

A person with short brown hair, seen from the back, wearing a white t-shirt and a black backpack with a camouflage pattern. They are standing in front of a dark background with a vertical white line.

Provincial Outreach Programs are Inclusive Practice

by

Kathy Keyworth

District Principal of Learning Support Services

(Retired)

*"When everyone is included,
everyone wins."*

- Jesse Jackson

By ratifying the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010, Canada committed to ensuring an “inclusive education system at all levels.” Article 24 specifically states that education systems should be directed so “persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live,” and “effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion” ¹. The purpose of the Human Rights Code in BC is to “foster a society in British Columbia in which there are no impediments to full and free participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of British Columbia” ². It goes on further to say that we cannot discriminate against someone “because of the Indigenous identity, race, colour... physical or mental disability... of that person or class of persons.” ³

As inclusive educators, we believe that all students belong in their neighbourhood schools, and we work diligently to ensure equitable access to academic and social programming for all. To do this, the school leaders must provide opportunities for staff to develop skills and understanding about educational practices that support students with disabilities and diverse abilities. The school administrator must have a vision for inclusion, the ability to organize (and re-organize) school structures and supports, and the understanding of how to clearly set goals and directions for staff to follow. In addition, school leaders must provide for collaborative opportunities to build staff capacity. Through transformational and instructional leadership, schools can truly become a place of inclusion.

Provincial Outreach Programs

One way I have been able to engage school teams in the collaborative process while promoting inclusive practices is through education, training, and

1 UN CRPD, 2006.
2 <https://bit.ly/48R0iBv>
3 <https://bit.ly/48R0iBv>

promotion of regular school-based and district team meetings. When strategies related to intervention and prevention require another layer of support beyond district specialists, I have enlisted the support of Provincial Outreach Programs (POP). These programs are funded by the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and each POP provides unique specialized services designed to serve schools well. POP provide outreach services to support educators, students, and families to meet the needs of students with diverse abilities within the public education system. Staff are experts in their field who work to support the academic, physical, social, and emotional needs of students.

Each POP listed below has a distinctive mandate and operates under its own service delivery model; however, the following services are generally provided by all programs:

- Sharing of best practices based on current research
- Building capacity amongst school-based teams by providing in-person training, webinars, mentorship, and in-service
- Developing and sharing quality learning resources and tools
- Providing tools for accessibility to curriculum that nurtures inclusion

ARC-BC	Accessible Resource Centre
POPARD	Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders
POPDB	Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deaf-Blindness
POPDHH	Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf & Hard of Hearing
POPFASD	Program Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder
PRCVI	Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired
SET-BC	Special Education Technology – British Columbia
	Inclusion Outreach
	Auditory Outreach



*“We will all profit from a more
diverse, inclusive society,
understanding, accommodating,
even celebrating our differences,
while pulling together for the
common good.”*

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Benefits of Enlisting Services

All POP offer both in-person and virtual professional development. While the programs are designed for specific disabilities and diverse abilities, they are really the basis of good teaching and can be applied in many classrooms and situations. POPFASD, for example, has an FASD-Informed Teaching (FIT) Framework. It focuses on four areas: knowing your student, brain-based needs, environment, and teaching practices to create a sense of belonging for students. POPARD offers half, one-, and two-day workshops centered around working with challenging behaviours and supporting students who are minimally verbal. POPDHH offers cultural opportunities for students, including Friendship Day and Showcase. They also offer mentorship to Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) teachers. PRCVI offers resources and training, as well as alternate formats of texts. ARC-BC offers a workshop on Designing for Inclusion: Creating Accessible Educational Materials for All Learners, and provides alternative texts for any student with a print disability, including learning disabilities.

A Personalized Experience with Inclusion Outreach

In my role as a District Principal of Learning Support Services, I was able to work with Inclusion Outreach to support a student with complex and multiple disabilities. The purpose of Inclusion Outreach is to develop meaningful and inclusive programs for K-12 students. I worked alongside a school team, district staff, and the provincial team to identify barriers towards inclusion, reduce violent incidents, and increase the school team's confidence in their ability to change instructional practices to meet students where they are at.

The process for accessing support through Inclusion Outreach was having the student's case manager complete a referral form, and send it to the District Partner for approval before submission. A consultant from Inclusion Outreach came to the school and worked onsite for the entire week to observe the student, and collaborate with school staff and caregivers; they helped create Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals around five quality of life outcomes and provided training on instructional strategies. All

documents are stored by Inclusion Outreach on a student-specific website that is designed to be used by all case managers as the student progresses through school. Through the student website, the Inclusion Outreach team provides follow-up service at a distance. School teams can upload videos for feedback. Inclusion Outreach remains involved with the student for their entire school career. As a result of Inclusion Outreach's involvement, the student in our care has been able to strengthen their gifts and improve their quality of life while participating in events with their peers. Additionally, the school team was excited to participate in the four-series course on Supporting the Inclusion of Students with Complex Needs, which is a free course on Open School BC that is available to anyone. ⁴

The Value of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education strives to ensure that every child has the right to quality education and learning. I

4 openschool.bc.ca/inclusionoutreach

believe that inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn, and develop the skills they need to thrive. Inclusive education is essential in changing societal discriminatory attitudes. Respect and understanding grow when students of diverse abilities can learn and play together. Inclusive systems value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all. My career has been based on these core values and I have enjoyed every aspect of my chosen career helping school and home teams access the resources they need to best support students in their communities.

Accessing POP

If you would like to learn more about Provincial Outreach Programs, contact your Director of Learning Support services, visit the Ministry of Education and Child Care website, or visit the POP website to locate your district partner.

Links

- bit.ly/CRPD_
- bit.ly/BCHRC_
- bit.ly/SEPMK12
- bit.ly/IERK12
- bit.ly/INCLBC_

- Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Human Rights Code
- Special Education Policy Manual
- Inclusive education resources - Province of British Columbia
- Home - Inclusion BC

*"Strength lies in differences,
not in similarities."*

- Stephen R. Covey

