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**Abstract**

A powerful and positive address which starts by considering Inclusive education as a societal issue with profound underlying assumptions about people with disabilities which need to be opened up and examined, particularly in relation to the intrinsic value of people with disabilities and the social justice of providing an education for all children regardless of disability. He states that "Education is much more the result of the values that we hold" rather than about the disability. Topics covered include: an extensive analysis of what inclusive education entails, the various impacts of segregation and inclusion and a comparison between Canada and Australia. Parents are praised for their leadership in promoting positive change in the education system. **Keywords:** Education, Inclusion, School age, Attitudes

# INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

**Seminar held in August 1991**

**Speaker: Bruce Uditsky**

Bruce explained that the first part of the session would be spent laying the framework for the seminar, particularly challenging past education practices.

Bruce has been a consultant to special education and segregated classrooms in Canada and has trained people to work in segregated situations as well as being the chairman of the Board of a segregated school. He is a parent of two children, one of whom has a disability. His wife has worked in the area of segregated education. Both he and his wife are now committed to inclusive education.

Bruce has been working in the area of inclusive education for approximately 15 years. He has had direct and personal experience of inclusive schooling across four countries so is not speaking theoretically.

He pointed out that inclusive schooling:

- is being done
- can be done
- does make a positive difference when it is done well.

He stated that the knowledge exists to implement and provide inclusive education for all children; Inclusive schooling is much more a question of will and understanding than a question of knowledge and Practice.

His hope for participants in the seminar was that:

- those who were already convinced that inclusive school is the way to go are re-affirmed in their belief
- those who were tentative about the idea of inclusive schooling would find some of their questions answered
- those who were opposed to inclusive schooling would listen with an open ear and understanding that it is a legitimate exercise and not impede others wishing to achieve this goal.

Underlying controversial issues in the area of inclusive education are:

- Why at times inclusive schooling is such a controversial issue
- Why at times teachers unions advocate for a moratorium on inclusive education
- Why so many parents have problems trying to have their child included and remain included.

It is important to realise that inclusive schooling is a societal issue. The acceptance or otherwise of inclusive schooling represents the value that are held at the moment in time in our culture...our 'humaness' or lack of essence of humaness.

*We need to look at the underlying moral assumptions.*

It is a question of values and social justice and not really a question of educational science; in a sense we have held the myth that it is educational science.

*Why is there so much emotion surrounding this particular question?*

Bruce felt that it was difficult as a visitor to challenge people without being alienating; to share his passion and commitment without being arrogant.

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He therefore shared his experience of Canada (both mistakes made and promising occurrences), believing in its relevance to the situation in Australia. At a moral level, there are assumptions that transcend cultures; principles or strategies may transcend cultures. Bruce asked those listening to draw their OWN conclusions.

He also made the following points:

- In advocacy for Inclusive Education, the advocacy is for quality education for all children. It looks at what is best in terms of schooling for all children.

The importance of inclusive schooling for all children is that children grow up and learn values and principles that foster the inclusion of everyone. Inclusive education tends to result in a better education for all students.

- Bruce sees disability as a secondary or less important issue. Every child can be included in a regular classroom.

While admitting that there is not the knowledge and capacity to individualise a child's education program for the whole day, every day, Bruce stressed the importance of individualised programs and his belief that segregation is an administrative or organisational decision, not a decision based on education need or premise. It is a decision that is essentially made much more on tradition and practice than a child's needs.

While maybe it is not possible for every child with a disability to be included for the whole day in regular programs to the maximum extent, there is nothing about having to individualise for that child that suggests that that child ought to be grouped with children that might have some other labels or conditions.

This is easier to understand when you think of the person with a disability as an individual; as a son, daughter, friend, colleague etc. as someone you spend time with.

Because, to the degree that you see someone in terms of disability, to the degree that you therefore deny the essence of who that person is, it becomes more difficult to understand Inclusive Education.

Inclusive education really stems from the perception and philosophy we have toward others, particularly those with disability. The degree to which we see people with disabilities as equally valued human beings affects the likelihood of our being willing to make an effort to include people with disabilities in all aspects of community life, including school.

Exclusion is not a question of resources and money, as most of us would like to plead or have come to sincerely believe. The reality is that exclusion is much more the result of the values that we hold.

If we wish to see the money and resources allocated towards inclusive education, we first have to address why this is a moral imperative, otherwise people with disabilities will always be second class citizens, and always be waiting, with the threat of future poverty and unemployment while we plead the cause of money and resources.

The necessity to see these things change over time requires a fair degree of analysis on our part:

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- Why it is that we have created the type of education environment that exists today?
- Why is it so difficult and challenging to change this environment ?

## **What Is Inclusive Education?**

Inclusive Education is when a child regardless of degree of disability goes to the same school that any other child or parent would choose to go to (typically the local neighbourhood school), i.e. the same choice exists for a child with disability as for a child without disability.

There is no need for levels of assessment and appeals (and money spent on this area), rather the aim is to make life for the child one of relative ordinariness. The emphasis is on the child coming first, given the age of the child, where the child lives and what schooling is chosen.

The child becomes a regular member of the classroom, with peers of approximately the same age. The child goes through their education in the same way as other children.

In the regular classroom there is one curriculum for all students; in essence, the curriculum is modified for the individual needs of the student with disability. Resources and assistance to accommodate the student are provided.

The student has the opportunity to participate in all aspects of school life, including sport and other activities. To the degree that the child cannot be accommodated full time in a regular classroom, that child is given individualised effort, perhaps outside the regular classroom but with every intention of working towards full inclusion over time.

In reality, the students with whom most difficulties occur are those with behavioural challenges more than students with disabilities. Research also clearly shows that the regular student is far more disruptive to a classroom than a student with disabilities.

So if we re going to apply the rationales that you too often hear people use, the students who should be excluded are the ones that are already included!

Every culture has a set of myths or values which is held to be true over time. Each of us has to review these assumptions over time. The same is true of segregated education.

“Some examples from the Canadian experience of a culture and cultural experiences are:

### **The first is Canada’s perception and orientation to women:**

Assumptions were made about women and their role in society, their value and the way in which institutions and education ought to respond to them.

These assumptions were held to be true and to be based on knowledge, science and fact. They required—and continue to require—continuous amounts of effort to redress.

Men sat in positions of authority and power and worried about the ability of women to contribute to the governance of life. Men made the assumption as to where women should participate.

These devaluing views led to the belief that women didn’t need access to the same education as men. Men recognised women’s humanness; the education of women could

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lead to some disruption of society (as women challenged existing values). Women therefore became isolated and their education was watered down.

Women have had to struggle to raise consciousness with respect to their role and legitimacy and even to a degree their equal value—that struggle continues.

If women have needed to struggle in this way, you can imagine what it's like for people with disabilities!

In the health area, pervasive intrusions into women's bodies were made on male assumptions that weren't true.

Remnants of damaging actions as a result of some wrong theories continue to persist, e.g. in Queensland recently the issue of a woman being appointed as a University professor brought about the suggestion by some parties that women were being appointed because of their gender, not their ability.

There are few women in senior administrative positions in education—does this reflect what women are like or does it reflect what has happened over time and the difficulty with changing the system?

In psychology, the view was held that men were smarter than women, and that it could be proven using scientific measurements (i.e. mass equals intelligence), forgetting to take into account body proportions: measured proportionally women are equal to, if not more intelligent than men.

This is relatively recent history; therefore, even science in a sense is a product of cultural bias. It requires further analysis to discover the truth.

### **The second group is the aboriginal people of Canada:**

Cultural genocide has been practised by intrusion into their lives and incredible devastation has been caused over time. Prisons are proportionately more likely to be filled by aborigines, their lifespan is likely to be shorter, and the degree of poverty and alcoholism higher than the non-aboriginal aboriginal population.

Looking at this in context, education responded by removing the children from their culture. They were put in residential schools, punished for speaking their native language and taught our own languages and values. They were denied their own culture and at the same time they weren't part of the value culture of the day. This was all done in their best interests with the knowledge that existed at that time.

People are only now coming forward and telling of the massive abuse which occurred.

### **Another group is the African national racial minority in the United States:**

In the United States we saw slavery. Moral grounds are the only grounds against slavery, yet there were many arguments as to why slavery was beneficial: It was to people's advantage in that it provided for them; it helped them succeed and take care of themselves; it contributed to the economic lifeblood of the country.

It also resulted in segregated schools.

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Today the odds that a black young male will end up in gaol are more than 50-50. You will recall the animosity of the civil rights struggle to see black people included in schools.

It is when the issues confront us on those moral levels, that we see the kind of resistance experienced there. This level of emotion is there when it comes to the issue of Inclusive Education. You won't see this kind of emotion and impact when you talk, for example, about the means of teaching language or introducing computers into schools. There will be debate and controversy but not people standing in front of the door saying "No, you don't belong".

It's when we get to the fundamental moral question, that you get the difficulties experienced by various groups.

In Canada in education you can see the assumptions made over time. The difficulty is challenging those assumptions, which most would now see as being even foolish. It involves a degree of struggle emotion and debate to address the issue.

We should have no illusion as to what it will mean to reconsider our assumptions about people with disabilities, illusions that were somehow wrong in every other way about other people (such as the groups mentioned above) but are still held to be right in respect of people with disabilities.

We have in a sense no track work to provide any assurance that our assumptions about excluding any group of people have every been appropriate. We need to take the time to reassess and understand our legacy of error.

### **People with Disabilities:**

The group of people that have been most responsible for change have been parents, not educators. Parents have provided the greatest degree of leadership and the greatest degree of innovation.

Historically, schools did one of two things:

a) categorised people on a hypothesis which has no basis in fact and therefore segregated them, or (b) excluded people with disabilities entirely, deeming them as being uneducable

Given the assumptions people held about disability, it shouldn't come as a surprise that authorities acted in this way.

When parents realised that what their son/daughter needed most was to be seen as just that—a son or daughter to be brought up as a member of the family and community, they turned to schools to have them taught.

In Canadian history parents were told "No, your children don't belong in school. We don't have the resources, money, training, facilities etc...". Parents wouldn't accept this so set about setting up their own schools and demonstrating that their sons and daughters could learn.

Over time these schools became legitimised and funded and resources began to be allocated and people trained.

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The parents of children with more severe, profound and multiple disabilities said “What about our children?” and were told “NO, they don’t belong here. They’re too disabled etc...” So this group of parents went about setting up their own schools. You can see that one rejection ends up feeding another. This again illustrates that both parents and educators can be wrong.

Unfortunately one of the most devastating legacies of that particular history of rejection was the assumption that those students needed segregation.

The basis of segregation never existed in educational practice or knowledge. It existed in exclusion. The parents had no choice: If you couldn’t get your child into school you did it yourselves and in doing so a false assumption was made and over time those schools began to be picked up and included.

As those schools became legitimate, new generations of parents came along with different ideas. The more people with disabilities have been seen as equally valued members of society, the greater the likelihood of new ideas coming forward. So some parents asked “Why not segregated classrooms in regular schools?” The education system generally said “No”. So parents had to fight to get the education system to include their son or daughter in regular schools.

Then parents said “If our children can be in segregated classrooms, why can’t they be integrated for part of the time?” Again, there was another struggle.

As time went the only place that a good many children were segregated was in the school. Parents then questioned why their children couldn’t be part of the regular classroom in the same way that they were part of the community.

In a few places in Canada there were administrators who worked collaboratively with parents, but even today parents are having to challenge the system, go to court or the Human Rights Commission, air their personal stories through the media etc. in the struggle to have their child placed in the classroom .

The issue of Inclusive Education in Canada is a systemic issue—the continuation of a 30 or 40 year struggle to see people with disabilities as they ought to be seen in the first place—as people of equal value, members who belong and need to be included.

In South Australia at the moment, there is debate as to whether people with significant disabilities are entitled to equal medical treatment. There is a committee report from the S.A. Health Commission that argues for active euthanasia for some people with significant disabilities. Now, if as a culture that is an element of the debate, then obviously there is going to be a degree of difficulty in getting society and educators to accept people’s inclusion.

*There are similarities between the Canadian and Australian experience.*

It is important to recognise:

- Why this issue tends to arouse so much passion and emotion
- Why it seems to require so much leadership on the part of people taking a stand.
- Why so many people take opposing stands and assume in absence that segregation is a legitimate, valid and non hurtful practice.

Then we can no longer easily say that it’s just an educational issue. It is a societal issue.

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We can't say it's not part of our history - it is part of our history. We can no longer say it isn't a moral or social justice question - it is precisely and simply that.

It is only through understanding and seeing people with disability in the essence of their humanness and being an integral part of the wholeness of our community that we will act on that moral imperative.

Otherwise people with disabilities will wait on the sidelines for us to get around to seeing and understanding them as true and valued human beings, always waiting for resources to be allocated etc.

It's interesting to note the degree of fear and apprehension experienced not just by teachers but by parents of other children when a child with a disability joins a regular class.

It is amazing that issues such as a person with a visual impairment moving about in hallways, or someone needing assistance to go to the bathroom, become so critical in education

It suggests our real fear and apprehension about having people with disabilities amongst us when issues such as these result in people not being included in our schools to the degree possible.

This is not just a challenge to teachers but a challenge to community and society. It means in principle seeing things a little differently and it also provides people with a clear choice.

If you look at the environment, each part plays a necessary role relative to the environment; each part of the environment is interconnected. From this we can see we're all an integral part of the whole. We need to value that, to acknowledge, support and appreciate it. You see this happening as people become aware of issues such as conserving water.

What is being suggested is that people with disabilities should be seen as an integral part of our world, being a vital and necessary part of our community in terms of what they have to contribute and in terms of what we have to lose through exclusion and denied friendship. People seem to have a great deal of difficulty understanding this - and if this is true, we ought to recognise why there is so much controversy over the inclusion of children in regular classrooms.

Segregation was not built on educational science but on a set of assumptions and traditional practice. There are more problems integrating the industry of special education than with integrating the children with disabilities themselves.

There is an assumption that segregation is just a passive, neutral exercise or if anything, it is beneficial. There has rarely been debate on what happens when you segregate students, only debate on what happens when you integrate students.

In Canada, a tremendous amount of change has taken place over time. While the vast majority of students are in some form of segregated education, an increasing number of students every year are receiving a full inclusive education regardless of the degree of disability. This has nothing to do in a sense with the wealth or size of the school system but with the values and the way which people have come to see students with disabilities and their willingness to collaborate with parents in making changes.



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In almost every community in Canada you will find examples of students with disabilities integrated whereas in the past or in other cultures were presumed not to be able to be included. You will also find school systems where every child receives an inclusive education to the maximum degree. (In Canada schools have more autonomy).

There are school systems that have changed over time, and others that have changed overnight (while not recommended, this has been done successfully); there are school systems in Canada where all you have to do is ask...but you have to know to ask. There are school systems where you have to 'nudge' a bit to get inclusion, and there are increasingly small numbers of segregated schools and classrooms.

The debate now in Canada is more about the process of change than questioning why change should take place. Of course, there are still pockets of resistance.

One of the most important lessons is that here in Australia and in other parts of the world inclusive education will become a reality—you can feel the momentum when you talk with some of the parents. In Canada, some places made the decision to collaborate—to move forward with families—and others didn't. Almost all that didn't, eventually gave in but at great cost to everyone, particularly in terms of family stress, animosity, and a history of negativity affecting schooling.

The choice is to collaborate to ensure quality education for all children or to be continually part of the problem and contribute to a greater degree of loss to the community in terms of the actions of schools.

### **Questions asked by members of audience:**

*Is it ever too late to start a child in inclusive schooling?*

BU: No, it's never too late. Practice and experience has shown that it is possible at any age, regardless of the student's history. However, it is always better to start younger as is the case with early intervention. But in Canada people are being included at every stage, even at university level. Some of these had never even received an education before and had been in institutional situations. The process may vary—inclusion may have to be more gradual if the person is starting later.

*I have heard that if your child is in a regular school following the regular curriculum to the degree possible the child will never learn living skills.*

BU: If you're segregated you lose out on a lot more. You lose out on life. It's more important to put life first, living skills second. We're much more likely to give people a better life, an interdependent life by inclusion. There's much more likelihood of learning the living skills that go along with inclusive practices than separate ones.

The idea that people need a separate pathway through life to get the ordinary life never seems to have shown any promise or truth.

*What steps were taken in Canada to address the problem of teacher disquiet at inclusion?*

BU: Teacher disquiet is legitimate and understandable. But the more extreme situation is where teachers are very negative. (Gone into later).

*Parent stated that her severely disabled child had been completely integrated in a Victorian school but had been segregated in NSW and had gone markedly backwards.*

BU: It can be different, should be different and must be different.

## THE IMPACT OF SEGREGATION AND THE IMPACT OF INCLUSION

### Overhead: What parents want:

*"I want my child to live and learn in an integrated world; to be a valued and real member of her community and to have the best possible education and to have friends"*

### Overhead: Needs of the child with disability

*There is no difference between the most pressing needs of a child with a disability and any other child.*

While they are not necessarily the needs of all of us all of the time and they vary in terms of where we are, we know most of the following to be shared fundamental needs:

- to be loved and to be able to give love
- to know that you belong
- to be wanted and have a sense of belonging
- to have a sense of self worth
- to have dignity and respect
- to be seen as equally and inherently valued (and therefore
- to be easily readily and ordinarily compensated if you have a disability
- not to be dependent on charity and have to struggle, plead, beg or lobby to be supported)
- to have an identity (where do you belong? What are your interests ?)
- friendship...fitting in, interdependence (Independence can contribute to isolation and loneliness in the name of some higher moral good because we haven't understood it properly).
- family
- home
- community
- security
- dreams and aspirations
- opportunities and possibilities
- support
- income
- career and employment
- choices
- education
- experiences

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We all need family, home and community—these are just ordinary assumptions, but we need to remember that they haven't been ordinary assumptions with regard to people with disabilities. The assumption is that people with disabilities need something different. The assumption is that the person with disability will cause stress to the family and be a burden and that they are better off in a place where there are trained personnel. It will be safer and more secure. We sincerely believed this—but it is a lie.

However, most of us know the horror of institutionalisation which is what those things were. We know that we're less secure if we're segregated (e.g. Chelmsford). We know that you're more likely to be abused if you're segregated. We know that you're less likely to have quality in your life if you're segregated. Nevertheless we haven't yet come to terms with the myths that we perpetuated and the ramifications of that.

While the person with a disability needed first and foremost family and the family needed community acceptance and support, we did the very opposite. You have a far greater degree of security if you know that you belong; if you have an opportunity for support and employment; if you have friends in your life. You have far less security if you grow up lonely and dependent on human services.

The reality is that people with disabilities end up on a pathway far less successful than our own and when they attempt to join us on our pathway we set up all kinds of barriers or excuses to deny them that opportunity.

Dreams and aspirations are important. Most of us already know that we are not going to achieve all our aspirations but we also know how important they are to us as part of establishing our life experiences and identity. We need to ensure that both families and individuals with disabilities have those same dreams and aspirations. How many of us hold the dream of a sheltered workshop? That robs people of their identity. Why go to school if the outcome is a sheltered workshop? You don't need to be educated to be segregated and isolated to do things for little or no pay so somebody else can benefit at a good salary.

If you want to be seen as having potential and possibility in your life, if you want to dream of sharing your life having friends and of making a contribution then you need inclusive schooling.

Unfortunately not enough people have been allowed to sustain those dreams and to know that they're valid. When there is a lot of resistance, people bury their dreams.

You're more likely to have a career, to have employment, if you're included. If you're supported in weekend, afternoon or holiday jobs, then you're much more likely to be employed than if you just have work experience.

The normative pathways are most successful for students with disabilities.

Inclusive education gets built on a number of assumptions:

- that people with disabilities are inherently or equally valued—therefore, if you have a disability you will be readily supported to the degree necessary to compensate your disability. To the degree that you are not, you are being discriminated against.

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- that people with disabilities have the same fundamental needs as anyone else and that the best way to meet those needs is through the same powerful normative pathways. (Parents hold dreams for the child-to-be - they want the child to "be their own person", and whether they realise it or not they hold aspirations for that child. The child is then encouraged to realise these roles. The child is encouraged to work hard, have goals, whereas the child with a disability is likely to have a different experience of life).
- that inclusion is consistent with the principles of social justice and success for all students.

Schools are one important part of the picture that encourages positive contribution.

The question of what is quality education has not been resolved but is much more likely to be resolved when it includes inclusive education. If you re-think education at a time when people are excluded then you will create new education models that continue exclusion. If you re-think education that will be successful for all students, you have to do it with all students present.

In Canada it has been found that schools contribute far more to some of the problems that were thought to lie with families or individuals (e.g. "dropouts" are likely to have more self esteem when they leave school than when at school).

The Principle is:

**All children shall be able to receive a quality education by attending their neighbourhood school, going to class together, learning together and becoming friends.**

- neighbourhood school or school of your choice
- regular classroom
- approximately the same age peers
- regular curriculum with modifications and adaptations
- maximum participation across all activities
- Individualisation
- regular teacher responsible with support as needed
- parents as partners
- emphasis on facilitating relationships in the classroom
- good quality education being applied.

There is no test or assessment on the basis of knowledge to decide whether the child belongs or not. The decision is based on values. If you believe in inclusive education, you end up believing all children belong...and if you don't, then some will belong and some won't.

The greater the degree of quality education being provided in the classroom, the easier it is to include students. In more traditional models, where you teach to the average student, it is harder to integrate, because it is harder for all students to follow at the same pace. Most no longer consider this to be the best educational practice.

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Co-operative learning models and more dynamic teaching methods are more suited to inclusive education. What seems to work best for all children, works best for children with disabilities.

Inclusive education isn't something you receive in doses—not so many hours a week; when you take a student who has difficulty interpreting the world (i.e. making sense of it) and then suggest that the child should be educated in two worlds at the same time, you have segregation—it's much more confusing and challenging to relate to.

Slides were then shown of children with different disabilities in inclusive education.

Bruce said that in a sense schools are failing lots of children, not just those with disabilities. The issue of schooling needs to be addressed by all—openly, not separately.

While we can all imagine some child who is difficult to include, the fact is that 99% of children with disabilities are easy to include. Where there are challenges we should honestly admit it and work on it rather than assume that because it's difficult for a particular person that it's difficult for all.

Every one of the students shown in the slides was once considered not able to be fully included. There is a variation according to particular needs—each child has a role to play in the class.

Bruce suggested that in dynamic education you are gaining most of the learning skills you actually need to acquire, e.g. language and communication with others. (One of the slides showed a student with disabilities—Dean—selecting computer software appropriate to his level).

Inclusive schooling works best where there is cooperative learning, and where there are activity-based models where language and learning are taught across all activities.

Remember, there is nothing about segregation that ensures that the necessary resources will be available.

The example of another student—Desiree—who has autism, highlighted the fact that most if not all of the aversive practices used in schooling are carried out in segregated classrooms. In inclusive schooling, the aversive practices formerly used with Desiree while in segregated schooling would be considered unacceptable.

It's been found that the affect of the disability on the ability of a person cannot be ascertained until the person is fully included. Segregation doesn't discover the aspirations or potential of the person.

Extra-curricular activities are important to people like Desiree.

Being a teenager is integral to our development as adults. The only place to develop is in the company of other teenagers as they try to develop a sense of identity. This can only come about in the right environment - through being included. You need role models around you to grow up - despite the trauma for parents ! It's important to have a group of friends to hang around with.

Wrong assumption: “No-one could be friends with my son/daughter”. This attitude is a reflection on how hurtful we've been towards people with disabilities.

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### OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (WHERE SEGREGATED) :

- Limited or no choice (more likely to have options through being included)
- Limited dreams, futures and career aspirations
- Poverty - segregated and congregated (The reality is that people with disabilities are more likely to be impoverished throughout life in terms of friendships, wealth and career)
- Loneliness - insecurity, failure
- Limited life experiences—boredom (Devaluation goes hand in hand with segregation. The greater the disability the greater likelihood of loneliness, isolation on reliance on parents,
- Limited expectations and possibilities (much more likely to be reliant on services)
- Lowered self-esteem
- Minimised potential (whereas inclusive classrooms adapt, modify, include support)
- restricted, managed and controlled
- devalued status reinforced

The assumption has been made that segregation is neutral. However, if you put students with learning difficulties together, the fact that they all have some problem makes it difficult to progress, but:

If you put those students in an environment where language is likely to have impact, the students are likely to respond and to see the meaning of language etc. and therefore are likely to learn more successfully.

Bruce gave the example of his son Todd, who had behaviour problems and was segregated in a class of children with behaviour problems. When he was placed in a regular classroom, Todd identified with the child in the class with behaviour problems as that was the role model he could most readily identify with from past experience.

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

(Inclusive education is about advocating for good, quality education for all students. It is not advocating for dumping students into regular classrooms and failing to modify or adapt, removing resources or not providing them to teachers. That is not Inclusive Education, it is bad education.)

- Quality where someone with disabilities is included
- Improved self-esteem (esp. when appropriately supported)
- Opportunities for friendship (which don't exist when you're being segregated and bussed long distances to school; then you may not have the option to get together, call each other, talk to each other)
- Sense of belonging
- Meaningful curriculum
- Contributory member
- Improved future
- Life-enriching experiences
- Individualisation

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- Valued role models (people with disabilities are much less likely to have behavioural difficulties in a regular classroom)
- Positive
- Independence
- Participation
- Expectations and cues (A normative environment provides much more educational training towards generalisation than the artificial ones that you find in the segregated environment.)
- With people with more severe disabilities in a segregated environment you're often looking for opportunities to allow for and work towards generalisation. If you work with people in inclusive environments, you have the same considerations but are much more likely to capitalise on that to promote generalisation)
- Acceptance
- Greater potential
- Cost effective - not more expensive (People with disabilities used to have massive curriculums and massive amount of money, time and resources to develop separate curriculums as well as check lists for various disabilities. Now they're not needed because they relate to a different identity about people with disabilities and their place in the world and what education is about)
- All benefit (When Inclusive Education is done well, teachers in regular classrooms are suggesting that students in general are learning more about being creative, about individualising, about using the resources of the other students etc. and teachers are finding out that they're getting more out of their students than previously)
- Reduced inappropriate behaviour
- Consistent with best practices
- Choice
- Improved public understanding and acceptance (There has actually been less apprehension from regular teachers over the issue of inclusive schooling than from special education teachers and there has been difficulty dismantling the separation education system developed over time)
- Improved learning and development
- Increased motivation
- Greater array of and access to resources
- Identification

Political decisions are made on the basis of values and what will make points politically. When people with disabilities are supported by their communities, when you gather together around the school as parents and when you lobby for one common purpose, then you'll have the political will to make changes.

Research results coming out at present comparing inclusive practices to segregated ones favour Inclusive Education to an astronomical degree. One would expect (even if segregation was valued and legitimate and given the history of segregation as practised) much closer outcomes in terms of research parallels. This hasn't happened and Bruce suggested this is because the segregated education that exists was not built on educational knowledge - the strategies were developed within the segregated context.

## INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

There is no research that shows detrimental impact on non aboriginal disabled students in regular classrooms.

We need to ask why a student with a disability is seen as a burden and a challenge more than as a valued member when schools are approached seeking that student's inclusion. We need to find the necessary resources for inclusion of the student with disabilities, to stand by the student and want and desire that person to have a part in the school community and culture. It is here that they're much more likely to have a sense of belonging and a meaningful curriculum.

On the other hand, few schools have turned away a gifted student because of lack of resources...

### **VIDEO - "A CHANCE TO BELONG"**

The video illustrates what a small school system can do by reallocating its resources - this is the way most change has taken place in Canada.

The resources had already been put into place for segregated students - it then became a question of re-allocating them to include students and stopping spending money on resources that contributed towards segregation.

The following points were made in the video:

External public and parental pressure is usually necessary to change bureaucracies.

The result in this case was a model for integration. Special staff became more like collaborative consultants to regular teachers than replacing the work of regular teachers.

A philosophy and a strong sense of commitment are needed. The philosophy of Woodstock was that "the District believes that all children with special needs can learn, that the needs of children are best met in the classroom situation and the classroom teacher is responsible for all students assigned to his or her class".

The transition can be a difficult process. However, with a strong philosophical foundation, some flexibility and a good measure of foresight, obstacles were easily overcome.

Comment from Parents:

"Other students were such good models"

"My daughter has learned from her peers, language has developed, behaviour improved and she has been challenged by her peers".

Teachers and students are positive towards child—see him as another member of the group who has a few problems.

Comment from teacher:

*"Other students have benefited and learned from students with disabilities"*

*"More opportunities because they've been given the chance to learn with and from their peers"*

*"The success is so evident in that great things are happening to kids as a result of integration"*.



## INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

Teachers in Woodstock have access to a diverse support network:

1. Resource teacher - offers direct support
2. In-classroom support (includes teacher's aides)
3. Principal very involved in programmes - another support
4. In-service training planned to look at strategies and resources.

Individualised programmes seek to include parents and others close to the student in the planning process.

Woodstock is a small rural province with good provincial legislation, but there was still a lot of resistance to inclusive education and it was necessary to go to court to show how the legislation could work.

*The Teachers Union opposed Inclusive Education.*

As a result a legislative review took place. It found that Inclusive Education was working well and needed to continue. It found most resistance came from people who weren't practicing inclusive education, didn't want to or weren't being supported properly, and that where inclusive education was being carried out properly it was clearly appropriate.

*Inclusive Education is still not widespread but has expanded.*

Usually, the Canadian experience is similar to the Woodstock experience: Where there are problems, Inclusive Education won't solve those problems, it just puts them in an appropriate perspective.

If people are willing to work collaboratively, it's quite possible to deal with most problems. It is much more a question of understanding someone with a disability first and foremost as a person and working from there.

*Quote: "Is he a kid? Well, doesn't he belong?"*