



A Teacher on Opportunities for Youth with Special Needs

Transcript

Liam Cameron: As a secondary school teacher in special programs one of the concerns that I've always had is just the fact that some of students, once they leave us at age 21, even with very supportive networks--like good parents and consultants from the Board that make very good suggestions--we still have some students that are... not intentionally undermined, but they have talents and gifts that could be used and they're there, and we want them to shine and give them the opportunity. And sometimes it takes even more than diligent programs; sometimes it takes that extra step.

Networking, coordinating with programs and organizations like L'Arche Canada, I think philosophically and certainly spiritually, makes a lot of sense because it'll help us guide our students and give them opportunities after they leave us. And the nice thing, I think, about one of the possibilities of this particular project* for example, is that some of them might be able to come back or stay within our (school) system--the system that nurtured them. And now they're going to nurture others, as they've been doing all along the way anyway, the way I look at it. And now, they're young adults. Let them...they can find meaning within our own system, in addition to whatever else they might have out there.

There are other good programs, of course. Some of them have long waiting lists. There are practical considerations. Some parents can't afford private programming. These are all practical things. We're not doing this (project) just as a band-aid solution to lack of programming or waiting lists. It's a good thing in its own right as far as I'm concerned. Philosophically and spiritually--in terms of community-building, a sense of belonging—it makes perfect sense.

(The project was inspired by Kim's full-time volunteer work in her local elementary school and set out by Principal Linda Alonzi and colleagues including Liam Cameron, of the Toronto Catholic District School Board.)

