

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TALKING POINTS

## *Explaining the issue to a decision-maker*

*We have provided a loose outline with key points that you can use at your meetings. We suggest that you personalize your approach and begin with a brief version of your family's story and the positive impact inclusive education has had or could have on your lives.*

- While the government has promoted choice in education, it has not acted to ensure choice for parents of children with intellectual disabilities who want their child to be included and supported in the regular education classroom with their same-aged non-disabled peers.
- Inclusive education takes place when students with intellectual disabilities attend their neighbourhood/community schools (or school of choice) learning together with their same aged non-disabled peers in the regular education classroom and are included as participating and contributing members in all aspects of school life, with appropriate supports as necessary.
- Segregated or special schools or classes, partial integration and partial school days are not inclusion.
- Many Alberta schools and school districts offer inclusive education but others, with the same funding, deny the request of a parent for their child with an intellectual disability to be included.
- Obtaining access to a quality inclusive education remains a yearly challenge for thousands of families.
- For many of these families, access to an inclusive education is outright denied by a principal or division representatives. Those families who currently have access to a quality inclusive education live in fear that the next teacher or the next principal at the next school, may not agree to honour their request to continue the child's inclusive education.
- The fact that one school in a district can honour the choice of an inclusive education while another in the same district will deny it demonstrates that whether inclusive education is available is not a matter of funding, class sizes, or the nature of student's disability.
- In many cases parents and educators who assume segregated classes are the only solution to meeting diverse students' needs in have never seen a school authority that fully dedicated its teaching staff, consultants and other resources to inclusive rather than segregated classes.

- School authorities that consistently honour this parent choice do so by allocating available funding equitably, and by not concentrating resources in segregated classrooms. Over 45 years of educational research demonstrates including children with intellectual disabilities with supports provided in regular classrooms rather than in segregated special education classes, is the model with the strongest academic and social outcomes.
- Are you committed to advocating for true and equitable access to inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in Alberta?
- Will you commit to supporting the right for families to choose a fully inclusive education which is defined in Ministerial Order 015/2004 as specially designed instruction and support in regular classrooms and neighbourhood schools?