

Getting to Inclusion

Carrle Melsom

There is a book that was published many years ago called *Including All of Us*. The journey toward that goal is a long bumpy one, and the road continues to stretch ahead of us. But oh the rewards, the challenges, and learning for those who actively embrace that journey!

Of course, you don't have to embrace the journey to find yourself on this road—I've always had children with all kinds of needs and abilities in my classrooms. Some have had identified special needs and some have not. Once they entered my room, each child relied on my colleagues and I for the same thing—acceptance, care, and education.

Early on in my career I felt poorly equipped and poorly supported in meeting the needs of all those children, in all their individual variety. Over time I grew to realize that the strategies I might use in the care and education of any child were the basis of the strategies I'd employ to include every child who entered the classroom. Accept, accommodate, and advocate became my mantra.

Recently the Province of Nova Scotia turned a major corner on the road toward inclusion.

The Supported Child Care Grant offered by the Department of Community Services (<http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/provider/SupportedChildCare.html>) has allowed programs to shift their focus from how to include one particular child to how to create and

sustain an inclusive child care program that allows programs to include any child who might enroll.



What a change! With that change has come the possibility of new ways of working and thinking about the inclusion of children with special needs. Figuring out what it might mean for our programs and the children and families we work with is the challenge we are faced with now.

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Jane Cawley, NSCECE Executive Director, helps with placement of our new sign. Come see it for yourself at our new location, 6208 Quinpool Road, Halifax

Inside this issue:

- We are the If ...
- Director's Message
- Toward Inclusive Practice

A publication informing the early childhood education community of events, services and professional development opportunities offered by the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education

Please circulate and post this newsletter!

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to be added to our e-mail list or
visit our website at
www.nscece.ca**

Getting to Inclusion

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This change has meant that some programs have created new inclusion policies and are defining new roles for staff. What these changes mean for inclusion practice in each program is only slowly emerging. Many people are looking for support as they try to determine what this new type of inclusion framework will mean for their children, families, and staff.

The Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education and the ECE Resource Centre are available in both formal and informal ways to assist programs as they journey on that bumpy road toward inclusion. The College is currently circulating a survey to help identify training and professional development needs around inclusion policy, practice, and special needs. The goal is to use this survey to create the kinds of training you need and want to see.

In the Resource Centre we continue to expand the collection of materials related to working with children with special needs. We also have materials on coaching and mentoring colleagues in early childhood education.

I recently became involved with an ad-hoc group of “champions for inclusion”. This group wants to create a supportive network and learning community for those interested in making inclusion work. A first step toward this goal is the **All Together Now!** event advertised at the bottom of this page; stay tuned for more information. I would like to send a big shout out to Justin West who got the ball rolling for this group by advocating for himself and his centre, and by reaching out to others to make something happen. That’s how we’ll make inclusion work!

We Are the If—Inclusion in Practice

Carrie Melsom

Let me tell you the story that lies behind this photograph of two girls (one of whom is playing harmonica for the other). These two girls started in the infant room together. As I look back over photographs I see they were often together. They were classmates and friends who enjoyed each other’s company. This is the kind of picture that illustrates the benefits of inclusive early learning and child care. Although you don’t see me, I’m in this photo too. I’m the IF.



On this day, the child with the harmonica marched around the playground enjoying her music and activity—totally in her own world. I saw how the other child watched the harmonica player intently; following the sound of the harmonica every time it went by. I mentioned to the harmonica player how much her friend liked the music, “She’s really watching you.” The result was the private concert seen in the photo. An early childhood educator has many roles. Supporting relationships is one of my favourites.

“We must not assess what the child knows, or knows how to do, but what he or she would do IF ...

We are the IF.”

The Educators of Reggio Emilia

A Message from the Director

Dear Early Childhood Colleagues,

Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education has many things to celebrate this fall.

- Our 1st year enrolment for the full time program is at an all time high and our 2nd year returning class is also at record numbers. As we head into a new term we will be offering 2 courses per semester for the part-time offerings.
- We said goodbye to Loreen Pawlowski, FT faculty member in the spring but are delighted to have that position filled by Nicki Beck-Chisholm. Many of you know her through her work at Mount Saint Vincent University Child Study Centre and as an advocate for inclusion.
- Planning and actually moving to 6208 Quinpool Road has been challenging, exciting, stressful, and rewarding – sort of sounds like the path of an early childhood educator. I have had to utilize all of my skill sets and acquire many new ones to make this a reality.

Over the next several months we look forward to showing off our new space and hope to see you at the official grand opening – date to be announced.

Jane Cawley

Looking for networking & support or resources & information about working in inclusive ECE settings? Join a group of inclusion champions for a week-end of workshops, planning, and community building.

NSCECE

6208

**Quinpool Rd,
2nd Fl. Hfx.**

Friday, Nov 5th

7:00 PM &

**Saturday,
November 6th**

8:30–4:00

All Together Now!

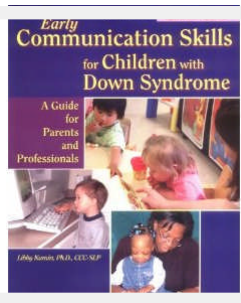
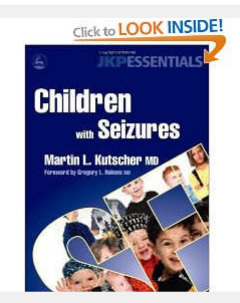
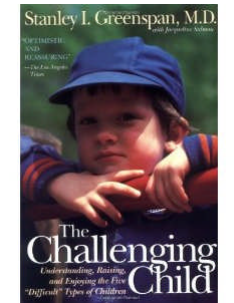
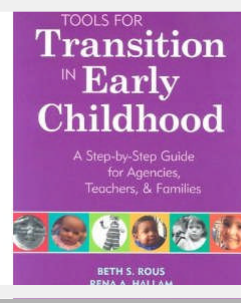
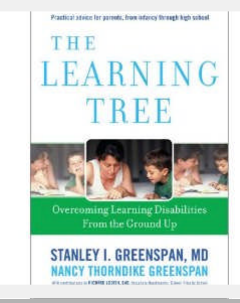
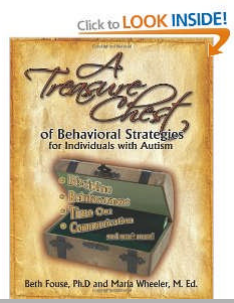
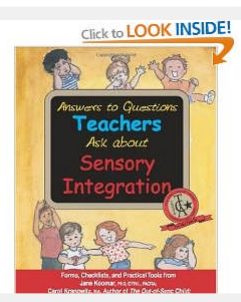
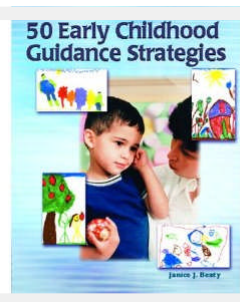
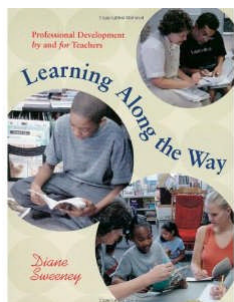
Info: CCCNS (902)423-8199

In the Resource Centre

Carrle Melsom

One reality about working with children with special needs is that you will always have moments when you feel like you need more information; this isn't working—I need help! There are lots of wonderful books in the Resource Centre to support your work with children who have special needs. Some of them like *Building Blocks* (371.9 MONA); *Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Settings* (371.9 PAA); *The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom* (371.9 GO); and *Building Bridges Through Sensory Integration* (371.94 YAC) are my go-to books for quick reference and support. I've just finished placing an order for even more resources. Below are some of the titles you can expect to find on our shelves soon. I hope they will become part of your go-to list.

For those who learn best in conversation, one of the goals of the **All Together Now!** event is to start a discussion group for people working with children with special needs in their programs. This group will be meeting with the support and facilitation of the NSCECE Resource Centre. You can look forward to more information about this group in the winter newsletter.



Resource Centre services are offered with support from the Department of Community Services, Early Childhood Education Training Initiative.

Resource Centre Professional Development Opportunities for Centres or Groups

- **Reaching In ... Reaching Out - Promoting Resiliency in Young Children in Child Care** (2 day training)
- **The Encouraging Classroom: Social Problem Solving for Preschoolers** (full day workshop)
- **Magical Environments** (1/2 day workshop)
- **Meeting the Challenge: Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviours** (full day or 3 sessions)
- **What are we doing here? Reconnecting with your vision** (documentation visit + workshop)
- **Tumble Bugs Active Play** (1/2 day leader training)
- **The Affective Curriculum** (five, 3-hour workshops focused on cultural competence, self-esteem, optimism, problem solving, and emotional intelligence)
- **Hold a Staff Meeting or Work Bee in the Resource Centre**

Have a professional development need you don't see listed here? Call Carrie Melsom, NSCECE Resource Centre Coordinator at 423-7114 ext. 227 to discuss the possibility of a workshop designed for your centre or group.



6208 Quinpool road (2nd Floor)
Halifax, NS B3L 1A3
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Some NSCECE Practicum Contact Teachers at our Practicum PD/Recognition Day in March 2010.

At the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education, we provide an opportunity for students to study and gain experience in Early Childhood Education through a diverse range of courses and practical settings.

We are proud to lay the foundation for the personal and professional growth and development of our students. It is our hope and goal that NSCECE graduates continue to learn, practice and reflect throughout their years in early childhood education.



Join the crowd—become a member today!

Take advantage of the many services provided with a NSCECE Resource Centre membership

Resources for the early childhood community



Organization members

Individual members

E-mail: resourcecentre@nscece.ca

Tel: (902) 423-7114 ext. 227



A Personal Journey Toward Inclusive Practice

Carrie Melsom

I was teaching preschool when children from a nearby program began visiting to experience a mainstream setting. It was a pleasure having them. I had no particular skills or training related to working with children with special needs but I held an absolute belief in the right of all children to participate in the community, as full members of the community. Based on this experience I became a teacher with an interest in working with children with special needs.

Inclusion is about participation. My job as a teacher in an inclusive classroom is to facilitate and support each child's participation in all daily routines and learning activities. My training as an early childhood educator gave me the tools to do that in a developmentally appropriate way; each child taught me what the individually appropriate way would be.

The children and I worked together to

make it work; for that child, for the other children, and for me. I've learned there are as many ways of having a specific challenge as there are ways of being human. A diagnosis gives me broad strokes of understanding but the subtle shadings of what it means for each child are different. Often children I worked with had no diagnosis; their challenges were obvious but the reasons for them, and the road forward were unclear. I learned to accept where they were, accommodate where I could, and advocate for the resources and support we needed to move forward.

I was fortunate to work in programs with colleagues who were willing to mentor me. I also often had early interventionists visiting the children I worked with. Their role was to help facilitate the inclusion process, a part of which meant actively mentoring me in my practice and alerting me to skills, techniques, and best practices in the field. Through them I found out about workshops that related to the needs of children I

was working with. I took advantage of many of these opportunities and was richly rewarded by my growing skill set and ability to accommodate and support the active participation of children who faced challenges in their learning and development.

Children do not come to us in isolation. Families are key. They know their child and are often generous with their insights. From them I learned about what it means to have a child who has special needs, and how important it is to find a place that welcomes all children. Therapists and doctors tend to focus on remediation and the broken bits—what's not working. I've learned that one of the most important gifts I can give a family is to celebrate and enjoy their child with them. I was often able to give them the gift of seeing their child through my eyes; as sturdy, capable, and independent. I work with adults now, but I hope that in mentoring and teaching I can continue to share the gift of seeing the child first and the challenges later.