

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

Inclusive education week

Resource kit

2009

WWW.INCLUSIVEEDUCATION.CA



Diversity includes.

FOREWORD

February 15 to 21, 2009 is National Inclusive Education Week in Canada. CACL and the provincial and territorial associations across the country have been using this week as an opportunity to organize events to promote inclusion in our communities, schools and classrooms. Many local associations have adopted the week and organized activities as well.

This “**Resource Kit**” is designed to assist associations in their efforts to focus on inclusive schooling for students with intellectual disabilities across our nation at the same time.

We encourage member associations to use the strategies outlined and share ideas you have that are not included here. Our intention is to update this “Resource Kit” as we move forward. Send feedback, experiences and suggestions to – inclusiveeducation@cacl.ca.

All the best with National Inclusive Education Week – 2009.

- *The National Action Committee on Inclusive Education.*

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NATIONAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WEEK

The National Action Committee on Inclusive Education, which is made up of representatives of Provincial and Territorial ACLs, considers “National Inclusive Education Week” a key strategy to inform and engage the community about our efforts to move ahead in the area.

The Committee concluded that, to the degree possible, we carry out “Inclusive Education Week” during the same week across the country. Some associations may find it best to select another time, but we hope as many as possible will join the common effort to develop the week in every part of Canada.

The third week of February was selected as the best time to target since schools will have been in session long enough to establish the connection between students and teachers and to allow the activities to be well planned. This also seems to be a time when most schools are operating and not on winter or spring break.

One of the key features of the “Week” can be recognizing achievement and presenting an award to an individual or group who have made a significant contribution to inclusive education in the province or community. In the following pages we suggest a possible time line for actions leading up to a “presentation event”. We suggest you begin in October/November to assure a successful event.

In 2009, the Week of February 15-21 is “National Inclusive Education Week”.

It is with the third week of February in mind that the work plan for the Inclusive Education award ceremony was established. Beginning in October, the following section of the document deals with suggestions of what would need to be done every month for this event to be held in February. In appendix and on the CD, you will find the documents that you can adapt to what you need. These documents will be referred to throughout the work plan when they are needed.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AWARD CEREMONY

The inclusive education award ceremony has proven to be an effective way for provincial/territorial and local ***Associations for Community Living*** to recognize teachers, principals and other stakeholders in the education community who are doing something notable toward achieving inclusive education. When we celebrate progress and recognize success in inclusive education, it helps create a positive relationship between parents, your ACL and the education system. This establishes a good starting point for communication and dialogue – and more systemic inclusive practice.

When you identify success stories, you will also be identifying good practices in teaching and support strategies. Showing that inclusive education equals good practice in education is appropriate way for your ACL to support schools and teachers in their efforts.

Holding an Award Ceremony is a proactive way to draw attention of teachers, teacher associations, principals, district officials and the Ministry of Education to inclusive education. Everyone appreciates being recognized for hard work and good results.

Presenting an award shows how inclusive education is possible, and how specific teachers or school teams, as well as education officials are doing it. Having these success stories shared in the media shows a positive side to inclusive education and gives a model for other schools. It is also a positive way for your ACL to be seen in the media.



A Possible Time-Line of Activities Follows

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

In October or early November, a first meeting will be held with your ACLs' Inclusive Education Week Work Group. To help you decide who should be asked to join this working group, the following are examples of the major tasks that will come in organising the award ceremony:

- Sending nominations and keeping track of nominations
- Sending invitations and keeping track of registrations
- Finding a venue, visiting the location, finding catering
- Finding the Master(s) of Ceremony and creating their speaker notes
- Inviting the media, creating and sending media kits
- Creating and coordinating the selection committee
- Contacting winners and keeping track of their information packages
- Printing and framing certificates
- Bringing resources to event and back from event
- Sending thank you letters to honourable guests

First meeting

At this first meeting, the working group will:

- 1) Review and change the nomination forms to fit the association (Appendix).
Example: Logo, contact information, dates for the inclusive education week, categories of winners, last day for submissions of nominations, etc.
- 2) Create a strategy plan for sending the call for nominations. The purpose of this strategy is to find how to get these nomination forms into the hands of the teachers and other education stakeholders. The following are examples of who could receive the call for nominations:
 - a. Working with the teacher associations by asking them to send the form electronically to their members, and publishing the call for nominations in their newsletter.
 - b. Having the nomination form to be downloaded on your Web site.
 - c. Send the electronic copy to all known contacts in the schools.
 - d. On the government Web site, you can usually find the emails of district superintendants and staff at the Ministry of education. Work with them to find the most effective way of getting the nomination forms through to teachers.
 - e. Send to all members of your committees and to your staff.
 - f. Depending on the categories you will be giving awards to, plan to send to those groups as well.
 - g. Etc.

- 3) A strategy should also be created for inviting special guests. Having special guests present at the Ceremony will liken your chance of having the media present. Depending on the categories of winners you have chosen, find who at the government level should be invited, or any other esteemed guest: an example would be the Minister of Education (for an example of an invitation letter, view appendix).
- 4) The working group should also take time to review the work plan so as to find the upcoming and to assign roles to staff members.

First Tasks to be completed October/November

- Working group is established.
- Call for nominations are sent.



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER CONTINUED

This month's activities will be a continuation of sending a call for nominations and keeping track of nominations. In order to be published in December newsletters, work with other associations to get the nomination forms distributed in the beginning of this month.

Finding a Master of Ceremony

The Working Group will suggest a Master of Ceremony, who might be the president of the association. If you plan to have guests and winners that speak another language, it is suggested to find a bilingual MC or have two of them: for example, in New Brunswick, they had one francophone MC and one anglophone MC.

The prospective person to be the MC for the evening should be contacted to find his or her availabilities. The MC can expect to receive the speaking notes about a week prior of the event.

Tasks completed by end of November

- Call for nominations are sent a second time.
- A prospective MC was contacted
- MC confirmed, if possible



DECEMBER

This month is a continuation of keeping track of the nominations.

Inviting Special guests

The Working Group provides a personal invitation to special guests and makes sure they are available to come to the award ceremony. If suitable, the Working Group decides on an alternative date for the award ceremony.

Finding a location and catering

- Finding a proper location and catering options depend on what is available in your area. Sometimes it is best to find the location first and then contact the MC and special guests.
- Once a date and the MC are confirmed someone can find an appropriate location and catering.
- In some provinces the Lieutenant Governor is a patron of the association. In this case the event may be held at place provided by the LG.
- In order to accommodate the award winners and guests, select a time in the late afternoon or early evening when as many people as possible can attend.
- If you are making several awards, prepare for more guests – recipients will want family members and colleagues to attend.
- This award ceremony is a good opportunity for you to network and build relationships. Consider providing hors-d'oeuvres and refreshments so people will linger and network.
- Take advantage of the opportunity for your ACL to be seen and acknowledged for your expertise about inclusive education by setting up a resource table to display your resources on inclusive education.
- A member of the Committee or a staff person can visit the room and discuss with the location's event coordinator the preferred room arrangement, including placement of chairs, podium and location of display tables.
- You might also want to check out the area in the room where you can take the best pictures: by considering the lighting, the backdrop and so on. Award recipients may be nervous when accepting an award and a clear process will help ease their anxiety: they need to know where to go, where to stand, and when the picture will be taken. If you could provide that information in the package which will be sent to the winners in January, that would help a lot. An alternative to this would be to have the MC explain the process at the beginning of the ceremony.

Establish Award Selection Panel

Eventually, nominations will start to come in during this month. With the Working Group, decide on who should make up the Award Selection Panel: these people will choose the winners for the inclusive education award(s). Once it has been decided who should be on the panel, contact them and assure they are available during the appropriate time period, perhaps late January, or the week following the date scheduled for the deadline. It is helpful to arrange a process to send the panel members copies of nominations as they are submitted and received. You might do so by mail or email. The opportunity to read the nominations before the meeting will improve the process.

Tasks to be completed prior to the Holiday period

- VIP and special guests are invited
- VIP and special guests have confirmed their attendance
- Date of ceremony now official
- MC is contacted for official date of ceremony
- Location and catering reserved
- Selection Panel contacted and confirmed attendance at January meeting



JANUARY

Nominations - last effort

As soon as school starts after the holiday season, a last call for nominations should be sent again to the people contacted in November. The day following the deadline, copies of the nominations should be printed and sent by mail or emailed to the members of the Selection Panel. Panel members need about five days to go through the nominations and assess the merits of each

The Selection Meeting

At the Selection Panel meeting, you might start by eliminating the nominations that are incomplete or illegible.

Be sure to schedule enough time for a thorough discussion about who should receive the award for the appropriate category.

Contacting the Award Winners

Once the award winners have been chosen, a personal telephone call should be made to all those being honoured. You should be ready to explain:

- What the award is for;
- Who nominated them;
- Who CACL and your ACL are;
- When the award will be presented;
- What the ceremony will be like.

It is important to keep a record of contacts between the ACL and the Award Winners to assure all important information is communicated and that clarity is maintained.

Record:

- The date they were called;
- their contact information;
- what they need to do next, their guests, etc. (view spreadsheet).
- Winners are usually very happy to receive the award and some may get a little anxious. To make this experience as enjoyable as possible for them, an information package detailing all the information they need to prepare for the ceremony could be sent to them.
- In this package, they will need to sign the media release form and send it back to the ACL. By keeping a database of the winners who were contacted, it makes it easier to find which media release form you have received and which one is still missing. Usually teachers have access to a fax, but if they do not, the staff person could send the package by mail with a pre-posted envelop (view appendix for example of information package).

Speaker notes

Speaking notes for the person presenting the award can be prepared using the information submitted with the nomination. This process make take some time – especially if more than one award is presented – so this needs to be taken into account when planning. Having these notes done as soon as possible is recommended. (View appendix for sample speaker notes).

Ceremony draft agenda

Following the speaker notes, the agenda for the event should be drafted. Many changes may be required in the days leading up to the event, so it is best to wait the day before the event, before printing copies for the guests. If you are having a bilingual event, make sure you have bilingual agendas as well (view appendix for example of draft agenda).

Certificates

Certificates can be created as soon as the winners are announced. A Committee member or staff support needs to get the name(s) and category correct for the certificate. The Working Group should determine who will sign the Certificate. Arrangements can be made for it to be from the CACL President, the P/T President, Local ACL President or a combination of these. Be sure to print the award on high quality paper.

Finally, the certificate(s) need to be framed and kept in a safe location. These frames could be donated to your ACL with a mention of the company's name during the event as a form of publicity. (View appendix for example of Certificate).

Tasks completed before the end of January

- A call for nominations are sent a second time
- Winners have been chosen by the Selection Panel
- Winners have received the information package
- Speaker notes have been written and sent to MC
- Certificates are personalized and framed



FEBRUARY – BEFORE EVENT

Special guests

Any other special guests need to be sent a personalised email/letter of invitation to the event. (View appendix for example of letters).

These guests could include: the winner's local MLA (member of legislative assembly) and the winner's supervisors (district superintendant, principal, government official, etc.). As with the winner's database, a database for invited guests should be done as well. By keeping track of registrations and who is coming, it makes it easier to be organised and ready for any last minute changes (view spreadsheet).

General public

An invitation is also sent to the general public and their registrations kept in the database (view appendix for example of letter and spreadsheet).

Media

As noted above, the inclusive education award ceremony is a great opportunity for your ACL to send a positive message to the public on inclusive education through the media. For this to be a success, a thorough media strategy should be established by the Working Group. Some of these strategies might include:

- Having a list of the winner's local media (newspaper, radio, television) and invite them to the ceremony. Most of them will not be able to make it, but ask them to whom you should send the media kits following the event. These media kits can include a resume of the event as well as a high resolution photo of the award winners.
- Contacting the major media (newspapers, television) of your Province/Territory and invite them to the ceremony. Mentioning your special guests and guest speakers helps to have them at the event.

In appendix you will find an example of a media release. This release is sent to the media, inviting them to come to the event. Track feedback from the media on who will and will not be attending.

In appendix you will find a database to keep track of contact people with the media.

Media kits

Media kits are the information packages sent to the media following the event. For each winner, a kit should be sent to their local media and a general media kit sent to the major provincial/territorial media. It is best to have the written part of the kit completed before the award ceremony. That way, the day after the award ceremony, you will only need to join the picture to the document and it will be ready to be sent right away. (View appendix for example of a media kit).

Staff work plan

If appropriate schedule several staff members (or Committee Members) to welcome people to the award ceremony and guide guests and answer any questions. Arrange to have association materials at the event.

Appoint a staff person who will bring the certificates and camera (make sure there is enough memory in your camera and bring extra batteries). A staff person should also be designated to take pictures at the event, and will need to know where the picture area is and have a note pad to write down the names of the winners in the picture, in order.

Last minute items

First of all, make sure you have all the winners' information packages. If you have any special guest speakers, call them to make sure they are coming. Also, the event coordinators at your location appreciate knowing how many people will be coming on the day of the event: that way they can properly setup the room.

The Award Ceremony

With the long awaited day finally here, it is very important that your ACL Committee and staff are present and able to greet guests as they arrive. Assure your ACL - staff and volunteers demonstrate your professionalism and care. You might want to check to see that all the recipients are present: if one of them should arrive late, the agenda could be changed so that this award is given at the end.



AFTER THE EVENT

- Media kits should be sent the following day.
- Winners love to receive their picture from the event and sending it to them shows how much your ACL cares for what they do for inclusive education.
- It is important to acknowledge the special guests that attended the ceremony as well as the guest speakers with a thank you letter. (View appendix for an example of this letter).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WEEK

This week is a great opportunity to celebrate good practices in inclusive education and to create awareness and openness to diversity in learning communities. Below are a few examples of activities that can serve these two purposes. ¹

SPECIAL LAUNCH

Any program (such as Best Buddies), newsletter or Web Site could be launched during this week. Any effective launch will have a good media plan. This would be a great opportunity to show how your association is helping to build inclusive education in your province/territory.

SCHOOL PROJECTS/CONTESTS

- Students could participate in a project to design “My ideal inclusive school”, which would represent the voices of the full range of children and young people. This could include writing, drawing or three dimensional models and a presentation to the rest of the school*.
- A school could meet and discuss how they could enhance their inclusive school culture (using the “**Inclusive School Culture**” tool from Community Living Ontario would be a good idea).
- Community Living Toronto has a game for youngsters called – **Spinclusion**. It is a board game that raises students awareness of diversity and inclusion. CLT has successfully used it in many schools during “Inclusive Education Week”. Contact them for information
- A school that has a segregated class and wants to move towards a more inclusive model could launch that initiative during this week.
- A Professional development day for teachers could be scheduled - especially on inclusive pedagogy.
- Sponsor a party at school to celebrate diversity.
- Any activity that includes diversity can be linked to black history month (which is February).
- A school that has been inclusive for some time can celebrate that landmark.
- Teachers could attend a workshop on inclusive play: how to organise and promote play time to be more inclusive.

¹ Activities marked with * were taken from <http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/inclusionweek/examples.htm>

- School could launch a **Circle of Friends** program, or invite media to recognise the school's efforts in using this program.
- Hold a bullying awareness day at the school.

STATEMENT FROM MINISTER OF EDUCATION

This week could be a great opportunity to ask the Minister of Education to comment on inclusive education. It could also be an occasion to ask the Minister to consider its education policy with a view to setting more challenging targets for reducing segregation and increasing support for inclusion. Debates and consultations could be arranged for elected members, officers and the wider community*.

POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

- Teacher training departments in universities could examine the syllabus used to train new teachers and introduce greater emphasis on inclusive policy and practice.
- Art faculties could use this week to display their projects on the following themes: inclusive education, inclusion, exclusion, etc.
- Drama faculties could use this week to perform their scene on inclusion/exclusion in the surrounding schools and/or to the public.
- This would be a great opportunity for education students to debate the importance of inclusion.
- Have a kiosk at your local university or college showing the services offered to the student population (technology, staff, film presentation, promotion of other activities, etc.).
- Sponsor a seminar on inclusion by speakers who are members of People First.
- Have activities at your recreation centre (wheelchair race, blindfolded race, reading materials - to create awareness for individuals with learning disabilities.
- Round table discussion on how inclusive is the institution? Have groups representing students from all cohorts: international, gay and lesbian, students with disabilities, etc.
- Conference from researchers on inclusive education practices.
- Education faculties could look at case studies on inclusive education.
- Presentation on **Universal Design for Learning** and how technologies can be used to promote inclusive education.

COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS

- The local city council could look at ways to reduce exclusion in their city.

OTHER NGO'S

- Volunteer associations, such as the Home and School Association, could demonstrate their commitment to inclusion with local meetings and specially commissioned reports on their work*.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS

Invite your provincial Human Rights Commission to partner in an event to focus on this aspect of inclusive education.

EMPLOYERS

- Those committed to inclusive practices could investigate the connections between inclusion in education (school and college levels) and the working environment*.

SELF ADVOCATES

- Organisations of adults with disabilities as well as individual self advocates have many rich stories to tell which illustrate the social, emotional and human rights arguments supporting inclusion as well as the injustice of segregation and discrimination. Presentations and story telling as well as new publications could be powerful contributions to the Week*.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Best practices can be promoted through new reports, open days and meetings*.