

# AT A GLANCE

January 2005 Volume 17, Issue 3  
This Month: Special Education



## President's Message

Larry Liffiton

We are all, in varying degrees, teachers of students with special needs.

We are all responsible for Individual Program Plans. More importantly, we are responsible for the students who come to our classrooms with that special education code attached to their file.

Yes, of course, we are responsible for every student who enters our classrooms. But the inclusion of special education students into the mainstream has added a dimension of complexity to the landscape of education and educational accountability.

Those of us who have been around for a decade or more know that the full-scale inclusion of special education students into the regular classroom began at about the same time as the cutbacks to education impacted our schools. With insufficient money to accomplish the vision of inclusion, the government instituted higher levels of "accountability." This meant that classroom teachers saw a burgeoning of forms to fill out, hence the IPP.

We have been struggling ever since with how best to meet the needs of all of our students. How have we done?

Questions related to various aspects of special education have arisen quite frequently at the Council of School Representatives meetings over the past

number of years. We have heard about problems ranging from the time pressures related to completing IPPs to having substitute coverage for teacher assistants in severe settings; and from mandatory assessments of students with certain codes to the appropriate treatment of immobile students during evacuation drills.

Currently the environment of special education is so large and so complex that very few are able to describe that environment with sufficient clarity and accuracy to be helpful. We know there are problems and that there are successes. What we don't know is what the larger landscape looks like.

The Executive Committee of Calgary Public Teachers has established a steering committee charged with determining what our Local can do to increase our understanding of the special education landscape. The ultimate purpose is to advocate for and seek improvements in the way we do our business. But we feel we need to know more about the right questions to ask before we can offer answers to the problems.

The steering committee has met three times and is currently assessing the cost and feasibility of conducting a system-wide scan of special education provisions in the CBE. We expect to deliver a full report and recommendations to the Council of School Representatives in February.

Special education is a large and complex component of the work we do. It is time we all had a clear picture of what is going on so that we can all move forward together to meet this challenge.

## CBE Descriptors For Some Special Needs Programs

The Calgary Board of Education offers more than forty Special Needs Programs, some in partnership with external agencies. Not many teachers are familiar with all that these programs provide. We take this opportunity to provide CBE descriptors of a sampling of the lesser known ones.

- **The Transitions Mental Health Program, Div. II, III, and IV**  
These programs are for students who are experiencing severe and/or pervasive mental health difficulties. They are designed for students who internalize their problems rather than externalize or "act out" their difficulties. For example, children who have persistent fears, are highly anxious, are socially withdrawn, and/or who are victims of highly traumatic events. At the High School level this program is housed in "The Class," at Ernest Manning H.S. The programs use a multidisciplinary approach including teachers, behaviour support workers, educational assistants, and mental health professionals.
- **The George Wood Learning Centre, Div. III and IV**  
This Learning Centre provides long-term intensive clinical and academic programming to young people who are experiencing severe psychological, social and family difficulties. It serves young people who have yet to experience success in other community and/or treatment settings, and who are considered to need a high level of support, for up to two years.

- **HERA (Wood’s), Div. III and IV**  
HERA is a holistic, therapeutically based program designed to meet the needs of high-risk adolescent girls and their families. The goal is to provide these girls and their families with opportunities to discover their inherent value, worth, and strengths to guide them in making healthy and responsible life choices. In addition to individualized academic and life-skills programs, it offers in-home family support, in-home counseling, and a volunteer mentoring program.
- **Discovering Choices, Div. IV**  
This is a community-based High School for young people who, due to particular and/or family situations, experience difficulties in their educational pursuits. They earn high school credits through participation in the work experience or the academic program. For academic credits, youth embark on self-directed learning utilizing Alberta Distance Learning materials. This school operates in alliance with other organizations to complement a holistic approach in supporting young people who face life’s numerous challenges. Under the auspices of Calgary Achievement Center for Youth (CACY), Discovering Choices works in conjunction with the YMCA (computer lab), the City of Calgary (Youth Employment Center), the Calgary Immigrant Services, and the L.I.N.C. ESL program in providing services.
- **SKILL, Div. I and II, and ACCESS, Div. III and IV**  
SKILL (Social Knowledge, Independent Living and Language) programs are for Elementary students who have moderate to severe developmental disabilities. ACCESS (Attitude, Community, Competence, Elements of Academic Curriculum, Social Skills) is the program these students attend at the Junior High and High School levels. These programs focus on communication development and skills, functional language arts and mathematics skills, community and environmental awareness, and pre-vocational skills.

- **Excel (Project Trust), Div. III and IV**  
The educational program at Project Trust is an integrated component of the Project Trust Treatment Centre for students aged 14-17 years. The goal is to provide an effective educational setting that keeps students connected to their learning needs while their therapeutic issues are being resolved. The aim of this program is to provide a high intensity, short-term (3-4 months) residential/school program to youth under Child Welfare protection, in the Calgary region.

For more information on these and/or other Special Needs Programs contact Student Support Services, at Parkdale, or Gerry Bates at 249-3131, extension 2148.

## What’s Special About Special Ed at Annie Foote

By Pam Reed  
*Communications Committee*

Tucked away in the North-East section of town, Annie Foote Elementary School is home to several special education programs. For the last 3 years, Darci Fulton has been teaching Behaviour Adaptation for Division I. Silvia Filatoff is in her third year of full-time English as Second Language teacher for the school, and Jana El-Guebaly and myself are currently in our third year of teaching the Gifted and Talented Education program at “the Foote”. Marilyn Stallworthy completes the Special Education component of the school as the Resource Teacher. She has been in resource for fifteen years, and is currently spending her sixth year at Annie Foote.

We are sometimes burdened down by the challenges that accompany our jobs: the constant need for current resources, diversity of children’s needs in each of the programs, and providing experiences for children to build upon, are just a few. However, focusing on the rewards and celebrations are what keep us coming back to work with our unique groups of students.

Continuity with children is one of the biggest celebrations for Sylvia. Working with children over extended periods of time and seeing their English becoming more and more proficient is exciting for her. “They’re like my

children,” she says. “In the fall, I often know them better than their regular classroom teacher.” Spirit days are an opportunity to become really involved and “go with it” to help kids explore new experiences.

“The kids come to believe in themselves and take risks,” Says Darci, when asked about the rewards and celebrations she sees in the students in her Div I B.A. class. “They start to see (that) other people do believe in them, so they start to believe in themselves. I’m able to implement knowledge and beliefs on how children with behaviour challenges should be taught. You do see progress because of the structure, consistency, and high expectations of the program.”

For Jana and myself, the opportunity to work with kids who learn at a pace closely approaching the speed of light is both exhilarating and challenging. The ability to explore curriculum in depth, engage in incredibly insightful conversations with our students, and to have the time to explore issues which may not be directly tied to curriculum is exciting.

Marilyn’s celebrations come in the opportunities she has to work as a liaison between various agencies and teachers and parents. “Every day is a professional development opportunity,” she says about her work, which involves bringing resources, strategies and ideas to teachers about working with children with a variety of learning, emotional, and medical challenges. “I help kids to be successful in school and help their parents and teachers try to achieve this.”

A school rich with diversity in the form of cultures, languages, behaviour and academic challenges, Annie Foote has much to celebrate. The efforts of all the teachers and support staff make Annie Foote the special place it is to work.

## Blessings

By Erin Warburton  
*Elementary Schools Representative*

At first, I dreaded having Jeremy move into my classroom. The information presented to me by our school’s Resource teacher was not promising; a code 53 student, Jeremy had recently been suspended from his Junior High school for throwing chairs and

screaming cusswords at his teacher. His grades were in the low teens, due primarily to his unwillingness to complete assignments, his negative attitude, his lack of attention, and his tendency to skip classes. Although he was in grade 7, he read at a beginning grade-3 level, struggled in math, and had very few friends.

His aunt, who had recently become Jeremy's legal guardian, felt that he would benefit from the more structured environment of elementary school, and thus Jeremy became a student in my grade 5/6 class. His aunt asked to meet with us before he began classes. I must admit I attended this meeting with almost a defeatist attitude; believing that this kid was beyond help.

I softened when Jeremy's aunt filled us in on his history. The only child of a single mother, Jeremy found himself with many adult responsibilities. His mother was both blind and an amputee, the results of diabetes. Jeremy loved his mother deeply and took care of her and the household chores from an early age. Now his mother had terminal cancer, and as the end was near, Jeremy had moved in with his aunt.

"I know Jeremy has a lot of problems," she pleaded. "He's made a lot of mistakes. But please, he's really a great kid, and he's been through so much. I'm willing to do anything to help him."

I promised that I would, too, and prepared to welcome Jeremy into my class.

After a rough few first days, Jeremy began to settle into the routines of our classroom. He did seem to benefit from the structure and consistent expectations, and soon made friends. He was working hard in school, and making tremendous gains in Mathematics and Reading. He soon became one of my special students; he liked and respected me, and the feeling was mutual. Often, he would linger after school to tell me about how his mom was doing, to ask for help with assignments, or just to chat and get some extra attention. I found myself feeling very glad that he was my student.

In March, Jeremy's mother died. His classmates made him cards and wrote letters of sympathy, which I delivered at the funeral. When I walked in, Jeremy ran to me, threw his arms

around me, and sobbed. As I tried to comfort him, and as I ached for him, I was grateful that I could be there to offer support.

When he was able to come back to class, our after-school chats became more frequent. I listened, offered advice, and let him know that I believed in him. In May, Mother's Day rolled around. I had a craft planned for the students, but was unsure of what to do about Jeremy. I spoke with him privately, explained the situation, and offered him choices: he could make the bookmark for someone else he cared about, he could make it for his mother in her honour, he could do an alternate art activity, or he could visit another classroom during art period and be excused from the activity. Jeremy said, "There's someone I care a lot about. I'll make it for her." I pictured his caring aunt and how fiercely she loved her nephew, and nodded.

Art period rolled around, and the students were hard at work. They created beautifully ornate bookmarks, and required little direct supervision. After cleanup and agendas, it was dismissal time. When I said goodbye to the children, I noticed that Jeremy bolted out as soon as the bell rang, choosing not to stay after school. As I made my way to my desk, I noticed a brown paper lunch bag had been placed there. Curious, I opened it up, and pulled out a bookmark. Pale yellow, with lovely daisies drawn around the border, it read, "Ms. Warburton, you are the best teacher. Thanks for being my friend. Love, Jeremy."

I swallowed hard. To think that I had almost hardened my heart against this precious boy! He had become such a blessing. As teachers it is our privilege to teach all children, as they all have something to teach us. Such is the beauty of Public Education; we accept all students. No child is ever too bad, too poor, too complex, or too challenging to walk through our doors. We are there to welcome them, to support them, to teach them, to nurture them, and most of all, to let them enrich us.



## Hehr Lines

**Dick Hehr**  
*Executive  
Assistant*

Inclusion has become the present buzzword to describe the efforts throughout society in dealing with persons with various disabilities. The term has basically evolved from what in the past were known as the mainstreaming, normalization, and integration movements.

Unfortunately, changes in terminology do not necessarily infer that progress is being made in dealing with the issue. The implementation of inclusive policies throughout society in general, and schools in particular, continues to face challenges.

Since 1982 the ATA has had policy supporting the inclusion of students with special needs. This policy at present lists eight caveats to ensure that the practice actually works to the betterment of all students.

Expanding upon the basic issue and addressing its complexity the Association states that inclusion of students with special needs should be into the most enabling environment. The policy concludes by stating that environments less inclusive than regular classrooms may be more appropriate for some students with complex or severe learning and/or behavioral needs.

The appropriate placement of the student must be the major element of concern. For some special needs students, inclusion is only an illusion. We must remember that simply placing a student in a so-called inclusive setting does not constitute inclusion. Research suggests that placement of children in regular programs or situations may lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness and disempowerment. The moral imperatives of including persons with disabilities in an able-bodied environment must not lead to a sense of social isolation in the mind of the disabled. Meaningful, positive interaction must always be facilitated.

In regards to inclusion I believe we are making progress. It is more than an education issue, it is a social issue and, as always, public schools should be at the forefront of this effort.

## Calgary Public Teachers ATA, Local #38 Scholarship Winners

Following review of the 63 applications received, the following fifty (50) students were awarded the 2004 ATA, Local #38 Scholarship:  
In alphabetical order:

<u>Student</u>		<u>Parent</u>	
Kaylee Anderson	Lord Beaverbrook Sr	Roxanne Morley Anderson	Woodbine Elem
Brady Bajnok	Western Canada Sr	Jane Jessiman	Ranchlands Elem
Chantal Bazinet	Western Canada Sr	Guy Bazinet	Bob Edwards Jr
Monique Bazinet	Western Canada Sr	Guy Bazinet	Bob Edwards Jr
Elly Bialek	Bowness Sr	Linda Bialek	Bowness Sr
Karla Binder	Cochrane High	Linda Binder	Chinook College
Mackenzie Clarke	Western Canada Sr	Andrea Clarke	Canyon Meadows Elem
		John Clarke	Woodman Jr
		Elaine Cole	Bowness Sr
Chelsea Cole	Bowness Sr	Mark Collard	Nickle Jr
Alexandra Collard	Dr E P Scarlett Sr	Ann Crawford	The Hamptons
Alayne Crawford	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Bree Greenway	Dr G M Egbert Jr
Shanna Daly	William Aberhart Sr	Jim Dauncey	Louis Riel Elem/Jr
Colleen Dauncey	Henry Wise Wood Sr	Mary Lou Dauncey	Nickle Jr
		Susan Fache	Belfast Elem
Madeleine Fache	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Anna-Marie Fuller	Simons Valley Elem
Justina Fuller	Queen Elizabeth Jr/Sr	James Giles	James Fowler Sr
Wayne Giles	James Fowler Sr	W. John Hadden	Deer Run Elem
Kyle Hadden	Henry Wise Wood Sr	David Hanson	Young Adult Program
Kyle Hanson	Central Memorial Sr	Sylvia Hayward	Forest Lawn Sr
Dana Hayward	Western Canada Sr	Linda Mason	Central Memorial Sr
Kelsey Hohol	Henry Wise Wood Sr	Barbara Newman	King George Elem
Christina Hylton	William Aberhart Sr	W. Arnold Ingelson	Deer Run Elem
Scott Ingelson	Central Memorial Sr	Marilyn Jackson	Earl Grey Elem
Claire Jackson	Western Canada Sr	Jane Kelly	Chinook Learning Services
Patricia Kelly	Henry Wise Wood Sr	Thomas Leppard	Lester B Pearson Sr
Jason Leppard	John G Diefenbaker Sr	Greg Long	Bowness Sr
Kaitlin Long	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Darlene Selby	Thomas B Riley Jr
		Ronald Matsalla	Senator P Burns Jr
Justine Matsalla	St Francis Sr	Barbara Menu	William Aberhart Sr
Courtney Menu	Bishop Grandin Sr	Merry Nenadov	F E Osborne Jr
Sasha Nenadov	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Barbara Paton	Henry Wise Wood Sr
Jordan Paton	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Peter Pfiffig	Nickle Jr
Nathalie Pfiffig	Bishop Grandin Sr	Nancy Pon	Sir John A Macdonald Jr
Andrew Pon	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Kerry Porter	Sir Winston Churchill Sr
Allison Porter	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Pete Robertson	Central Memorial Sr
Andrew Robertson	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Pete Robertson	Central Memorial Sr
Katherine Robertson	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Cathy Robinson	Andrew Sibbald Elem
Robert Robinson	Queen Elizabeth Jr/Sr	Anne Rodger	Hawkwood Elem
Sheila Rodger	Western Canada Sr	Donna Siddall	R T Alderman Jr
Rochelle Siddall	Lord Beaverbrook Sr	Rick Stafford	Senator P Burns Jr
Leland Stafford	Crescent Heights Sr	Cheryl Pinder	Altadore Elem
Sylvie Stilwell	Henry Wise Wood Sr	Ian Strachan	MidSun Jr
Jessica Strachan	Western Canada Sr	Wendy Sykes	National Sport School
Paul Sykes	William Aberhart Sr	Philip Tuck	Bowness Sr
Andrew Tuck	Bowness Sr	Irene Welch	Thomas B Riley Jr
Caitlin Welch	Crescent Heights Sr	Dawna Jean Wiens	Le Roi Daniels Elem
Laine Wiens	Lord Beaverbrook Sr	Mark Wiens	Georges P Vanier Jr
		Benita Wilkie	Forest Lawn Sr
Jason Wilkie	John G Diefenbaker Sr	Kathleen Wodelet	Dr Gordon Townsend
Krista Wodelet	William Aberhart Sr	Del Bylsma	Brentwood Elem
Ashley Wynne	Western Canada Sr	Joanne Wyvill	Lord Beaverbrook Sr
Charlotte Wyvill	William Aberhart Sr	Lesley Young	Tom Baines Jr
Charley Young	Sir Winston Churchill Sr	Jean Zoller	Lord Beaverbrook Sr
Kristina Zoller	William Aberhart Sr		

ATA Glance is a publication of Calgary Public Teachers, Local #38 of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The goal of *ATA Glance* is to facilitate communication between and within our membership and local executive.  
Calgary Public Teachers, ATA, Local # 38, #212, 3016-5 Avenue NE. Calgary, AB T2A 6K4  
Contact: 262-6616 Fax: 234-9596 Editor: Gerry Bates  
Opinions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and not necessarily of Calgary Public Teachers, Local #38 or the Alberta Teachers' Association

