

INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY

Communities' Role in Creating Authentic Inclusive Experience for Students with Disabilities



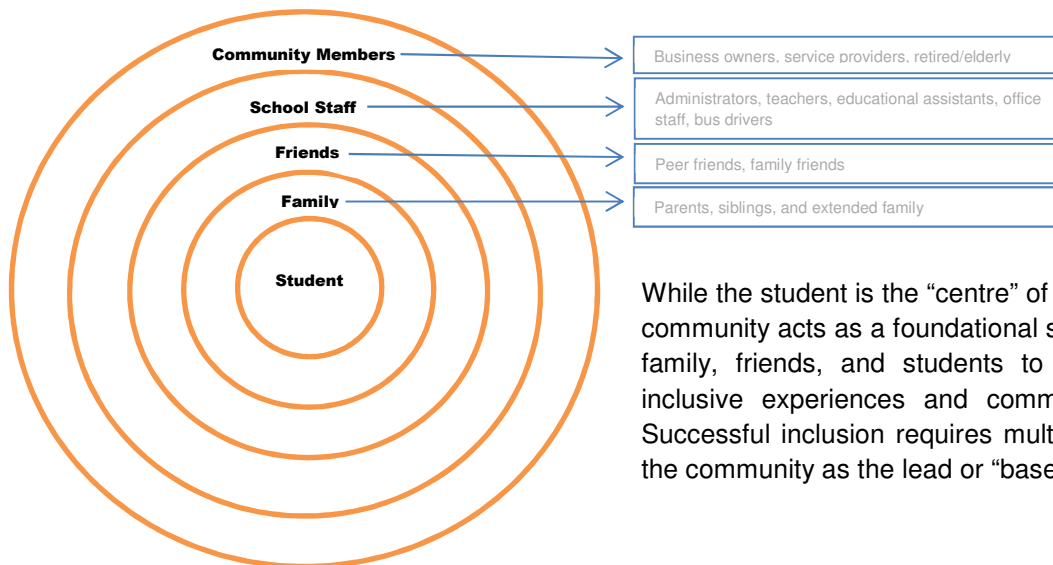
Pembina Hills Research Project



"I can always pull into anybody's home and say I need help and they'll open their doors for you." (Pembina Hills School District teacher speaking about community support)

Summary of Findings

Many of the key stakeholders (i.e., teachers, educational assistants, school administrators, and parents) described how inclusion **MUST** be a community venture. Inclusive education for the students in PHRD is more successful because the whole community is involved through activities such as providing work experiences and supporting fundraising/school events. The community support was focussed more on building relationships rather than formal, structured supports. A "rural advantage" came to light as the small community setting and mindset allowed for the students with exceptional needs to be more "visible" and familiarity was increased. Teachers and other school staff often had contact with the students outside of school because of special community events. The educators and parents described how inclusive educational experiences allowed for this familiarity and "visibility", something that would not have occurred in segregated classroom settings. These findings describe the need for both the school and community settings to embrace the concept of inclusion.



While the student is the "centre" of the inclusive practices, the community acts as a foundational support for the school staff, family, friends, and students to ensure more meaningful inclusive experiences and community living as a whole. Successful inclusion requires multiple layers of support with the community as the lead or "base".

Useful Resources

- Blue Herron Support Services (Barrhead, AB) - <http://www.bhssa.ca/>
- Personal Fulfillment, Values, and the Role of Supportive Communities by Michael Kendrick - <http://www.socialrolevalorization.com/articles/kendrick/personal-fulfillment-values-and-community.pdf>
- Actions that Build Community by John O'Brien - <http://inclusion.com/downloads/actionsthatbuildcommunity.pdf>
- Irvine, A., & Lupart, J. (2006). Social supports in inclusive settings: An essential component to community living. *Developmental Disabilities Bulletin*, 34, 107-126.

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