



Teachers Can Foster Inclusion

Transcript

Lauchie MacKinnon (teacher): Jonathan was really lucky. His peer group was very accepting, and like I said before, the teachers really created that environment. I particularly remember Sherry Rankin and Jerome Stewart creating that; including them and making them a part of that. But for a lot of other kids, the teachers don't see that as important, or see it as their job--and not because they don't care but because they look at it and they go, "My job is to teach Social Studies. It's not my job to teach social skills. That's what the YSF does or the Special Education teacher does." And they (these two teachers) bought into that right away and made sure that they (the students with disabilities) had a spot to be in the classroom. They didn't always have to be the centre stage but they were a part of it.

And the other thing was that at the end of the year we did a staff appreciation day. I don't have a camera, or a picture of that, but at the end of the year we made certificates for all the classrooms and all the students and we made a dinner for all the teachers and the boys (who had intellectual disabilities), they picked fresh flowers and put them in cans, wrapped them up, made spaghetti. The boys made the spaghetti. I am proud to say that no one passed away after the spaghetti! But it was just a way of including people in the process and always looking for how to make them a part of the bigger piece of the school.

Josie MacEachern (mother) That's very important if a teacher is able to help with those difficult things, because parents, you know--you try your best, you try really hard to find the resources, to find the books, but sometimes they're just not there. But if you brainstorm with a few people, people like yourself, people who have been to university and learned about this stuff, then it makes it all that much easier. I remember when Jonathan was in grade 9 or 10 and we still had inclusion then, but some of the teachers weren't really buying into it.

I remember going to one of the teachers and saying, "I don't feel that Jonathan is getting much out of this class, you know. Are you giving him much time?" And he said to me, "You know, well, I wasn't really...when I went to university, I learned how to teach math and physics and chemistry and things like that. I didn't learn how to teach those subjects



to people with disabilities.” And I didn’t know what to say to that, but I just said to that teacher, “Whatever you can do for Jonathan now will make him a better person, and it will make his life easier in 10 years’ time and in 20 years’ time.” And I don’t know where that came from, but it really helped that individual teacher understand that even the smallest thing, even though he didn’t take this job at (name of school) to teach someone with a developmental disability, nonetheless, Jonathan was in his class and he was accountable for him as well.”

(With thanks to Lauchie MacKinnon and Josie MacEachern and to L’Arche Cape Breton for videotaping.)

