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Diversity in Education Module 10

Participate in this seminar to learn more about the role of the board of education in meeting the diverse needs of students. Module 10 workshop and resource materials include these important topics:

- Understanding diversity in Saskatchewan;
- Board member legal and moral obligations regarding diversity;
- Meeting students needs in schools; and,
- Multiculturalism.

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Introduction

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association supports the shared approach to education equity in Saskatchewan described in the Ministry of Education policy framework entitled *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future: A Policy Framework.*

Our Association is committed to working collaboratively to provide an educational system where all people have the opportunity to experience success, to enjoy human dignity and to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society. While much has already been accomplished for equity in education, we recognize that more can and must be done.

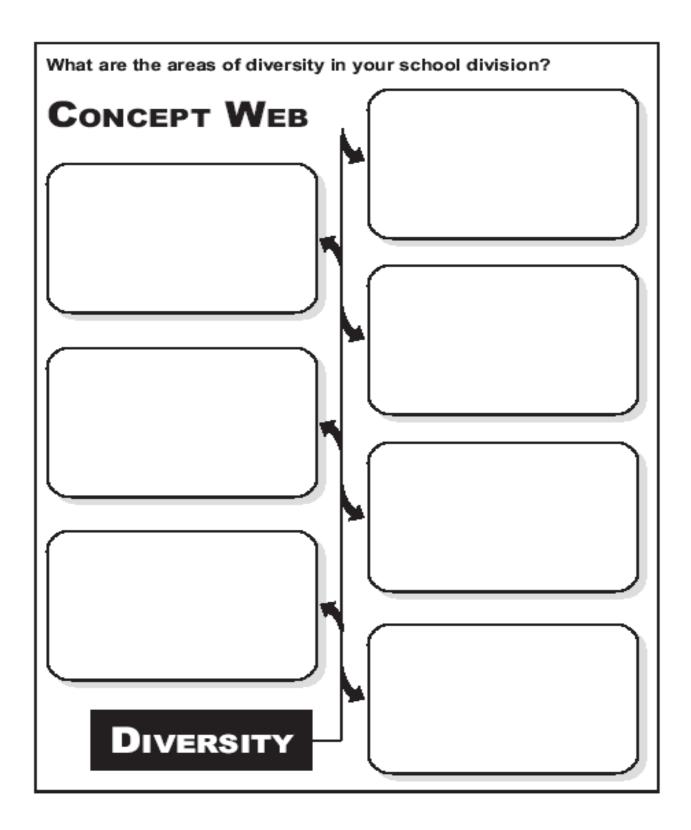
The purpose of this seminar is:

- To introduce diversity and initiate dialogue on the nature of diversity in Saskatchewan education;
- To provide an opportunity to reflect on the "as is" state while clarifying and exploring the rationale for addressing diversity issues in a proactive, positive way in our schools and classrooms; and,
- To develop plans and identify strategies for honouring diversity in our schools and creating environments in which all students can succeed.

Reflect on instances when you have experienced each of the following elements in your own learning experiences:

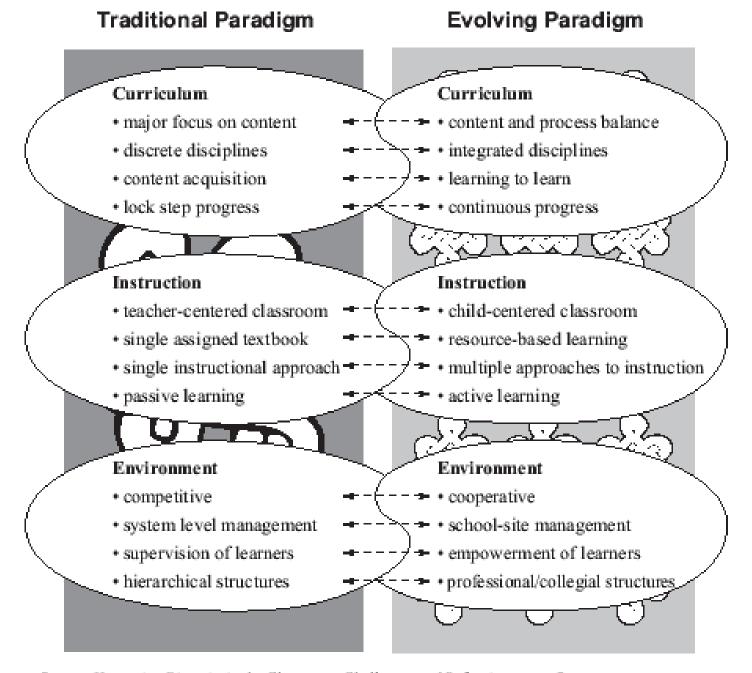
- **Open-mindedness**: Enables individuals to question all assumptions and rationales, to become experts at alternative points of view and to see things from the point of view of a diverse student population.
- **Responsibility**: Enables individuals to consider the future as well as the present, and acknowledge that their decisions and actions affect the future and the educational chances of their students.
- Whole-heartedness: Enables individuals to work through their fears and insecurities and take action designed to meet the challenges of a diverse student population.

Concept Web



Shifting Paradigms

SHIFTING PARADIGMS



Source: Honouring Diversity in the Classroom: Challenges and Reflections, page 7.

В	uilding Board Knowledge	
	What evidence of this paradigm shift do you see in your	SS
	system?	BA
2.	What impact does this shift have on expectations for diversity	support?
3.	How can this shift be supported at the board level?	

Saskatchewan's Scene

ASSESSING THE CURRENT STATE IN SASKATCHEWAN

- Up to 40% of children coming to school experience difficulty learning because of complex emotional, social, and health problems. These problems "put them at risk of failure in school" (Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report, 1995, p.5).
- By the year 2011, approximately one-third of the school population will be of Aboriginal ancestry, almost doubling the number of students of Aboriginal ancestry (Saskatchewan 2000, 1991).
- In 1991 only 12 percent of Aboriginal students completed Grade 12 compared to an overall graduation rate of 78.2 percent (Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report, 1995, p.21).
- In 1991, 25 percent of Saskatchewan children under the age of 7 lived in poverty.
- The poverty rate for children increased by 11 percent since 1981 (Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report, 1995, p.8).
- A total of 2,464 students with severe disabilities were enrolled in special education programs in 1994 (1.7%). Another 5-7 percent of the student population have varying learning and behavioural disabilities. Approximately 7-9% of the student population have some sort of disability (Saskatchewan Education, personal communication, 1995).
- 2.6% of Saskatchewan's population are members of visible minorities with higher concentrations in the major cities: Regina 5.1%, Saskatoon 4.7% (Statistics provided by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission).
- 74% of English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) students dropped out of school. Reasons varied from limited ability in English combined with limited first language proficiency, the requirement that E.S.L. students leave school by the age of 19, and their own impending sense of failure (Watt & Roessingh, 1994, p.5-6).
- Traditional pedagogy favours boys' learning patterns more than girls': teachers interact more with boys than girls and the interaction is more meaningful (Lather, 1991: Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Research Report #03-02 - Boys in School

Discussion and research regarding boys in school is growing. This work began because of the gender achievement gap - test results reported over the last decade indicate that girls are outperforming boys.

Boys are not achieving in school as well as they might. The issue of the achievement gap needs to be considered within the study of masculinity - and male socialization in society. Boys are also more likely to be involved in aggression, bullying, crime, suicide and the legal system. Boys inherit their sex, but they are socialized into their gender behaviour. In other words, boys' behaviour is the result of the way society forms them and makes them behave.

• What should be a school board's policy about gender and the boy question?

School systems are encouraged to examine how schools as gender institutions prompts teachers and students to develop an orientation to masculinity. Schools can be powerful on how boys develop their understanding of their maleness.

- Students from diverse backgrounds "are, on average, performing somewhat worse than students from other communities" (Begin & Caplan, 1994).
- Researchers argue that if the education system was working equitably, there
 should be an equal distribution of achievement across demographic or
 community lines.

These writers are drawing attention to the systemic discrimination or systemic barriers, usually unintended, which impede the learning opportunities of members of diverse groups. These barriers to learning may include curriculum materials, pedagogy, policies, practices, programs and staffing. The effect of these educational practices or conventions, that act as systemic barriers, can be that the equality rights of all students are not being met.

Source: Honouring Diversity in the Classroom: Challenges and Reflections, pages 10-12.

Legal Obligations

What obligations are reflected for you in these statements?

• Did you know that school curriculum, pedagogy, the learning environment, rules and regulations, are open to questioning and challenge under Human Rights Legislation if they act as systemic barriers to the equality rights of diverse groups of students?

Do you know that Lower Courts and Tribunals have ruled that:

- The reciting of the Lord's Prayer and readings from the Bible in public schools are unconstitutional (Zylberberg et al. v. Sudbury Board of Education, 1988: Canadian Civil Liberties association v. Ontario (Minister of Education), 1990; Russow v. British Columbia (A.G.), 1989; Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties Inc. v. Manitoba (Minister of Education), 1992).
- That harassment in schools violates the equality provisions of the Charter (Quebec Human Rights Commission v. Board of Education of Deux-Montagnes, 1994).
- That students with disabilities have a right to integration within their neighbourhood schools (Eaton v. Brant (Country) Board of Education, 1995).
- That school authorities have an obligation to combat harassment by undertaking substantive educational measures to neutralize an environment that condones harassment (Quebec Human Rights Commission v. Board of Education of Deux-Montagnes, 1994)

Do you know that the Supreme Court has ruled that:

- French speaking parents have a right to establish their own school boards consistent with s. 23 of the Charter (Mahe v. Alberta, 1990);
- The public's interest in public education is an overriding interest and cannot give way, without approval from the education ministry, to a parent's wish for religious home schooling (Jones v. The Queen, 1986);
- That employees of school boards whose religion is different than the
 majority must be accommodated by adjusting the work place so as to allow
 them to maintain their Sabbath (Renaud v. Board of Education of Central
 Okanogan No. 23 and Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 523,
 1992);
- That a teacher's freedom of expression does not include the right to promote hatred against a protected class (R. v. Keegstra, 1991).

Source: Honouring Diversity in the Classroom: Challenges and Reflections, pages 16-18.

Building Board Knowledge

1. What we do in our division?

Honouring Diversity



2. Why we do it?

3. Who benefits from what we do?

4. Who is burdened by what we do?

5. How can we adjust this practice to ensure all students develop to their potential?

6. What will I do to help this happen?

In-School Administration and Diversity

Research has found that the attitude of the in-school administrator toward inclusion is one of the main factors in the success or failure of attempts to provide inclusive education (Bain & Dolbel, 1991: Perner, 1991: Porter & Collicott, 1992). The administrator's attitude influences the attitudes of others, therefore creating a climate of acceptance or of rejection.

An administrator who believes in inclusive education will:

- Make a commitment to inclusion. This commitment will be reflected in the school philosophy and policies and in the actions of the administrator. Inclusion should be on-gong, planned, promoted, implemented and rewarded.
- Work to overcome fear and prejudices. This will involve the provision of resources, both print and human, to teach about inclusion, opportunities for open communication and opportunities for networking with others who have experienced inclusion.
- Involve teachers in the planning. Teachers need to be informed and to feel that they have opportunities to voice their opinions and to shape the school philosophy, policies and long-term plans.
- Address concerns and needs of teachers. Provide opportunities for teachers
 to voice their concerns and to discuss options to address them. Provide
 opportunities for teachers to communicate with each other as well as with
 those who have experienced inclusion. Provide resource materials,
 problem-solving sessions and networking time.
- Meet with teachers on a regular basis to listen, support, encourage, recognize and reward their efforts and contributions.
- Work to find the time and the resources necessary to support teachers in the classroom.
- Share experiences and assist in problem solving.
- Establish school-based teams and encourage collaboration, consultation and cooperation. Be an active member of these teams. Provide the necessary release time so that collaboration may occur. This may require creativity in the structuring of the school day.
- Encourage staff members to attend in-service sessions and to network with other teachers.

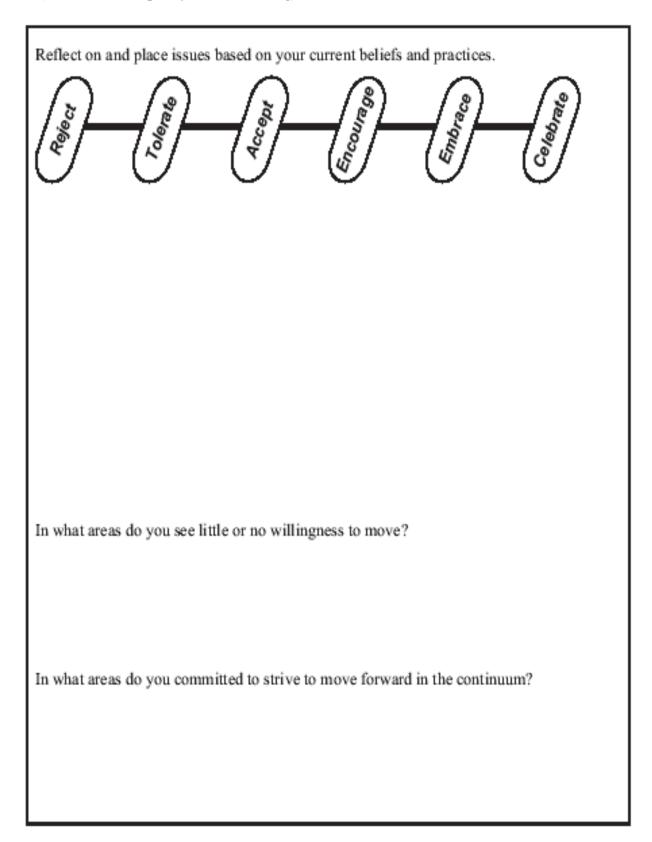
- Allow for changing job descriptions for special educators so that their role becomes that of a support to, a facilitator for, and a team-worker with the classroom teacher.
- Establish partnerships with parents and increase opportunities for parent involvement.
- Assign educational assistants to teachers. Try to avoid assigning the EA particular students. The EA should be interacting with all students.
- Reward successes and promote public awareness of the work that teachers are doing.
- Create a sense of community. Create an accepting and positive climate, one which encourages all members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students, to seek assistance, to collaborate, to be flexible, to take risks, to be creative and to be allowed to veer off the conventional path.
- Model the acceptance of all members of the school community.

Source: Creating an Inclusive Classroom: Integrating Students with Special Needs, pages 30-31.

Вι	Building Board Knowledge			
1.	How can your school board steer the school-based leaders attitudes toward diversity in education?	S S A		

Diversity Continuum

(Loewen as adapted from Eric Wong)



Diversity in the Classroom Book Series

Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit, in collaboration with The Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit, embarked on the development of a new series to address teachers' needs in the context of today's classroom. The series, Diversity in the Classroom, consists of seven documents on the themes of multicultural education, teaching pro-social skills, creating positive classroom environments, First Nations and Métis education, gender equity, the integration of special needs students and a foundational document for the series. These resources are respectful of the experiences of classroom teachers and their professionalism.

To order contact:
SPDU
2317 Avenue,
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7J 2H8
1-800-667-7762 or 1-306-374-1122
Email: SPDU@stf.sk.ca
Cost \$5.00/doc + GST + shipping & handling

Documents include:

7225 – Honouring diversity in the Classroom: Challenges and Reflections

Honouring Diversity in the Classroom: Challenges and Reflections is the foundation and introduction to the other documents in the series. It is a must for policy development and a review of current issues.

7226 - Multicultural Connections: Exploring Strategies and Issues

Multicultural Connections: Exploring Strategies and Issues is chock full of practical ideas for creating a rich multicultural environment for learning.

7227 - Growing Stronger: Teaching and Learning Responsibility

Growing Stronger: Teaching and Learning Responsibility is comprehensive, focused and practical. There are many ideas for working with students to encourage responsible decision making and taking responsibility for one's own actions.

7228 – Planning Together: Positive Classroom Environments

Planning Together: Positive Classroom Environments explores proactive and preventative strategies for classroom management and student discipline. A valuable

resource for all teachers.

7229 – Aboriginal Cultures and Perspectives: Making a Difference in the Classroom

Aboriginal Cultures and Perspectives: Making a Difference in the Classroom offers ideas to deepen your understanding of Aboriginal perspectives while providing practical suggestions.

7230 – A Voice for all Students: Realizing Gender Equity in Schools

A Voice for all Students: Realizing Gender Equity in Schools is he resource for you if you are interested in finding out if your teaching is gender biased, and you would like to know what you can do to help all students develop to their full potential.

7231 – Creating an Inclusive Classroom: Integrating Students with Special Needs

Creating an Inclusive Classroom: Integrating Students with Special Needs offers tools useful in creating inclusive classrooms, and provides the regular classroom teacher with strategies for meeting the diverse educational needs of students with special needs.

Building Board Knowledge	
1. List issues for teachers that are critical as they support diversity in their classrooms.	BA

Quotes

Creating an Inclusive Classroom

The United Nations; The Charter of Rights and Freedoms; The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code; The Saskatchewan Education Act, 1995; and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 9.1.2; recognize the right of all children to be educated in the least restrictive and most natural environment possible.

As much as there is diversity, all students have the same needs and desires: to be valued, to belong, and to be given the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to become contributing adults in our diverse society.

A Voice for all Students

Equity must become a proactive goal of schooling rather than the reactive response to wrongs committed. (Pollard, 1996) What you *don't* say can be just as strong as message as what you *do* say.

Aboriginal Cultures and Perspectives

Good acts done for the love of children become stories good for the ears of people from other bands; they become as coveted things, and are placed side by side with the stories of war achievements. - Nakota proverb

Planning Together

"It is not enough for a teacher to feel that he or she is a caring professional. The task is to communicate our caring to the student so that he or she feels cared about." (Morse, 1994)

Growing Stronger

I have noticed that happy people are constantly evaluating themselves and unhappy people are constantly evaluating others. (Dr. William Glasser)

Multicultural Connections

"This is what the Canadian experience is all about. To see if people who are different can live together and work together, to learn to regard diversity not with suspicion but as a cause for celebration." (Justice Thomas Berger)

Comparative research from a number of countries suggests that differences in school success among minorities is not just because of culture and language differences with the majority culture. Evidence suggests that if all students are treated alike, they are probably being denied equal educational opportunity.

A Multicultural Perspective

- A positive attitude toward multicultural diversity;
- Acceptance that there is more than one "right" way of looking at or doing things;
- A focus on commonalities and similarities as well as differences;
- Moving beyond awareness of differences to looking at attitudes about differences;
- An acknowledgment of bias and prejudice in self and others;
- Helping children to recognize racism and discrimination and work against them;
- Pervasive throughout the school curriculum and environment;
- Present all the time;
- Empowering, enriching and fun;
- Incorporates a variety of aspects of diverse cultures;
- A natural incorporation of all cultures in the school's ethos;
- A depiction of cultures in an authentic and realistic manner;
- A recognition that people from different cultures are part of the mainstream;
- A sensitive and meaningful treatment of diversity and aspects of other cultures;
- Attending to language as a core part of culture and cultural retention;
- Acknowledging and incorporating the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of staff and families;
- Placing a priority on developmental appropriateness;
- A philosophy that encompasses families and community;
- Drawing on experiences from the daily lives of people in the community;
- Integrative and interdisciplinary;
- A celebration of differences;
- A valuing of other cultures; and,
- A recognition that Canada is multilingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multiracial

Adapted from A. Stonehouse, 1991

A Multicultural Perspective is Not:

- Trying to get children to fit in;
- The view that one way is the right way over other ways;
- 'Colour blindness' and ignoring differences;
- Looking superficially at differences without asking and explaining why;
- Denial of bias, prejudice, racism and discrimination;
- Assuming that children are too young and see racism and discrimination and to act to counter them;
- A 'tourist' or 'museum' approach or additive in nature;
- Present only at specific times and only for children of minority cultures;
- A problem to overcome;
- 'Doing' a culture or country or a 'unit' about a group;
- Making a fuss over experiences and materials from other cultures;
- A focus on the exotic, unusual, or bizarre aspects of cultures;
- A depiction of minorities as not fitting into the social, economic and political life of the community;
- A Eurocentric or ethnocentric orientation a focus on the superficial, obvious or window dressing;
- Treating language or culture in isolation or as a learning deficiency;
- Just a matter of having token representation of people from other cultures in the school;
- Sacrificing or compromising developmental appropriateness for the sake of being multicultural;
- Just a set of activities for children;
- Attention to times long ago and places far away;
- Something tacked on, something extra;
- A conscious effort to get rid of differences or a view that they are deficits;
- A view of other cultures as deprived; or,
- A preoccupation with the concept of two founding nations.

Case Studies

Case Study #1 - In Dan's Best Interest

What if my student is so disruptive in class that the other students are losing out? Their right to enjoy an education is being undermined. What am I supposed to do?

Let us consider the following situation. Dan is in Grade 8. He is described by the staff as a "handful". The biggest problem seems to be his bullying which often results in physical fights. Many students are terrified of him. He has been reprimanded for harming students in the younger grades and disrupting the classroom many times. Without a doubt he is the subject of many telephone calls from upset parents. A number of progressive discipline methods have been tried but to no avail. The school administration decides that the time has come to expel him from the school. But is that fair? Doesn't Dan have the right to an education? On the other hand, don't the other students have the same right to an education - a right that is being disrupted by the behaviour of one student.

What is important to remember is that the rights and freedoms as set down in human rights laws and the Charter are not absolute rights. The Charter and provincial and territorial human rights legislation allow for the limiting of rights and freedoms under certain conditions. In other words, Dan's right to an education may be limited if it interferes, in a harmful way, with the rights of the collective. However, the justification for limiting Dan's right to an education rests with the educational decision makers

Section 1 of the Charter allows school authorities to limit the rights and freedoms of students and staff if the limits meet the criteria set out in section 1. The Court's have provided an important framework, which educators may find useful, to assist in reflecting upon educational decisions (R. v. Oakes, 1986). While this framework was developed under the Charter it has been applied to human rights legislation (Saskatchewan High School Athletics Association, 1994).

Let us assume that Dan is making the argument that he has the right to an education and cannot be expelled from school. In order to justify your decision to expel him you must be able to show that expulsion, in this case, was necessary to fulfil an important educational objective. The important educational objective could be to provide the other students with an environment in which learning can take place. The Courts have warned that the standards to be used in measuring the worth of any objective must be high to ensure that objectives which are trivial or inconsistent with the principles integral to a free and democratic society are not protected.

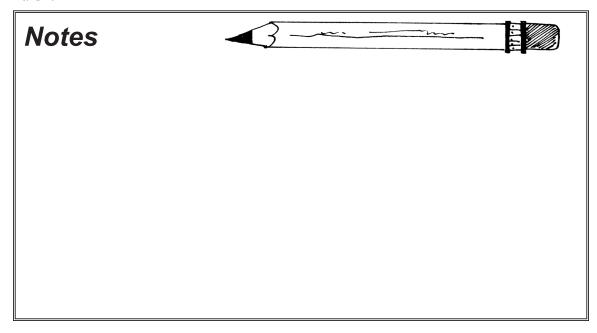
Once you have established the rationale for your decision you must reflect upon the following questions to determine whether your decision is reasonable and can be justified:

• Will Dan's expulsion ensure that the learning environment improves for the other students?

• Are there no other means available which will achieve the same objective, that is providing an environment conducive to learning, and still allow Dan to stay in school?

• Is the punishment so harsh that it interferes with the intended objective?

As noted earlier, legal rights and freedoms are not rigid. Those who drafted human rights legislation in Canada made sure that individual rights could not automatically override the collective good. Allowances are made to limit rights and freedoms as long as limiting an individual's right meets a sufficiently important educational objective, no other alternatives are available, and the punishment is not overly harsh.



Case Study #2 - In Emily's Best Interest

Background

Emily is 7 years old and in a Grade 1 class. She has cerebral palsy and does not speak. Emily has some visual impairment and uses a wheelchair most of the time.

At the request of her parents, the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (I.P.R.C.), placed Emily in her neighbourhood school. The placement was on a trial basis. A full-time educational assistant was assigned to her classroom. The assistant's principle function was to attend to Emily's special needs.

Toward the end of Emily's Grade 1 year, the school board requested that the I.P.R.C. place Emily in a special class for disabled students. The I.P.R.C. granted the request. The parents objected.

Emily

Emily is unable to communicate verbally. However, she appears happy in the integrated setting and is benefiting from being around other students her age.

Emily's Parents

The parents believe that placing Emily in a special education classroom is a form of segregation, something advocates for persons with disabilities have fought for decades. If Emily were placed in the segregated setting, the parents believe she would not learn from the other students and they would not learn from her. The parents consider a segregated setting a burden and a disadvantage to Emily. They have stated that there is no evidence to show that Emily would do better in a segregated setting than she is doing in an integrated setting. The parents believe that Emily's best interests are better served in an integrated setting with appropriate supports.

The Teacher

Emily's teacher agrees that Emily requires more assistance than the teacher and Emily's teacher associate are capable of providing. Emily's teacher has 26 other students in her class and sometimes she feels she is neglecting them. She is ambivalent about placing Emily in a segregated class because she believes Emily would continue to do well in an integrated setting as long as the classroom teacher has more appropriate support. Of particular concern to the teacher is Emily's habit of "mouthing" objects including sand, paper, and in some instances, potentially harmful objects such as pins. The teacher is concerned with the possible harm Emily could do to herself, and yet the teacher cannot provide the intense supervision she believes is necessary to avoid any harm.

The School Board

The School Board believes it had already made extensive and significant efforts to accommodate the parent's wishes by attempting to meet the needs of Emily in a regular class with appropriate modifications and supports. They also have empirical, objective evidence that shows Emily's needs are not being met in the regular class. Placing Emily in a special classroom at this stage would, the Board believes, be in her best interest.

- What do you think?
- How would you respond?

Case Study #3 - In Robert's Best Interest

Background

Robert is in Grade 7. He is the only Aboriginal student in a predominantly white middle class group.

Robert

Robert feels that his classmates do not have a good understanding of what it is like in his culture and what it is like for him to be in a class where no other student looks like him. Robert is concerned about the lack of information the students have regarding Aboriginal people, and in particular their treaty rights. His classmates have made disparaging comments about Aboriginal people a number of times in class and Robert feels very isolated.

Robert's Mother

Robert spoke to his mother about the situation and his mother met with the teacher. Robert's mother asked whether the teacher could not present a unit on Aboriginal treaty rights, their history, and legal standing.

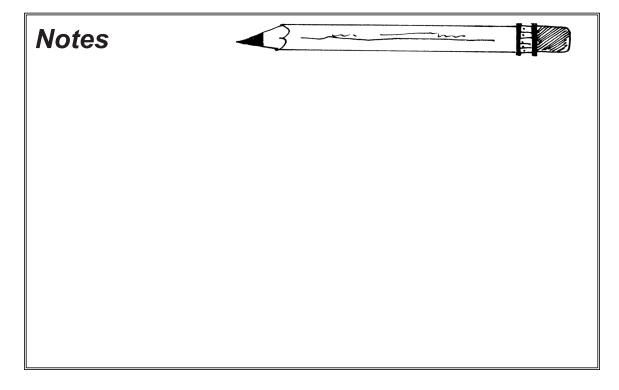
Teacher

Robert's teacher feels there is some truth to Robert's complaints and has considered how best to handle the matter. The teacher saw her role as trying to provide a balanced picture but she was reluctant to take sides. She also knew that some of the parents in the community had complained about the Grade 5 teacher who always included references to the contributions of Aboriginal people, women, and members of diverse backgrounds in every subject she taught.

School Board

The school board was not sympathetic to the request of Aboriginal parents for more inclusive curriculum content, and had recently passed a policy condemning "political correctness" as an affront to academic excellence. The Board argued that historical facts were being undermined in the rush to be seen as fair.

- What do you think?
- How would you respond?



Racism: In Whose Best Interest?

See Research Report #92-05: Racial Incidents

School systems have an obligation to facilitate learning. A racial incident, unfortunate as it is, can also be a learning opportunity. Students, staff and community members can learn that not only can racially biased behaviour is wrong, but also why it is wrong. They can develop a personal commitment to equality and learn new ways of thinking and acting.

Appropriate management of racial incidents can turn a negative, unacceptable episode into one with positive outcomes.

What is a Racial Incident?

A racial incident is a verbal or physical expression of racial or ethnic bias which exhibits a negative attitude, disparagement, or hatred toward a person's or group's race, colour or ethno-cultural heritage (including racial/ethnic slurs, jokes, and stereotyping as well as threats, abuse, intimidation or assault).

"I was talking to some people who wanted to know why something might be called racism if it's against somebody of colour, but not against people who are white. Let's say two children are playing and fall and hurt themselves. One child is a hemophiliac and the other child doesn't have anything the matter with her. Both kids are going to bleed, both kids are going to hurt. But you can't attend to the children in the same way. Because if you do the same thing for both kids, one of the children is going to die because they don't have the capacity to start the clotting.

Its the same thing about racism and other kinds of discrimination If you have power, it is one kind of experience. It is entirely different if you are from a marginalized group. In the latter case, you have fewer options and less social power to back you up. It's the same with class, it's the same with gender. In social terms, the implications are significant. The individual experience with discrimination becomes part of a historic pattern and feed into the larger picture of systemic oppression." (Lee, 1992)

- What do you think?
- How would you respond?

Policy Sample

Policy Name	Equity in Education
Approved	
School Division	. Saskatchewan Rivers S. D. #119

"The Board of Education believes in providing an education system where all people have the opportunity to experience success, to enjoy human dignity and to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society."

• Discuss what implications for practice this policy might have.

• Do you agree or disagree with the policy?

• What changes might have to be made if this policy was in place in your school division?

• Develop a policy framework.

Appendix A

A Guide to strategies

- 1. Mastery Learning
- 2. Computer-Assisted Instruction
- 3. Cooperative Group Learning
- 4. Activity-based Learning
- 5. Resource-based Learning
- 6. Collaborative Learning Approaches
- 7. Whole Language Strategies

More information on these can be found in Diversity Series #7 – *Creating an Inclusive Classroom: Integrating Students with Special Needs.*

Reflection

Three key ideas from	this	module	are:
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My questions:

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	Ideas I want to learn more about:	Ideas for my board to consider:
To be an effective trustee:		
To be an effective board:		

My Personal Plan of Action

In order to strengthen the governance of our board of education, I make a commitment to:

State the Area You Want to Improve	I Commit Myself to the Following	When Will I Do This?	How Will I Know I Have Been Successful