of citizenship.

In an inclusive school, all students are provided with the supports and opportunities they need to become participating students and members of their school communities. Collaboration among home, school and community is imperative. Core values and beliefs include:

- All students can learn, in different ways and at different rates.
- All students have individual abilities and needs.
- All students want to feel they belong and are valued.
- All students have the right to benefit from their education.⁸⁶

Policy overview

Although Manitoba did not have a specific policy on inclusion until 2001, the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities proposed a new province-wide strategy to improve supports for children with disabilities.⁸⁷ Manitoba

is family-centered in its approach to policy of children with disabilities, and this area is the responsibility of three ministries: Health; Education, Training and Youth; and Family Services. Although the involvement of multiple ministries in the delivery of supports and services to children with disabilities and their families is unavoidable, if proper accountability measures are not in place, children can “fall between the cracks.”

Manitoba’s *Amendment to the Public Schools Act: Appropriate Educational Programming Regulations 155/2005* was created to guide policy to ensure that children with disabilities receive the services and supports they require. The following standards and regulations cover how students are assessed, Individual Education Plans, school-related activities, transitions into school, discipline, and dispute-resolution processes:

- *Appropriate Educational Programming Regulations 155/2005*
- *Education Administration Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 156/2005*
- *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services*
- *Appropriate Educational Programming: A Handbook for Student Services*
- *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: A Formal Dispute Resolution Process*

Sokal and Sharma’s study on teacher’s attitudes and perceptions on inclusive education in Manitoba found that teacher confidence explained teacher efficacy; and exposure to teacher training created teacher confidence, which explained attitudes and concerns about inclusion.⁸⁸ The teachers interviewed for this study said that classroom practices and policy decisions that address teacher workload and resources must work together if they are to address teacher concerns.⁸⁹ The study concluded that the Manitoba Teachers Society’s offering professional development opportunities on the Three-Block Model of the Universal Design for Learning (an approach to instruction that promotes participation in and access to the curriculum for all learners) are making this model more accessible for implementation by both urban and rural teachers.⁹⁰

How funding is allocated

Like Saskatchewan and Alberta, the province of Manitoba provides a base layer of funding for operations. Each school division provides a unique continuum of supports for students with disabilities. Additional sources of fund-

ing for students with special needs are provided to each school division in the form of Level 2 and Level 3 grants.

Funds are drawn from both the provincial treasury and the education support levy to support the public school finance model. The total operating budget for the 2014–15 school year was \$2,145,702,640. This amount includes funding for regular instruction, student support services, adult learning centres, community education and services, divisional administration, instructional and other support services, transportation of pupils, operations and maintenance, and fiscal functions.⁹¹

Operating funds for regular instruction are associated with costs directly related to the K–12 classroom (i.e. teachers, textbooks, etc.). Student support services costs are specifically related to students who have disabilities and to counseling resources for all students; special needs educational assistants, clinicians, and software are included in this category.

Instructional base support for the 2014–15 school year was \$318,844,256. The total special needs support for the 2014–15 school year was \$149,325,882,⁹² this includes students eligible for Level 2 and 3 grants. Level 2 support (\$9,220 per student) is granted to students who require a full time-person to be with them throughout most of the school day. Level 3 support (\$20,515 per student) is granted based on the level of support a student requires for the entire school day that is additional to the programming requirements established for Level 2 support. Both Level 2 and 3 supports are determined on an individual basis.⁹³

Ontario

How inclusion is defined

The province of Ontario recently released a guideline for policy development and implementation to ensure that schools throughout Ontario are equal and inclusive. The key terms are defined as follows:

Diversity: The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Equity: A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

Inclusive Education: Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.⁹⁴

Policy overview

Ontario is similar to Alberta and British Columbia in that it requires school boards to consider placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms before placing them in a special education class. However, the province's education system is not truly inclusive because its *Education Act* and accompanying regulations do not call for children with disabilities to be automatically included in regular classrooms. This leaves open the possibility of children with disabilities being placed into segregated settings.⁹⁵

In Burge et al.'s study on public perceptions of intellectual disability in Ontario, schools' lack of special resources along with teachers being unprepared to teach students with intellectual disabilities were seen as obstacles to inclusion.⁹⁶ The study found that the public opinion was divided on the best type of schooling for children with intellectual disabilities (regular versus segregated settings). The authors concluded that boards of education, school staff, and government ministries all play a pivotal role in strengthening support for inclusion, and that the benefits of educating children with disabilities alongside children without disabilities in a regular classroom setting should be better communicated to the public.⁹⁷

How funding is allocated

Ontario funds education on a per-pupil basis. The various grants included in the province's education funding formula determine the amount of money each school board receives. Funding categories include basic funding (for general costs, such as staff salaries and textbooks); unique student needs (ESL programs, special education); and funds for building maintenance or new schools. It is up to school boards to decide how much money to give each school.

The total funding projections for the 2014–15 school year were \$22,528,153,531 (excluding capital programs such as full-day kindergarten). The Pupil Foun-

dation Grant (projected to be \$10,529,913,981 for the 2014–15 school year) is a per-pupil allocation that supports the elements of a classroom education that are required by, and generally common to, all students. Professional and para-professionals, such as teachers and occupational therapists, are a part of this category, and both this grant and the Special Education Grant fund them. In addition to the Pupil Foundation Grant, additional board funding is shared through Special Purpose Grants. These grants are meant to be implemented based on the diversity of the students enrolled. For example, the Special Education Grant falls under this category.

Ontario's Special Education Grant (projected at \$2,719,783,444 for the 2014–15 school year)⁹⁸ is made up of six allocations:

- Special Education Per Pupil Amount Allocation – \$1.41 billion
- High Needs Amount Allocation – \$1.05 billion
- Special Equipment Amount Allocation – \$91.8 million
- Special Incidence Portion Allocation – \$60.3 million
- Facilities Amount Allocation – \$96.0 million
- Behaviour Expertise Amount Allocation – \$11.6 million

The Special Education Grant may only be used for special education. Any unspent funding must be treated as deferred revenue for special education.

All of the above is based on a total enrollment rate of 1,971,961 students (elementary and secondary) for 2014–15.⁹⁹

Québec

How inclusion is defined

The province of Quebec defines inclusion as follows:

A philosophy and a vision based on the belief that each individual is accepted and belongs in the regular classroom. It involves students' membership in general education classrooms with chronological age appropriate classmates, having individualized and relevant learning goals, and being provided with the support necessary to learn. It involves melding special education and regular educational services and instituting innovative instructional strategies and professional collaborative team approaches.¹⁰⁰

Policy overview

Quebec's *Education Act* stipulates that all students have a right to education programs and services, which includes special education. Students must be identified as “handicapped, have social maladjustments or learning disabilities” to be eligible for an Individual Education Plan and adaptations to services. Centres Locales de Services Communautaires (CLSC) are responsible for determining health and social supports, including early intervention services and supports, for school-aged children with disabilities.

Although it is now 15 years old, the *Adapting our Schools to the Needs of All Students, Policy on Special Education* serves as the key piece of policy in the implementation of services for students with disabilities. This policy encourages the integration of all students into a regular classroom; however, if integration imposes an excessive constraint on the right to learn of other students, the student with a disability may be removed, on a case-by-case basis.¹⁰¹

How funding is allocated

Section 275-277 of Quebec's *Education Act* states that funding shall be distributed among school boards in an equitable way. Each school must have its budget approved by the school board and specifically the exact financial resources allocated to students with social maladjustments, handicaps, or learning disabilities.¹⁰²

Expenditures for the Ministry of Education, Sports and Leisure totaled \$10,205,363,9 in the 2013–14 school year. The annual budget is allocated to four different programs: administration, educators at all levels, sports and leisure development, and retirement plans for educators. The administration allocation (\$138,023,700 of the 2013–14 budget) aims to ensure the administration of all programs relating to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Leisure and to support the action of the network of preschool, primary, and secondary schooling by providing the services necessary to their mission. The “teachers at all levels” allotment (\$9,141,354,800 in 2013–14) provides access to students, both youth and adult, to schooling services by funding school boards, subsidized private establishments, and various other organizations (this includes subsidies for school transport).¹⁰³

New Brunswick

How inclusion is defined

New Brunswick defines inclusive education as follows:

The pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allows each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can participate with peers in the common learning environment and learn and develop to his or her full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interest 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.¹⁰⁴

Policy overview

New Brunswick has the most progressive inclusive education program in Canada. According to the province's *Policy 322, Inclusive Education*, all students are provided universal access to the curriculum in a common learning environment with similar aged peers and in their neighbourhood.¹⁰⁵ A personalized learning plan will be developed for a student to meet their physical, sensorial, cognitive, social-emotional or other needs.¹⁰⁶ Students who receive categorization in the above categories are considered to be under the parameters of "exceptional," which means special education programming is provided; however, the type of education programming they receive is at the discretion of the school board superintendent.

How funding is allocated

New Brunswick's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development uses a direct funding model for programs and services offered in both the Anglophone and Francophone school districts. In both school districts the amount of funding received for special education programs and servi-

ces is based on enrollment. This funding is then allotted for salaries of resource teachers, teacher assistants, supplies, and equipment.¹⁰⁷

In New Brunswick's 2014–15 provincial budget, \$1,002,017 was allotted for elementary and secondary education while \$10,535 was allotted to corporate and other education services.¹⁰⁸ Additional resources are available to people who live in the Atlantic provinces region under the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA), which provides programs and services to students who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, blind, or visually impaired.

Nova Scotia

How inclusion is defined

Nova Scotia defines inclusive education as follows:

The basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers. The goal of inclusive schooling is to facilitate the membership, participation, and learning of all students in school programs and activities. The support services that are designed to meet student's diverse educational needs should be coordinated within the neighborhood school and to the extent possible, within grade level/ subject area classrooms.¹⁰⁹

Policy overview

Nova Scotia has had a *Special Education Policy* in effect since the 1990s that provides a template for individual school boards across the province to create their own policies. It also sets out an appeal process specific to the needs of students with disabilities.¹¹⁰

The Special Education Programs and Services (SEPS) committee provides advice and support to the Nova Scotia's Department of Education by reviewing and monitoring programming and services for students with special needs, an accountability measure set out in the Special Education Policy. However, as a fall 2014 report, *Disrupting the Status Quo: Nova Scotians Demand a Better Future for Every Student, Report of the Minister's Panel on Education*, has concluded, the services currently being offered to students with disabilities are not meeting their needs.¹¹¹

Some of the report's findings included the following:

- 70% of parents, teachers, student support staff, and school community members disagree that current programs and services are adequate.
- Survey respondents felt that professional development would benefit education teams in the classroom, but that the Department of Education needed to establish higher standards for the use of resources in application to professional development.
- Survey respondents felt that better methods could be used to evaluate teacher performance.¹¹²

The panel suggested that reducing wait times for psychology and speech-language assessments would help students with disabilities and their families to:

- receive services faster;
- smoothly transition from early childhood education to school to ensure services are received throughout; and
- have more access to programs and services at schools in rural areas.¹¹³

The panel also recommended that parents be provided with more information about services and how to access them.¹¹⁴ Better-informing parents is supposed to be a key piece of Nova Scotia’s *Special Education Policy*, which calls for parents to be provided with as much information as possible to best advocate for their child in a collaborative manner.

Any approach that calls for an inclusive philosophy in policy but in practice still allows separation of students with disabilities from their peers is problematic. Recommendation 4.2 of the panel’s report states the following: “assist schools and school boards to create a range of learning environments for students with special needs, including congregated classes taught by highly qualified specialist teachers, where appropriate.”¹¹⁵ This report cautions against the idea expressed by this recommendation, because it suggests that students with special needs be segregated.

How funding is allocated

Nova Scotia’s 2014–15 budget lists \$962,606 as public education funding expenses¹¹⁶ and states that an increase to spending for “high-needs students” was supported by a \$1.5 million investment. Funding for 2014–2015 represents \$18.6 million of a \$65 million, four-year investment.¹¹⁷

The *Special Education Policy*, although naming certain disabilities for which additional funding shall be provided, notes that these categories should only be used for administrative purposes and not as labels for students.¹¹⁸

In addition to a program formula-funding grant, a special education formula-funding grant (targeted funding) for students with disabilities is allotted to each school board. A standard resource grid is applied against the number of enrolled students to determine the funding amount. For example, the resource teacher grid is one teacher for every 165 students.¹¹⁹ The Special Education Grant is for services that are needed in addition to teacher time. However, the grant may not be used towards transportation costs of students with disabilities.¹²⁰

Prince Edward Island

How inclusion is defined

Prince Edward Island defines special education and inclusion as follows:

Special Education means programming and/or services designed to accommodate students within the public school system whose educational needs require interventions different from, or in addition to, those that are needed by most students. Assessments of students are the basis for determining appropriate special education programs and services. These programs and services may involve the use of adapted or modified curriculum, materials and facilities, and/or alternative methodologies, and/or additional assistance from student support staff within school settings.

Inclusionary practice is the value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and belonging.¹²¹

Policy overview

Prince Edward Island is unique in its policy approach to education for children with disabilities. PEI is the smallest province in Canada and has three school boards, two English and one French, that deliver programming to grades 1 through 12. Because the province is so small, its education support

model is universally inclusive in its design. There are no segregated schools, although alternative education settings are used on a temporary basis.¹²²

The Ministry of Education and Childhood Development's document, *Individualized Educational Planning: Standards and Guidelines*,¹²³ goes into great detail about the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, which is beneficial to all students with disabilities. Having clear explanations in accessible language about the IEP process leads to less confusion for all people implementing the IEP, including the school team and parents.

Although PEI's education model is primarily inclusive in that all children are usually able to attend their neighborhood school, one criticism is that the province makes an exception for children with autism. The Ministry's directive, *Educational Services for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, outlines the role of autism consultants and coordinators. If the aim is true inclusion, it is problematic to single out one type of disability.

One challenge that PEI's education model faces is that small numbers of children with disabilities are spread out all over the province, so transferring knowledge between education professionals to create a consistent inclusive structure is important.¹²⁴ To address this challenge the Ministry has created a professional development model that combines mentoring, modeling, and practical experience.¹²⁵

How funding is allocated

The Ministry's directive on special education states that each school board is responsible for promoting an effective consultation model and providing opportunities for collaboration.¹²⁶ The Ministry is responsible for reviewing and monitoring how resources are allocated by school boards to ensure that all resources are being used appropriately to support inclusionary practices.¹²⁷

The aim stated by the Ministry's directive *No. MD 2014–15* is to provide equal access to the basic educational services for the 2014–15 school year. To meet this goal, school boards (both English and French) are required to allocate staff and resources equally among schools. Specifically, Section 3(5) on Special Education/Resource states that instructional staff for special education and resources shall be allocated to school boards to address high-needs students at an incidence rate of 7% of enrollment, or one instructional position (salary) assigned per board for every 14 students.¹²⁸ Students with lower needs are assigned one instructional position per school board for every 500 students.¹²⁹

PEI's projected amount of total administration and corporate services for 2014–15 was \$210,790,400; this includes administration, provincial learning materials, and grants to school boards. For 2014–15, the province's projected amount of operating revenue for education and early childhood development was \$5,458,000,¹³⁰ and its expenditure summary for education and early childhood development was \$232,215,700.¹³¹

Newfoundland and Labrador

How inclusion is defined

Newfoundland and Labrador defines inclusive education as follows:

- The right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality programming;
- A continuum of supports and services in the most appropriate setting (large group, small group, individualized) respecting the dignity of the child;
- A welcoming school culture where all members of the school community feel they belong, realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the school;
- A school community which celebrates diversity; and
- A safe and caring school environment.¹³²

Policy overview

Like some other provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador has a model in place (developed in 1995) to coordinate services provided to children and youth by several ministries: Health and Community Services, Education and Early Childhood Development, Human Resources and Employment, and Justice.¹³³ The Individual Support Services Plan is an essential piece for the fluid coordination of these services.

The province's *Service Delivery Model for Students with Exceptionalities* (2012) describes the types of programming available for students in kindergarten to Grade 12 who have been defined as children with an exceptionality, which includes the following: acquired brain injury; developmental delay; gifted and talented; hearing loss; medical condition; mental illness/mental health, neurodevelopmental and related disorders; intellectual disabil-

ity; specific learning disorder; physical disability; speech and/or language disorder; and vision loss.¹³⁴

Education programs are approached in the following ways for children with exceptionalities:

- **Modified prescribed courses**, which maintain the provincial curriculum with certain courses changed, deleted, added or extended;
- **Alternate programs**, which are programs administered outside of the regular classroom (but this type of program should not be used to interrupt cumulative or foundational courses); and
- **Functional curriculum**, which is a combination of career and personal development, independent living, and “functional” academics; no high school credits are received.¹³⁵

The *Public Exams Adaptation/Accommodation Policy* is designed to find strategies to accommodate students with identified exceptionalities. This policy enforces the rights of students with disabilities to be able to succeed in their examination processes, but it can only be applied if the student has been formally identified as having an exceptionality.¹³⁶

A 2007 report issued by Newfoundland and Labrador’s ISSP and Pathways Commission, *Focusing on Students*, described a “crisis in knowledge and leadership” in special education: the majority of classroom teachers still have no training in accommodating children with disabilities, have minimal qualifications, but hold permanent contracts.¹³⁷ The report challenges the model of power and decision-making authorities of special education and states that interventions and resources (training) should be directed towards where the students actually are — the classroom.¹³⁸

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development created a teacher training initiative in response to the *Focusing on Students* report. Over a number of phases, representatives from each school would be trained in the use of the Index for Inclusion, a tool used by schools to determine their current level of inclusivity based on the following scales: culture, policies and practices; differentiated instruction; collaborative teaching models; and development of annual action plans.¹³⁹

However, the option for removal and for a child with a disability to not be fully included still exists — as long as it is “justified.” The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development makes clear on its website that it does not interpret inclusion to mean that all students with disabilities should be in the regular classroom at all times. A student with an ex-

ceptionality may be removed from the classroom periodically in order for his or her medical, academic, social, or emotional needs to be met. To justify such a temporary removal, teachers must show that the student can't learn optimally in the regular classroom; they also must state the intervention outcomes and timelines, and include a plan for the child with an exceptionality to return to the regular classroom.

Furey conducted a study for which pre-service teachers, current teachers, and administrators were interviewed about their perceptions of the Bachelor of Special Education Program at Memorial University and its implications in teacher practice. The study found that the practicum element of the current program equipped teachers better for individualized settings than for group and inclusive settings.¹⁴⁰

How funding is allocated

Education funding in Newfoundland and Labrador is applied directly to school boards from the province's General Revenue Fund. The education summary of account expenditures for the provincial budget in 2012–13 was \$1,220,541.¹⁴¹ The Department of Education's total budget for the 2013–14 fiscal year was \$840,625,400 for 67,436 students enrolled in kindergarten through Grade 12.¹⁴² The statement of expenditure and related revenue summary for March 21, 2014, stated that the total amount spent on primary, elementary, and secondary education was \$825,326,236, with \$1,962,528 spent on Student Support Services (which includes programming and services for students with disabilities).¹⁴³

Nunavut

How inclusion is defined

Nunavut's Curriculum and School Services Division defines inclusion and inclusive education as follows:

Inclusion is an attitude and a belief, a way of life, and a way of living and working together in schools. In Nunavut, inclusion builds on the Inuit belief that each individual is valuable, belongs and contributes to the group. Inclusion infuses all aspects of school life.¹⁴⁴

Inclusive education is an educational practice, which ensures access for all children to educational programs offered in regular classroom settings with

their peers; builds on students' strengths and responds to students' needs; promotes and facilitates the involvement of parents in their children's education; and provides appropriate programs and, where necessary, accommodation or behaviour plans or individual education programs and support services so that all students are enabled to participate.¹⁴⁵

Policy overview

Traditional Inuit culture teaches that learning, whether physical or mental, can occur at different rates between individuals. The Division's policy, *Foundation for Inclusive Education Inuglugijaittuq in Nunavut Schools*, states that learning does not always have to be dependent on funding to be inclusive.¹⁴⁶

The values and ideals portrayed in this policy are progressive in nature and promote a strong sense of inclusion. A strong sense of Inuit culture is also represented, and the importance of learning both English and Inuktitut is stressed (although the policy does not explain how children who might be struggling with learning language at all, such as a child with a processing disability, are to be accommodated). Although the *Nunavut Education Act* is quite new (2008) compared to those of other provinces and territories, it still outlines when and how it is justifiable to remove a child with a disability from a regular instructional setting; for example, when the health and safety of other students is compromised.¹⁴⁷ Under the Act, all students have a right to inclusive education, and, using an Individual Education Plan, the District Education Authority is to provide programs and services where a specific need for accommodation exists. Unlike other provinces and territories, Nunavut has no formal categories of need, such as autism, that a student with a disability must be identified as having in order to receive support.¹⁴⁸

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada published a report on education in Nunavut in 2013. It found that the following categories needed improvement: student attendance, student assessment, bilingual education, inclusive education, curriculum building, and parental involvement.¹⁴⁹

How funding is allocated

In the 1980s, the Eastern Arctic (now Nunavut) operated within three Inuit school boards responsible for funding, staffing, policies, and programs.¹⁵⁰ Budgets and expenditures for major programs and lines of business in 2011–12 for kindergarten through Grade 12 cost \$143,428,457, up from \$134,718,052

in 2010–11.¹⁵¹ The enrollment of students in the 2010–11 school year was 8,855, and increased to 8,902 in the 2011–12 school year.¹⁵²

In the summary of operations and maintenance expenditures for education, Nunavut’s 2014–15 territorial budget allotted an estimate of \$184,230, up from \$182,971 in 2013–14. The summary of total expenditures for education was allotted \$207,940, up from \$215,547 in 2013–14.¹⁵³

Northwest Territories

How inclusion is defined

Northwest Territories defines inclusion as follows:

Every student is entitled to have access to the education program in a regular instructional setting in a public school or public denominational school in the community in which the student resides.¹⁵⁴

It defines inclusive schooling using the following principles:

1. Inclusive schooling shall be characterized by equal access to education opportunities.
2. Inclusive schooling shall be characterized by an approach to schooling that builds on student strengths and responds to student challenges.
3. Inclusive schooling shall be community-based.
4. Inclusive schooling shall include the involvement of parents/guardians in their children’s education.
5. Inclusive schooling shall be characterized by collaboration.¹⁵⁵

Policy overview

Northwest Territories, inclusive education model is similar to Nunavut’s model, in that it is based on an identification of needs rather than a categorization model. The *Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* and the *Northwest Territories Education Act* outline three education programs for children with disabilities: a regular program, a modified program, and an individual program. The territory’s District Education Authority suggests an assessment of a student to determine their needs, and a program is designed using ac-

commodations and adaptations, to help students meet their learning goals, which are monitored through an Individual Education Plan.¹⁵⁶

A recent assessment of Northwest Territories' inclusive education policy recommended that, because of the size of the territory, its Department of Education develop a set of processes for early identification of student needs, transferring into the school district, and transitioning between schools within the same community.¹⁵⁷ The report also recommended better levels of assessment and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the policy.¹⁵⁸

How funding is allocated

In the Northwest Territories, K–12 education programs are delivered by four Divisional Education Councils; three District Education Authorities; the Tâîchô Community Service Agency; and the Commission scolaire franco-ophone, Territoires du Nord-Ouest — all of which are allocated funding.¹⁵⁹ Two District Education Authorities, located in Yellowknife, are the only source of property tax levies, which are expected to cover at least 25% of the territory's school program delivery. The government provides the remaining amount through taxes it collects.¹⁶⁰

Inclusive Schooling Consultants were funded based on the average salary and benefits for the prior year. So 0.5 consultants would be allocated for 50 full-time enrolled students in one community; for five communities, it would still be 0.5; and for eight communities it would be one.¹⁶¹ A similar funding structure is used to determine the needs of program support teachers with respect to the previous year's salary; however, for one full-time enrolled student, 0.25 staff are allotted. The territory's Department of Education, Culture and Employment's projected expenditures for 2014–15 were \$305,599, up from \$300,195 in 2013–14 and \$292,096 in 2012–13.¹⁶²

Yukon

How inclusion is defined

The Yukon defines inclusion and inclusive education as follows:

Inclusive education provides the student with the least restrictive and most enabling environment to meet learning needs while enabling meaningful participation with other students. Inclusion of all students in regular classrooms is the goal of Yukon Education. All students are entitled to equitable access

to learning. Inclusion requires collaborative planning by an educational team with you, as parents, as active participants. This means that the student's strengths and challenges are central to all decisions. To succeed, some students may require adaptations in methodology, materials or assessment techniques; modifications or enhancements to programs; or interventions to assist skill development. This is a student-centered approach to teaching and learning.

Core values and beliefs as practiced in Yukon schools include:

- All students can learn.
- Students learn in different ways, at different rates and in different places.
- Students come from diverse backgrounds and want their differences to be respected.
- Students have the right to appropriate educational programming and required supports.
- Parental involvement is essential.

Inclusive schools encourage independence by providing opportunities that promote personal empowerment and self-determination.¹⁶³

Policy overview

Like Canada's other two territories, Yukon is progressive in its approach to special education. Specifically policy language does not frequently use terms that refer to segregated settings to describe education for children with disabilities. However, Yukon is the only territory that has categories of disability (or "exceptionalities" in its terminology). According to Division 2, Special Education, of Yukon's *Education Act*, students are to be provided accommodation for physical, intellectual, communicative, behavioural, or multiple exceptionalities. These terms are broad in their description of disability, which allows for more children to fit into these categorical labels. Students meeting any of the above categories are to be supported by Individualized Education Plans addressing their needs in a setting local to the child's home.¹⁶⁴

How funding is allocated

Section 178 of Yukon's *Education Act* states that each school board shall receive sufficient funding to meet its approved annual operations.¹⁶⁵ The De-

partment of Education funds education from the territory's Consolidated Fund, which includes property tax revenues.¹⁶⁶ The consolidated budget reported \$196,718 for education in 2014–15¹⁶⁷ for a total of 5,166 enrolled students.¹⁶⁸ Current expenditures per student were not available at the time of writing, but previously they have included all direct operation and maintenance costs, including school staff salaries, materials, supplies and building maintenance. In the 2012–2013 school year, 5,024 students were enrolled and the expenditure per student was \$17,667 (in 2010–2011 it was \$16,197 per student with 5,077 students enrolled; in 2011–12 it was \$17,039 per student with 5,027 students enrolled).¹⁶⁹

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