

Tyler Munro – Submission

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Mr. Chair, Trustees, thank you for this opportunity to delegate.

Boards that follow the IPRC/ISP model of special education struggle with

- Parent complaints
- Staff frustration
- Poor results

In 1969 Inclusive Education was developed by the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic board. It took years to implement but they found an effective solution to the problems in special education by placing the student at the centre of all decisions.

50 years later Pope Francis is telling Catholic Educators this is the model we should strive emulate.

There is no question, Inclusion is better, 30 years of researchers have proven it.

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What is an Inclusive Education:

Inclusive education brings all students together in a typical age appropriate classroom in their community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students.

There is a robust support system in place to serve the teachers and students. It is not a one-size fits all solution. It is a system that adjusts quickly to changing student needs. Without that support system you do not have Inclusion.

There were some unexpected benefits beyond special education.

- All students did better academically and socially.
- They were spending less.
- Teachers developed a broader range of skills which made teaching easier.
- School became more calm as students were more engaged.

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Compare the systems.

Approach:

IPRC/ISP is System Focused, Reactive, Assumes limits in learning, uses separate classrooms, the student becomes one of “those kids”.

Inclusion is Student Focused, Staff are prepared, assumes the student can learn and the student is a member of their class.

Teachers:

In the IPRC/ISP system teacher knowledge is compartmentalized.

With Inclusion teacher knowledge is shared broadly between teachers, year to year, formally and informally. Teachers develop a broader range of skills.

Learning:

In ISP class learning is based on alternate expectations.

In the Inclusive class learning expectations may be lower but still follow Ministry curriculum.

Outcome:

The outcome speaks for itself and it is not hard to see why Inclusiveness is more effective.

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The very nature of the IPRC/ISP system creates adversarial situations.

Parents cooperate in an Inclusive system as they see their child is the centre of all decisions, not a system.

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The Motion:

The board definition of Inclusion is self contradicting. Segregation of students into

a congregated setting is not an Inclusive model of education. I don't doubt ISP classes are needed under the current system and for the foreseeable future but let's not say having them makes us Inclusive. Please have this definition corrected.

The motion is not an all in, all at once recommendation. A transition will take time potentially upwards of 15 years as most boards start in Kindergarten then add a grade each year. Students in the system now will likely not benefit from Inclusion. This is a motion for the benefit of future students. It starts with the senior team taking the time to learn what Inclusion is and how our students would benefit.

The motion is saying there is a more effective system out there that is endorsed by global leaders in education.

The Senior Team is best qualified to evaluate Inclusion, not SEAC, not parents, or other organizations. This needs to be referred to them. They are the people with the professional knowledge who can make informed decisions and recommendations.

Some potential options:

- A pilot program.
- Start a limited transition plan in Kindergarten.
- Look at a partial Inclusion model and keep ISP classes open for certain Identification or situations.
- Even a simple short term plan to investigate further from initial inquiries
- There can be a multi phase approach or
- another option

The motion does not place restrictions on the Sr. Team. They should proceed at a pace they feel is appropriate but nothing happens if the Sr. Team is not permitted to open the door and look around, look for possibilities that will benefit our students.

The motion expects the Sr. Team to consult with experts who have experience and decide what is best, determine the scope and timelines for any change, details would come later.

The motion has made no recommendation as to the future of ISP classes but with a more Inclusive approach to education we should see a natural reduction in ISP students and classes.

We have to continue operating ISP classes for the foreseeable future.

We may give parents the choice to have their child in an ISP class or regular class but that choice is not there today.

The motion puts this all in the Sr. Team's hands.

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Change creates uncertainty. Parents are worried and are assuming the worst case scenarios. There are a few people peddling fear of change but change is necessary for progress and the fear of Inclusion is unfounded. Trustees you have stated you want “transformational change” at the board. That cannot happen if you don’t allow viable possibilities to be investigated.

I spoke to a Trustee who was getting push back. The Trustee told me her parents didn’t like Inclusion. Then she said they really liked how Halton Catholic operates, the cooperation between staff and families was great, we should be more like them. They didn’t realize their ideal example of a good educational system was a board that practiced Inclusion. Do not let fear and the lack of knowledge decide the future of our students and our board.

We have a competent senior team. Although some may not realize it you, staff, students, parents rely on their competence. Let’s rely on that competence again to properly evaluate Inclusive Education and its benefits.

Trustees look at who supports Inclusion:

- UNESCO
- The education experts representing the 92 nation that signed the Salamanca Accord, and subsequent accords

- Experts and research for 30 years
- Ontario's Ministry of Education, US Dept. of Education, PISA and others educational authorities.
- Human Rights Groups including the Ontario Human Rights Commission and
- The Catholic Church

There are many jurisdictions who have made this transition including 19 in Ontario, New Brunswick, Italy, Ireland, many districts in the USA and around the world.

Last year you hired a new Director of Education from outside the board because you wanted “transformational change”. Dr. Browne knows Inclusion. It would fundamentally frustrate the desire for transformational change if we do not use the resources we already have and expand on them. I ask Trustees to support this motion and let needed changes start happening.

To close I'd like to remind all on Feb 20, 2020 Pope Francis told the Congregation for Catholic Education that more effort needs to be made to accelerate the inclusiveness of education. He did not say become inclusive tomorrow. I believe he was saying to all Catholic Educators and those responsible for it we need to move in that direction. Referring this motion to staff is a simple step that respects Pope Francis' statement and moves us to a better future.

Thank you