

Education Propaganda Directory 2014

Pro.pa.gan.da: ideas or statements that are often false or exaggerated and that are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, a government etc. (Meriam. Webster dictionary)

The following statements are a collection of anecdotal comments from school members or even family and friends that are not helpful for the inclusive path we choose for our children. The responses are just a guide and should not be seen as a script but more something to draw ideas from.

Propaganda statement	An alternative point of view	Examples of how you might respond
"Your child needs to go to a special school."	Nobody "needs" to go to a special school. Children "need" to learn, to feel safe, to have friends, and to be treated with warmth and respect. All of those needs can be met in a regular school.	<i>"I have heard of no research to suggest that learning outcomes are improved in a special setting. What evidence are you basing your recommendation on?"</i>
"Your child isn't good enough to go to a regular school". "Your child is too far behind the other children. S/he is not ready for regular school."	Inclusive education policies affirm the right of all children to be enrolled in a mainstream school if that is what their parents wish. Schools are required to make reasonable adjustments so that all children can participate.	<i>"Inclusion is not about my son or daughter being 'good enough' or 'ready' for regular school. Every child can be included in regular school with a willingness to include and the right support. I hope we can talk about how my child can be included rather than why you think s/he can't."</i>
"Your child needs access to therapy and specialist services."	Many families have found the promises of therapists and extra services in special schools have come to naught. All schools, struggle with providing the required specialist services. The advantage of regular schools is the range of regular opportunities that they provide. School life is NOT just about therapy (even when a child has a disability).	<i>"We have accessed therapy and specialist services in the past and we will continue to monitor our child's needs in this area, but now that our child is school aged, the most important thing that they need is to be included in the regular life of our local school and to have the opportunity to learn and develop alongside children of their own age."</i>
"Our school doesn't have the funding to support your child."	Funding IS an issue (no matter which school a child goes to). Parents report, however, that schools prioritise their funding differently and can find funding when they are committed to inclusion. Also, support is not just about funding. There are many strategies that teachers can use so that students with disability can be included well.	<i>"I would be keen to talk about how my child can be supported to fully participate alongside his/her classmates. That may require some funding but not all types of support cost money. Obviously the overall budget of your school is not something I can help you with, but I am happy to discuss how we can work together to make sure my child can participate in the classroom."</i>

<p>“We can only provide support for XX hours.”</p>	<p>It is a mistake to equate support with teacher aide hours. In fact it can be to the detriment of good inclusive practice.</p>	<p><i>“I wonder if we can start with thinking about how my son/daughter can participate to the greatest extent possible in the classroom and the variety of ways that can happen. We need to consider the specific times when an extra person might be helpful and what their role with the class will be. I would certainly have concerns if the teacher aide was too attached to my child as I think this could act against their acceptance, friendships and their independence.”</i></p>
<p>“There are other schools that are better equipped to support your child.”</p>	<p>Inclusive education policies recognise that parents are entitled to enrol their child at the school of their choice. It is the school’s responsibility to provide the accommodation and support consistent with the legislation.</p>	<p><i>“I don’t accept that children with disability need “special places”. I have great confidence that this is the correct school for us. In the long-term, it is very important to me that my child grows up as part of this community.”</i></p>
<p>“You would be disadvantaging your child if you sent them to this school.”</p>	<p>There is no empirical evidence to suggest that regular schools disadvantage any student. In fact there is a large body of research to support the inclusion of students with disability. It may not be the cultural norm for a particular school to include children with disability; however that is not a reason to feel that you are making a decision that is against your child’s best interest.</p>	<p><i>“I understand that you may be feeling daunted by enrolling my child here, but the research is very clear that children with disability do better on all measures – academically and socially – by being included in regular schools. I want the best for my child and this is why I am choosing regular school. I know that in choosing a regular school, I am investing in my child being known and valued in our community.”</i></p>
<p>“Your child wouldn’t be able to cope here.”</p>	<p>Schools are legally required, under the Education Standards of the Disability Discrimination Act, to make necessary, reasonable adjustments. This objection reflects low expectations rather than a genuine prediction based on knowledge of your child.</p>	<p><i>“My child has surprised me over the years with what s/he can do. I have confidence that with the right support, he/she will do well at this school. Let’s talk instead about HOW my son/daughter can be supported to do well here.”</i></p>
<p>“Your child won’t have friends.”</p>	<p>Children are more likely to make friends when they spend time together in shared activities over long periods of time. It is part of a teacher’s role to support the development of relationships.</p>	<p><i>“I would hope that you will encourage my son/daughter to develop relationships with his/her peers. It would make it much harder for my child to make friends with his/her regular peers if he was removed from his/her local community.”</i></p>

<p>“You are being unrealistic.”</p>	<p>Parents have found the inclusive education CAN happen and has been possible for children for children with significant impairment when there is a will to include. Seeking inclusive education is in line with policy and with the law.</p>	<p><i>“I have known my child all his/her life. I know them better than anyone else and I know all that they have achieved so far. Of course, there are challenges but only seeing challenges and not potential would be to sell my son or daughter short. I see no benefit in having low expectations about what is possible.”</i></p>
<p>“The gap will only get wider.”</p>	<p>Yes, there will be a “gap” between children’s ability levels. Inclusive education acknowledges that gap and proposes differentiated instruction to cater for differing levels of ability. Inclusive education also promotes that all children are valued and can learn no matter their level of ability. Research supports the belief that all children learn better together, no matter their level of ability.</p>	<p><i>“There is a gap and always will be. This gap may appear to get wider but the research is clear that my child will continue to learn and will do better in an inclusive setting. They will always need modifications. The ‘widening gap’ distracts us from the reality that being alongside community peers is the best strategy for staying firmly in the real world.”</i></p>
<p>“Your child does not need to learn academic subjects. They need to learn life skills.”</p>	<p>All children benefit from being exposed to a broad curriculum with the chance to learn academic skills (at their own level). “Life skills” programs are usually the product of low expectations.</p>	<p><i>“Actually I see it as my responsibility to teach my child life skills. The school years are short and precious so I want my son/daughter to be challenged to learn academic skills to the greatest extent possible. While the work will need to be modified, I want my child to have the opportunity to be immersed in the regular curriculum.”</i></p>
<p>“Your child needs to be in the special education unit.”</p>	<p>Inclusive education means full membership of regular classrooms. Wise use of withdrawal when necessary can be helpful, however extensive or full-time schooling in a segregated classroom has the same disadvantages as special schools.</p>	<p><i>“Being in the unit won’t help my son/daughter be seen or feel like they are a full member of their regular class. I would hope that we can address how he/she can be supported in the classroom.”</i></p>
<p>“Your child won’t be able to go on that excursion/camp/school event.”</p>	<p>Inclusive education means participation in the life of the school; this means the same activities that the other children participate in. Accommodating this is also an important part of meeting legal obligations to include.</p>	<p><i>“Attending the excursion/camp is an important part of being at school. I want my child to participate. What do we need to do to make sure they can take part alongside their classmates?”</i></p>

“We won’t be able to deal with your child’s behaviour. You will have to come to school and collect your child if they cause any trouble.”

Teachers may feel confronted by certain behaviours and may not know what to do. It is good educational practice, however, to develop functional behaviour plans so that they can respond positively when children’s behaviour is challenging. It is unreasonable to send children home as a behaviour strategy.

“I would sincerely hope that we can have a well thought out plan about how we might ensure my child is happy and settled at school. I think when people know him/her well and develop a good relationship with my child that many difficulties can be avoided. It will be really important that everyone in the school is on the same page so that people grow more confident in understanding my son/daughter’s needs.”