



PlayFair Teams

Transcript

Jack Pearpoint: Life is about relationships. It's about belonging. It's not about isolation and loneliness and yet isolation and loneliness are endemic in our society, they are undermining our capacity to get along in schools and in communities throughout. It's an issue we've got to deal with.

PlayFair Teams is one of a family of tools to begin dealing with that right up front and doing it now. It challenges it by saying, "Let's do this stuff together." And it's an invitation for students who are systematically excluded, who don't have an opportunity to join in to be with other people and do things together. And when students do things together they discover important truths: they learn to listen to one another, a critical skill in our society; they learn to respect one another; they learn that everybody has gifts and they respect them deeply; they learn that bullying doesn't work nearly as well as we thought; they learn to get along. These are skills that we need in our society. We have an opportunity in schools to do something about it because everybody's there.

And so now is the time. And if we take this opportunity with PlayFair Teams--and any other way to put people together, to do things together, to learn things together--we are tackling a lifelong problem, because students who are in school today are going to learn together, live together, work together, play together, worship together, or not, depending on whether we begin those critical teaching lessons now.

We believe that together we're better, everybody belongs, and PlayFair Teams is a good way to begin that journey.

Gary Bunch: All my life I've been an educator. I've worked in many parts of education: first, as a classroom teacher, then as a principle, later as a superintendent of schools. In those changing roles there were changing tasks, different viewpoints looking back on the education system, but one thing always remained the same. The central task was to create a community of learners: students, teachers, parents, everyone.



Within that desire to create a community of learners, we continue to have challenges. First, we were challenged by the issue of gender: could males and females learn together? We've solved that. Then we had the issue of race: could people coming from different races learn together? We haven't succeeded there yet fully, but we've moved a long way. In Canada we're now faced with issues of varying ethnicities, varying languages, more so than we ever were before, but we have managed to bring those groups into the mainstream, into the fullness of community of schools. One group continues to elude us. And those are the people we have called disabled. We have not viewed them as learners, but now we are beginning to. First we did it through integration, where they could be part-time with the other students. Unfortunately, some people always remained apart in special situations, in special settings.

We're now moving into the phase, the reality, of including all learners, all children, in the community of schools. We are learning the lessons of how to work with those people in terms of their needs and their abilities, and to recognize that everyone has needs and abilities, and they can be together and they can learn together--everyone as learners! And if we can accomplish that in schools then we can do the same thing in the wider community when it comes down to adults and adulthood, adolescence, wherever people are in their community. We can bring them all together in equity

(Jack and Gary are co-founders of PlayFair Teams. Inclusion Press and L'Arche Canada have put some of their materials together in "A Resource Package on Belonging: Doing Equity Across the Curriculum." A teacher's guide gives suggestions for using this kit with various grade levels up to senior high school. Contact www.inclusion.com or education@larche.ca)

