

# **Implementing the Mandate of Inclusion for Students With Special Needs:**

## *A Model for Moving From Concept to Action*

### ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on creating the conditions for social change, proposing that through the alignment of organizational values and practice, organizations stuck at a concept stage may begin to move toward positive action. It is based on evidence gathered from one British Columbia school district, as it struggles with implementation of a provincial Ministry of Education mandate for the inclusion of students with special needs in BC schools.

Chapter One is an introduction to the culture within which the examination of values and practice is observed and considered, in the broad sense of the prevailing Canadian and provincial culture, as well as within the district and its individual school communities. Chapter Two provides a review of the current literature on social change within organizations, and the issues related to inclusion and the model of Full Inclusion. Chapter Three presents the dissertation framework, with a description of the methodology, techniques and procedures used in the investigative research. Chapter Four provides a description of the data that was collected. Chapter Five identifies and expands on trends indicated in the data through analysis and interpretation, as well as through presentation of narratives which further give understanding to inclusive (and non-inclusive) experiences. This chapter also discusses those areas of incongruity between values and practice that have held inclusion at the concept stage, or continue to do so. Chapter Six, summary and conclusions, reviews the alignment initiatives so far completed, presently underway, and still needed to move inclusion from concept to reality as a norm in British Columbia classrooms. This final chapter also provides the reader with recommendations for future research.

Overall, this dissertation suggests that social change requires careful consideration of both organizational values and practice to create optimal alignment between them. As an example, the concept of Inclusion of students with special needs has so far lacked the necessary inertia to become common practice. The placement of students with special needs in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers has achieved proximity, but not the inclusion that is a core ideal of the theory of Full Inclusion. The model for creating the conditions for social change proposed here allows us to see why the concept of Inclusion has not become operationalized, and then to propose the necessary adjustments. As alignment improves and the organization is transformed, individuals are able to carry the concept forward and begin to give shape to action.