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Authentic Inclusion in Two Secondary Schools: "It's the Full Meal Deal. It's Not Just in the Class. It's Everywhere."

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Abstract

Inclusive educational practices vary across Canada, and perhaps most especially in secondary schools. Researchers use the term authentic inclusion to describe exemplary inclusive educational institutions. Using an appreciative inquiry framework, two such high schools were identified and profiled within the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Students with and without disabilities, parents and/or guardians, teachers, educational assistants, and other school-based personnel were interviewed using semi-structured protocols. Data were analyzed and two main interrelated themes emerged; the first, authentic inclusion: "the full meal deal—it's everywhere"; and the second, inclusive pedagogies. Several sub-themes provide greater detail, namely: a) a broad and infused inclusive vision, (b) leadership: implementing the vision, (c) pushing all students beyond comfort zones, (d) no to the new exclusion, and lastly, (d) rejection of false dichotomies: specialized care vs. social inclusion. In the final section, the notion of hope is taken up, as it harkens back to the appreciative methodology, and more generally, to the promise of authentic inclusive education. We

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**Authentic Inclusion in Two Secondary Schools:
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It’s Not Just in the Class. It’s Everywhere”**

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Abstract

Inclusive educational practices vary across Canada, and perhaps most especially in secondary schools. Researchers use the term authentic inclusion to describe exemplary inclusive educational institutions. Using an appreciative inquiry framework, two such high schools were identified and profiled within the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Students with and without disabilities, parents and/or guardians, teachers, educational assistants, and other school-based personnel were interviewed using semi-structured protocols. Data were analyzed and two main interrelated themes emerged; the first, authentic inclusion: “the full meal deal—it’s everywhere”; and the second, inclusive pedagogies. Several sub-themes provide greater detail, namely: (a) a broad and infused inclusive vision, (b) leadership: implementing the vision, (c) pushing all students beyond comfort zones, (d) no to the new exclusion, and lastly, (d) rejection of false dichotomies: specialized care vs. social inclusion. In the final section, the notion of hope is taken up, as it hearkens back to the appreciative methodology, and more generally, to the promise of authentic inclusive education. We explore the notion of hope-filled schools, and students’ hopes for the future. Hope may be a critical element in the practice of authentic inclusion for students with disabilities.

For students with disabilities, inclusive education seems ever-evolving (Ferguson, 2008). In North America and Europe, the field emerged in the 1980s with the introduction of *mainstreaming* or *integration*, which emphasized student placement into school classrooms. In the 1990s there was a call to merge general and special education systems,

as some argued that neither system on its own seemed capable of supporting students with a range of needs. At the same time there was a call for more meaningful curricula and outcomes for students with disabilities both socially and academically; this became termed *inclusive education* (Ferguson, 1995).

Authentic Inclusion

Defining inclusion may seem as ever-evolving as its practice. According to Inclusion BC (2016), “inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school” (para. 1). Causton and Theoharis (2013) described several different ways in which inclusion is understood and practised; including some that are clearly not inclusive. Note the contradictory phrase “we have inclusion rooms” (2013, p. 19) —as though inclusion occurs only within specific designated areas. Perhaps more troubling are the attitudes, “We did inclusion.” ... “We tried inclusion” (2013, p. 19). More troubling still may be labelling as inclusive whatever a school’s current practice happens to be. Nusbaum (2013), for example, observed that

analysis of ethnographic data collected at an urban elementary school that had been inclusive for over a decade before adding a segregated classroom for some students with disabilities to the site, demonstrated that the meanings attached to inclusive education were quite variable and elastic for most of the teachers. (p. 1295)

Perhaps some schools may too easily lay claim to the inclusion of students with disabilities. *Inclusion* may be in danger of becoming a politically correct term; and, like many such concepts, lose its potency. Taken together, *inclusion* may be variously defined, despite being a rather straightforward idea, as Inclusion BC above simply stated. This situation, confusion, and/or obfuscation is not new, and so alongside these inclusive iterations another conversation has emerged.

This developing discussion began as advocates and researchers saw the need to qualify inclusion—that not every use of the term *inclusion* is inclusive (as Causton & Theoharis, 2013, noted above); thus has emerged the concept of *authentic inclusion* (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Ferguson, 1995; Irvine, Lupart, Loreman, & McGhie-Richmond, 2010; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Lynch & Irvine, 2009; Lyons & Arthur-Kelly, 2014). Similarly, Rietveld (2010) used the term *facilitative inclusion*. Lyons and Arthur-Kelly (2014, p. 450), for example, discussed authentic inclusion as one pathway to actualize the UNESCO (2009) inclusive education policy guidelines. Ferguson (1995, p. 286), the mother of son with an intellectual disability and passionate researcher, is often credited as presenting one of the first operational definitions of *authentic inclusion*, which, in her words, is:

a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student. (p. 286)

Ferguson stands by her definition (2008; see also, Thompson, 2015) and laments the progress toward its full implementation, as she remarked: “Trends point to some troubling

results especially for minority students, and students with some kinds of disabilities. The newest challenge is to make inclusive practices available to everybody, everywhere and all the time” (2008, p. 109). Around the time Ferguson first defined *authentic inclusion*, Lipsky and Gartner (1997, cited in Lynch & Irvine, 2009, p. 847) delineated seven key areas necessary to facilitate it. These areas are: visionary leadership, collaboration, support for staff and students, effective parental involvement, refocused use of assessment, appropriate levels of funding, and finally, curricular adaptation and effective instructional practices. Although the term *effective inclusion* may not be completely synonymous with the term *authentic inclusion*, there is certainly credible and substantive overlap. Jorgensen, McSheehan, Schuh, and Sonnermeir (2002) listed some essential best practices in inclusive schools. Dolmage, Young, Stuart, Specht, and Strickland (2009) used these as a framework to locate evidence of effective high school inclusion.

Similar to Ferguson (1995, 2008), Andrews and Lupart (2000) understood that authentic inclusion requires a needs-based focus within a classroom of varying abilities. Otherwise, they suggest, inclusion becomes an empty label applied to students with disabilities without addressing any concerns. From this perspective, authentic inclusion involves an emphasis on individualized supports within a context of difference; difference is the “new normal.” Irvine et al. (2010) spoke most directly to the heart of this issue:

While there are many definitions and interpretations of “inclusion,” few reflect the concept of “authentic inclusion.” By this we mean that diversity is not situated in the student; it is also not about where a student is placed. Rather, diversity resides in the social and cultural practice, values, and beliefs that make up our Canadian society. Authentic inclusive classrooms reflect this understanding. All students should have access to these important concepts as well as the associated activities. (p. 71)

Inclusion then, is not an acceptance of disability “into” society; rather, authentic inclusion is concrete support and recognition that society always and already is comprised of individuals of differing abilities—it is a broadening of the term *new normal*.

Local Context

Saskatchewan is a geographically large Canadian province with 28 school divisions (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.) and a comparatively small population. In 2000 a province-wide review of educational supports for students with disabilities was conducted (*Directions for Diversity*, Government of Saskatchewan, 2000). Researchers found “inconsistencies, variances, and gaps in services across the province” (p. 57). The authors identified “strengths and barriers of the system and the possible avenues to improve” (2000, p. iv). Changes were made (Caswell & Hadden, 2012); one of the most significant was the shift in funding structures. Saskatchewan Ministry of Education¹ moved from an entitlement model, where school divisions (previously) received monies to support students with disabilities based upon medical diagnosis, to an impact model, where (currently) monies are tied to students’ needs, the extent to which their situation requires intense and/or intermittent supports. Implicit in this funding shift is a

¹ In Canada, education funding decisions are made provincially, except for First Nations and Aboriginal schools which are part of the federal government’s mandate.

philosophical one—a move away from a medical view of disability and toward a social model—in the way funding is tied to conditions necessary to make school more meaningful for students (Caswell & Hadden, 2012). School divisions receive set monies for students with disabilities and, as divisions, decide upon resource allocation. During the same period, from 2001 to 2010, the percentage of students requiring intensive supports steadily increased (Caswell & Hadden, 2012).

Significantly, the Saskatchewan Ministry's role is basically advisory with respect to the education of students with disabilities. Stated differently, the choice of the kinds of supports provided, and the ways in which those supports are delivered to students—be it inclusive or specialized (meaning segregated) programs—lies primarily within each school divisions' control. That being said, there is an articulated commitment to inclusion (Ministry of Education, 2015). Further, some have argued that the social model of disability, consistent with Saskatchewan's impact profile needs assessment, is more conducive to inclusive practice. Rietveld (2010, p. 18), for example, suggested that “adoption of this [social] model requires staff ... to arrange the physical and social environment from the outset to take into account the variation in abilities, interests and attributes of all members in ways that enhance all children's learning of culturally valued beliefs, skills and/or understandings.” Regardless, the fact that funding is not directly tied to *how* school divisions support students, may be one of the reasons that inclusive practices vary from school division to school division (Lyons, Thompson, & Timmons, 2016).

Purpose

This article is part of a larger project entitled “Voices of Inclusion,” in which selected authentic inclusive preschool, elementary, secondary, and vocational settings were showcased (Lyons et al., 2016). We choose to highlight positive aspects—that is, the “articulation of the strengths and best practices. ‘The best of what has been and what is’” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16). Our intent is purposeful: “Rather than giving priority to the problems in our current practice, [we chose to give] attention to evidence of successful practice” (Giles & Aldersen, 2008, p. 466). As described above, given the uneven nature of inclusive practice within Saskatchewan, featuring exemplars of authentic inclusive practice may lift up other schools. Again, there is definite rationale for focussing upon a school's strengths, since “what we focus on becomes our reality” (Hammond, 1998; p. 4). Our aim is to lift up significant aspects of what authentic inclusion looks like in two secondary settings in Saskatchewan.

Like Ferguson (1995, 2008), Swedeen (2009) is a parent of a child with a disability. Also like Ferguson, she asks some important questions around “the meaning and value of authentic inclusion” (p. 1): questions such as “Are the students supporting each other?” (p. 7) and “Does each member of the teaching team express ownership for all students?” (p. 7). Indeed, we found Swedeen's (2009) inquiry so practical and tangible that we revisit them in the results and discussion sections. We use Swedeen's work as touchstone as we investigate and describe aspects of authentic inclusion in two secondary school contexts. (By doing so, we do not suggest or imply that parents are the only ones who understand the importance of inclusion.)

Methodology

There is a named methodology that guides researchers to accentuate the positive: *appreciative inquiry*. Although appreciative inquiry (AI) is a decidedly different way of conducting research, there is precedence for using it within inclusive education research (Calabrese et al., 2008; Carlson Berg, 2010; Clarke, Egan, Fletcher, & Ryan, 2006; Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006; Underwood & Killoran, 2012). Interestingly, the roots of AI are not in education, but in business. As described by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005, p. 16), AI is implemented in a four-part cycle, named *4-D* after its phases, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny:

- In the Discovery phase, the idea is to “mobilize the whole system by engaging all stake holders in the articulation of strengths and best practices.”
- Next is the Dream stage, in which the goal is “creating a clear results-oriented vision in relation to discovered potential.”
- In the Design phase, the focus is on “possibility propositions of the ideal organization.”
- Finally, the Destiny phase involves “strengthening the affirmative capability of the whole system, enabling it to build hope and sustain momentum for ongoing positive change.”

As may be apparent, AI has much in common with action research, since both are cyclical and self-reflective (see especially Dolmage et al., 2009). As Coghlan, Preskill, and Tzavaras Catsambas (2003, p. 12) observed, some researchers label the phases slightly differently—Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, and Innovate (e.g., Watkins & Mohr, 2001). “Although AI has no formula” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 15), when used to structure a change process, management typically move through all four phases. On the other hand, when AI has been used within inclusive educational research in particular, the process and the number of phases varies.

Appreciative Inquiry in Educational Research

There are examples of inclusive education research that use all four phases of the 4-D cycle defined by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005). Most saliently here, Kozik et al. (2009, p. 80) used AI methodology in order to promote and move some secondary schools toward inclusion of students with disabilities. Through AI, the attributes of successful inclusive educators were identified and “plans [were] developed to promote successful inclusive [educational] settings” as well as “commitment to short term goals” (p. 86). Further, Kozik et al. (2009) suggested AI is a fruitful framework for professional development: “The commitments in the final *deliver* stage of the AI...represent what individuals and their organizations can do in the short term to increase inclusive adolescent opportunities and to improve outcomes in schools for teaching students with disabilities” (p. 89). Clarke et al. (2006) also used AI for the professional development of science teachers, in which the focus was “on ways to capture, respond to and develop children’s ideas ... to help adults follow and support early curiosity” (p. 409). Interestingly, the participants in Clarke et al.’s (2006) study experienced tension due to a perceived lack of prescribed structure through AI, but did find that AI’s emphasis on the

positive allowed relevant objectives to emerge. (Perhaps this observation has more to do with how professional development is usually enacted, a discussion certainly beyond the scope of this article). In short, some educational researchers have used AI's 4-D cycle, particularly when a change may be involved, and some researchers have used AI in teacher professional development.

Further, AI has been used in educational program evaluation. Since AI seeks generous participation from all stakeholders and since it “creates continuous opportunities to look back on those moments of excellence and use them to guide the organization toward a more positive future” (Coghlan et al., 2003, p. 20), it may not be surprising that educational practitioners and researchers have used AI as program evaluation (Coghlan et al., 2003; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). In fact, there are AI program evaluation studies even within inclusive education. For example, through surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews, Underwood and Killoran (2012) used an AI approach to investigate various early years programs and supports in Ontario. Not surprisingly, “parent ... satisfaction with the program and staff lead parents and family members to attend programs, to keep going to programs, and to keep them coming back” (p. 405). In another inclusive education study, Calabrese et al. (2008) evaluated a Circle of Friends (CoF), a program designed to address the social needs of students with disabilities through social engineering. They determined that CoF “reduced the level of alienation felt by parents of children with disabilities,” that “participation in the Circle of Friends was transformative,” and finally, that CoFs created “ecological conditions ... for inclusion into the school's social experience for students with disabilities” (p. 27). In some ways AI may appear a strange choice for a program evaluation methodology, since “one of the risks involved in using an appreciative inquiry approach [may be] missing important information about what is *not* working well” (Underwood & Killoran, 2012, p. 384); however, Claiborne, Cornforth, Gibson, and Smith (2011, p. 515) and Underwood and Killoran (2012), among others, feel that the benefits of AI are quite powerful, especially if the goal is to move the school toward more positive and effective practice (however defined—greater inclusivity, greater use of evidence-based practice science, greater use of CoFs, etc.)

Appreciative inquiry approaches. Calabrese et al. (2008), Clarke et al., (2006), Kozik et al., (2009), and Underwood and Killoran (2012) conducted AI more or less through the full 4-D cycle; however, like Coghlan et al., (2003), we have found many other studies in which “the Appreciative Inquiry was modified and only partially used” (p. 17). Likely due to its positive nature, inclusive education researchers often use AI to frame their study and/or to structure interview questions (Carlson Berg, 2010; Claiborne et al., 2011; Deer, 2013; Dolmage et al., 2009; Giles & Aldersen, 2008; Lightfoot & Bond, 2013; Villeneuve & Hutchinson, 2012). For example, Villeneuve and Hutchinson (2012) investigated the different kinds of collaboration between occupational therapists and school-based teams for students with developmental disabilities; the “interview questions were guided by prior observations and document review using an appreciative approach to inquiry... [to] emphasize the sharing of [positive] stories” (p. 9). Citing an AI focus, Giles and Aldersen (2008) “appreciatively appraise[d] those social interactions that were occurring between teachers and students that had a positive impact on the students” (p. 470).

To investigate school transitions for students with Down syndrome, Lightfoot and Bond (2013) used “semi-structured interviews conducted using open-ended questions ... informed by Appreciative Inquiry’s 4-D cycle and positively framed questioning” (p. 167). Deer (2013) employed the principles of appreciative inquiry “by negotiating ‘initial intentional empathy’ (Elliot, 1999, p. 12) with the participants, and attempted to establish an environment of individual and social affirmation” (p. 183). Finally, Carlson Berg (2010) explored the experiences of newcomers to Fransaskois schools in Saskatchewan using an AI framework. Like all these inclusive education researchers, we used an AI approach. Specifically, we posed interview questions that would ideally elicit positive responses, and in the interviews, we sought participants’ hopeful, encouraging stories.

Method

Sampling Procedures

Because we were interested in successful authentic inclusive secondary schools, we used (as others have done) purposeful sample techniques. In their CoF efficacy research, Calabrese et al. (2008), for example, purposefully selected individuals who initiated and monitored CoFs for at least three years; they also intentionally selected students with disabilities who were part of a CoF for at least two years. In our letter of invitation, we described what inclusive education is in the context of students with disabilities. All directors of education within the province were contacted. Directors were asked to nominate schools within their division which they deemed commendable, excellent inclusive settings. Based upon site visits to nominated schools, two were eventually selected where students with intellectual disabilities were included in various academic and extracurricular activities. One might expect that selected schools would come from the two largest cities in Saskatchewan, but such was not the case. One was from a large city; the other from a medium-sized one. Although these schools were exemplary in many ways with respect to authentic inclusive practice, particularly Mountainview School, it is fair to suggest that each school was continuing to improve.

The Schools and the School Participants²

Mountainview School is located in southern Saskatchewan in a medium-sized city; while Plainsview School is situated farther north. Though Mountainview School has a history of inclusion, the school moved to full inclusion relatively recently, about 2009, after a division-wide review was conducted. With 21 students with disabilities and a total school population of 128 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015), 16.4% of students had a disability within that school, a rate that is higher than might be expected for a neighbourhood school.³ Such data for Plainsview School was not available; however, based upon our informal observations, it appeared that the percentage of students with disabilities also might also be higher than expected. As secondary schools go, it may

² School and participant names are pseudonyms.

³ Maulik, Mascarenhas, Mathers, Dua, and Saxena (2011) determined that the rate of intellectual disability to be about 1% and the overall rate of disability to be about 5%.

appear that these two were small, with Mountainview School at 128 students and Plainsview School at 488 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015); however, these enrolment numbers were not inconsistent with secondary schools across the province (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015).

In order to obtain a thorough picture of these schools, we interviewed 34 participants, including (first and foremost) students with and without disabilities, parents or guardians, classroom teachers, specialist teachers and consultants (learning resource, student support teachers, etc.), paraprofessionals, a principal, a social worker, and educational and clinical psychologists. We chose not to read background files (cumulative or “cum” files) of the student participants; we wanted to hear from participants in their own words—to get their experience of school unencumbered by psycho-educational tests, etc. Students were free to bring a parent or guardian to the interview, and some chose to do so (see Table 1). At Mountainview a teacher and parent were present for support during the focus group interviews (see Table 1), although their participation in those interviews was minimal; the teacher was available as a support for both students with and without disabilities. Because the school structured the interviews in these ways (see next section), we cannot speculate on how alternative arrangements could have affected the data collected. Having said that, for the most part, students spoke for themselves with minimal prompting during focus groups, so it appears that the impact of the teacher and parent were minimal.

Data Collection Techniques

The selected schools had input regarding data collection techniques, to the extent necessary to accommodate their hectic schedules while enabling interviews with as wide a selection of participants as possible. When participants structure data collection, it may be within participatory action research frameworks (see Bergold & Thomas, 2012), although this arrangement is not inconsistent with AI.

Mountainview School opted for three focus group interviews; one comprised of parents/guardians, one of students with and without disabilities, and one of school-based personnel (Claiborne et al., 2011; Giles & Alderson, 2008). Due to time conflicts, the principal was interviewed individually. Focus group interviews lasted about 90–120 minutes. Unfortunately, two students with disabilities were ill during data collection, which occurred over two days. Focus groups are a time-efficient data collection strategy to be sure, although there may be a risk of inherent coercion; participants may feel compelled to share beyond their comfort level should others do so. Having said that, Giles and Alderson (2008) used focus groups in an AI with students in tertiary education programs, another participant group thought to be potentially vulnerable. Further, the emphasis here was on the positive, so we thought the risk minimal, which it proved to be.

In contrast, Plainsview School personnel chose mostly individual interviews with some small group (up to three participants). Data collection also occurred over two days at Plainsview. These individual and small group interviews lasted between 45–90 minutes (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Summary

Mountainview School		
Parents / Guardians	Students	Staff
<p>Interviewed in a single focus group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Debbie</i> Kelly's mother • <i>Patricia</i> Fernando's mother (Fernando has a developmental disability though not interviewed) • <i>Olga</i> Peter's mother (Peter has a significant disability though not interviewed) • <i>Susan and Bernie</i> Ken's mother and father (Ken has a developmental disability though not interviewed) • <i>Linda</i> Tony's mother 	<p>Interviewed in a single focus group; adults Debbie and Pamela were present for support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kelly</i> Grade 12, 17 years old With a developmental disability and in a wheelchair • <i>Cindy</i> Grade 12, 18 years old With a developmental disability • <i>Tabatha</i> Grade 12, 19 years old With a developmental disability • <i>Fred</i> Grade 11, 17 years old Without a disability • <i>Lynn</i> Grade 9, 14 years old Without a disability 	<p>Interviewed in a single focus group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pamela and Kathy</i> Student support teacher • <i>Teresa</i> Student support consultant • <i>Karen and Katie</i> Educational assistants • <i>Len</i> Classroom teacher • <i>Reese</i> Classroom teacher (math) <p>Interviewed individually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ron</i> Principal
Plainsview School		
Parents / Guardians	Students	Staff
<p>Interviewed with Tessa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ivy</i> Tessa's mother <p>Interviewed with Myrna:</p> <p><i>Sarah</i> former guardian of Myrna</p>	<p>Interviewed with her mother, Ivy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tessa</i> Grade 9, 15 years old With a developmental disability <p>Interviewed with her former guardian, Sarah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Myrna</i> Grade 12, 21 years old Finishing her work placement With a developmental disability Mikayla is her daughter, 5 years old <p>Interviewed with a teacher present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Steven</i> Grade 9, 14 years old Asperger's syndrome 	<p>Interviewed individually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kim</i> Inclusive classroom teacher (home economics) • <i>Elizabeth</i> Alternative education teacher • <i>Isabella</i> Social worker • <i>Chloe</i> Social work student <p>2 interviewed together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Barbara</i> Functional integration teacher • <i>Dorothy</i> Advocate from a community living society <p>3 interviewed together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Celeste</i> Clinical psychologist • <i>Clara</i> Educational psychologist • <i>Sahara</i> Psychology student

We personally collected data at Mountainview; a retired colleague collected data at Plainsview. Mountainview also provided some school newsletters and a few other related documents. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Regina, as well as from each and every participant. Informed consent forms were completed at the beginning of all interviews. Additional safeguards were enacted, such as the availability

of a parent, guardian, or trusted teacher being present at interviews. Given the topic, showcasing successful examples of inclusion, and given the AI approach, most individuals were eager to participate.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. A robust audit trail has been maintained, including dates and places of the interviews, and the identities of interviewees and interviewers (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 201). Data analysis began by reading through all transcripts in their entirety. The first author coded the transcripts, from which a series of matrices was created. The codes were distilled into categories, and eventually further distilled into themes. Data analysis for this current project was happening at the same time as for the entire “Voices of Inclusion” project; that is to say, data analyses of the AI of preschool, elementary, vocational—and of particular interest here—secondary settings occurred simultaneously. What is significant is the degree of thematic resonance, there was substantive overlap in themes, considering authentic inclusion was investigated across settings, and across analyses. (Leadership, for example is a key theme that permeates all analyses; for more, see Lyons et al., 2016.) We see this thematic resonance as not only significant for what authentic inclusion means, but also as another marker of research quality.

Results and Discussion⁴

We present our results in two interrelated themes, the first of which we have labelled *authentic inclusion*, and the second, *authentic inclusive pedagogy*. We see inclusive pedagogy as both an outcome, and constituent of, authentic inclusion. Within these two major themes are several sub-themes; namely, (a) a broad and infused inclusive vision, (b) leadership: implementing the vision, (c) pushing all students beyond comfort zones, (d) no to the new exclusion, and lastly, (d) rejection of false dichotomies: specialized care vs. social inclusion.

Authentic Inclusion: “The Full Meal Deal” (It’s Everywhere)

To be authentically inclusive is, firstly (and obviously), to include students with disabilities in classes. As Pamela, a student support teacher, explained, “There are 21 students [with disabilities] ... The majority of our students are in four classes out of five per day, and when they’re not in classes, we’ve targeted the goals that fit best *in* our classroom to do more intensive work.” Isabella, social worker at Plainsview School, stated, “It’s so important to not segregate, because self-esteem and the mental health part, that is huge.” Further, as Andrews and Lupart (2000) suggested, authentic inclusion is an appreciation and support of difference; and, according to Chloe, a social work student at Plainsview, sometimes such support is quite easily provided: “A lot of the times either those kids get missed or punished when it’s really something so simple to do with just

⁴ Since there is more data from Mountainview, unless otherwise specified participants are from that school. Mountainview was further along in its journey toward authentic inclusion.

like focusing more on what they need.” The learning resource teacher at that school stated, “It’s more like, ‘What do you need from your school to work for you?’ ”

At times students with disabilities simply required access to existing school services. For example, at Plainsview Myrna, a single mother with a disability, gave birth to her daughter, Mikayla. Myrna’s former guardian, Sarah stated, “I think the daycare is really important. It would be difficult when Mikayla was younger to be going to a different place and going back and forth.” So when a need is recognized, an authentically inclusive school either has to create supports for that need or advocate for the resources to do so, “This school is very good at advocating for the children. So ... a need that the child has is outside and in the community somewhere, then they will pull together to get that child’s needs met,” suggested Sahara from Plainsview. Authentic inclusion at Plainsview seemed to be concerned with identification of and for difference, and support around that.

A broad and infused inclusive vision. The vision appeared broader at Mountainview; as our title suggests, participants saw inclusion

everywhere. You see students—they’ve moved the lunch program that used to be in here upstairs. It’s now out in the foyer by the canteen, where a lot of the other students [without disabilities] eat. It’s in the extracurricular. It’s in the rock band. It’s not just in the classroom setting; it’s throughout the whole school. (Teresa, student-support consultant)

Walking around the school, there was a palpable and positive feeling. Disability appeared to be easily visible and normalized. Not only was inclusion “everywhere,” it is noticeably beyond disability, as Karen, a teaching assistant, pointed out:

Our motto is “Mountainview, where everybody is somebody,” and I just think that is very true. We have a lot of kids with some mental illness or some problems at home ... There’s a lot of kids here that have their own issues [who are also actively included in school].

Indeed, authentic inclusion at Mountainview exemplified a broad student community within which various legitimized roles coexisted. Pamela, a student support teacher, stated, “What’s most meaningful and exciting is just working towards something that’s larger than myself. Seeing students naturally interact with their peers.” More meaningfully, in this authentically inclusive setting, Mountainview students seemed to be positive role models within its larger community. Ken is a student with an intellectual disability. His father Bernie recalled,

We went to the fair and [Ken] met some of his peers. There were girls [without disabilities] and they asked him to go on a ride. Of course he shows no fear, and some of them... were afraid, but he wasn’t. So, maybe he showed leadership among his peers that way.

Though this example may be a small, it may illustrate that authentic inclusion—whether in community or school—not only involves valued social roles, but also opportunities for students with disabilities to be front-runners. Of course, the community can affect the school as well in ways that promote authentic inclusion. Ken’s mother suggested that attitudes toward folks with disabilities

have changed so much. Like older people feel sorry for us sometimes that we have a kid like—you know, even people who've worked with handicapped children. But it's actually now the young people in their 30s and younger, you know, who ... don't look down on you or feel sorry or, you know, they just are more like a buddy [to folks with disabilities]—I really think in this next generation of peers, they will be probably even better. I think it's very positive.

Leadership: Implementing the vision. Though there were some differences in how authentic inclusion appeared at each school, participants from each setting identified leadership as critically important. Certainly within both schools many of these key areas were addressed (see Jorgensen et al., 2012; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Swedeen, 2009). Zoe, a home economics teacher from Plainsview, said an inclusive vision “comes from your administration. You know we've been educated that way to focus on that.” Swedeen asked (2009, p. 10) “Do ... principals understand and support inclusive principles?” and then posed a deeper question, “In the school district ... do school leaders see how inclusive practices fit into overall school improvement and school redesign efforts?” (p.11). In other words, to what extent is inclusion mandated and practised division wide?

In 2006, the Saskatchewan government amalgamated 71 school divisions into the current 28. At that time Mountainview School was in a new division, larger than before. With this merger, administration took the opportunity to commission a review of all student support services, including those for students with disabilities. Ron, the principal, commented that “one of the best supports I had was my superintendent, and ... she decided that she would do a study just on what could be improved and what needs to be improved and what things were working well.” Pamela, a student support teacher at Mountainview, agreed:

[This] review... spearheaded this whole change of inclusion, and I think when we're talking about a change such as this—and we need to have a shared vision, and I think that that document that we received ... allowed us to have that shared vision to always refer back to, and all the decisions that we make, we try and look at that review and say, “Okay, yeah, that's what”—it just guides all the decisions I feel that we've made in this program to make it better and better and better. So that's an important part.

Indeed, several Mountainview participants expanded on this theme, including Len, a classroom teacher, who indicated that

the [school] division has made [inclusion] a priority. That's the main thing. It's not just one school decides, “Well, we're going to do this.” It's a division mandate that every school has to do it, and so it's [of] some importance, obviously.

According to Kathy, student support teacher, implementing the vision began with the division's superintendent of learning, who

thought that it [inclusion] was a priority and that things needed to change. We made a learning wall in the staff room that first year after the report, where you had to... fill out a thing every staff meeting of one of the 11 recommendations.

Teresa continued “You had to fill out what you accomplished for one of those [recommendations], and we made a Monopoly board, so there's a visual in there. So, then you actually looked at it.” Ron said,

the other document that we used quite a bit is the School Division Student Support Services, the one we modeled. This is out by the Ministry [of Education], and that is the rubric we used to measure ourselves. We're including that we had this as our focus and our goal.

Ron went onto explain that Mountainview is still working on “parents’ community engagement as one of the pillars within the rubric, and that’s a place where we have to move still.”

Mountainview participants said they were appreciative of Ron’s leadership—not only to actualize inclusive practice, but almost more importantly, to demonstrate the belief that it is the “right thing to do.” According to some, this demonstration helped move the inclusive education agenda forward:

We need a strong leader, and I think Ron has done an amazing job of modeling his belief that this is the best for all students, and I think you really need that strong support system, someone who’s a leader, to make it happen, because otherwise you’re just fighting a battle maybe that you can’t win on your own. (Pamela, student support teacher)

Pamela continued,

It’s hard to change moral [beliefs]—that’s a hard thing to do, but I think over time—I think Ron used the quote one time, “You either jump on board or don’t, but we’re all jumping on it, so you’re gonna be left in the dust.”

Teresa responded,

I think there’s always going to be some differences amongst staff that’s working with [students with disabilities] and what their thoughts are, but I think everybody in this building could look at some of the successes that the students have, and that’s enough to pull you in a bit.

Authentic Inclusive Pedagogy

We shift focus now from administrative and staff perspectives on division- and school-wide change and examine how authentic inclusive pedagogy is experienced by students with and without disabilities and by others directly affected by its implementation. Not surprisingly, various teachers talked about differentiated instruction; to answer another of Swedeen’s (2009, p. 6) questions, “Are all students working in the same curriculum at varying levels of complexity?” At Mountainview, unequivocally the answer is “yes.” Indeed, teachers at Mountainview talked about differentiated instruction as a given, even in advanced mathematics and physics classes. Most interestingly, differentiated instruction was seen as challenging only when class composition implicitly suggested a special education pull-out class. Reese, a Grade 10–12 inclusive math teacher, commented:

If you want to do that inclusive, you need enough of—regular’s not the right word, but sort of typical students to be able to include. Most of my classes it works out fine that I’ve got enough kind of typical students and then a couple of functionally integrated students, so it’s a nice mix, but I know there’s a few classes in the building, where there’s maybe five functionally integrated students [students with

intellectual disabilities] and four students on a regular program. Well, that mix, that's hard to really do inclusion.

Causton and Theoharis (2013, p. 23) might suggest such a class is basically a special education classroom; a “dense clustering of students with needs” as a strategy may work both toward and away from authentic inclusive practices. Such a technique

often results in clustering students with disabilities or other needs into a single room. A third grade room might have 18 students without disabilities and eight students with disabilities.... While well intentioned, these rooms are not truly inclusive, as the disproportionate amount of needs can make them very much like special education classrooms.

Most interesting here, Reese does not identify adapting the content as the issue; rather, she recognizes the potential that such a classroom composition may operate as a special education room. To us, Reese's degree of awareness and caution around dense clustering, even if unplanned, is emblematic of an authentically inclusive pedagogy and school.

Pushing all students beyond comfort zones. To continue with Swedeen (2009) as our gauge, she asked, “Are all students actively encouraged to be part of and actually engaged in extracurriculars and social events at school?” (p. 9). Albeit in a very different context, Thompson (2003) argued for a “practical pedagogy ... the ‘routine’ ways in which facilitators support the power, choice and control of people with learning difficulties... [so that], alternative identity conceptions for people with learning difficulties are made possible” (p. 727). Any pedagogy for or including folks with disabilities must attempt to move beyond well worn disabling prejudices, and to do so, must account for such biases in its articulation (Thompson, 2012).

To connect that concept here, like anyone, students with disabilities have strengths and preferences; ideally, school builds upon them. Too often, however, students with disabilities may be shunted into arguably inclusive settings while choices presented therein are all too predictable—or, stated in another way, opportunities seem to be circumscribed by disabling practices. A leisure activity often cited for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is bowling; in the case of work placements, fast-food settings are ubiquitous. It is entirely possible for bowling to take place within an inclusive setting, yet not be an authentically inclusive practice. If every extracurricular activity for every student with a disability is bowling; if every job placement opportunity for every student with a disability is in a fast-food restaurant, the practice is not authentically inclusive. In other words, in this case, we feel as though Swedeen's question does not go far enough: Students with and without disabilities in an authentic inclusive school should participate in a range of opportunities.

The diversity of activities for students with (and without) disabilities at Mountainview was impressive. Kelly, for example, who presents in a wheelchair with some cognitive issues, stated:

Music sure changed my sense of confidence in how I learned to like participate with all my friends. That really has changed, made a difference in my life... and [I] got a job placement, the best job placement ever ... [a local radio station] I've been on the radio a couple times with [different stations]. I've been on the computer. I've been all over the place, basically.

Another student with a disability, Cindy, commented on her work placement, “I’ve been involved in daycares and I really enjoy working with little kids.” Fred, a nondisabled student, said, “I enjoy participating in the sports, all the sports activities. I love being physical so every sports [activity] I’ll join it.” Susan, Ken’s mother, observed, “Maybe because they learn it in school, and they see what they are capable of. Like Justin goes with his class, like canoeing or curling.”

Not only did students experience a range of vocational and extracurricular opportunities; significantly, they felt successful in doing so. Many times, students reported that their teachers were integral to enlarging the boundaries of what they thought was possible. In short, teachers made a difference.

Our school tries to get everyone participating in our activities. Like, they’ll [teachers] try to get everyone that’s here, [teachers] will try to get them to participate in all of the activities we have, like the musical. Even we had a winter Olympics, they got most people to participate in that. (Fred, student)

Later on, Fred said,

When Lynn mentioned the hockey program, I joined it just this year, and that was the first time I’ve ever played it and he [Len, the teacher] got me out to play it. I enjoyed it a lot it was a good experience.

Lynn, a student without a disability, stated:

I really like just being like at school and like being able to socialize with people. Some of the things that really stick out, I don’t know, I really like the sports as well, I just never even thought of it. But one of the things that has really helped me along is the hockey program ... I’ve never played hockey before, but now that I’ve been in it, I think, two years now, I’ve really enjoyed it and come to like try different things.

At Plainsview, Ivy was surprised that her daughter, Tessa “started doing drama. She really enjoyed drama, and she would come home and try and show me all the things that they learned and stuff. And, you know it’s just like she’d be so excited.” Pushing the boundaries of students with and without disabilities was certainly an explicit agenda on the part of the teachers; it was part of the authentic inclusive pedagogy. Len explained:

So I go with a little bit of the experimental process in terms of rock band [for example] and see what seems to work best with them [students] so they’re not put off by the process; they still want to come to rock band [or any other activity]. And then from there I try to push them a little bit. So if they start off on the tambourine or the shaker—a good example would be Celine (a student with a disability), who started off on the congas and we actually progressed her to playing a full drum kit. And now she’s trying vocals ... They might not be willing to try something, but if you give them a little bit of a push like a dad would, then they tend to buy into it and keep going. I find if you stand back too much and just say, “Okay, you don’t wanna play the tambourine” or “You don’t wanna do that,” becomes just a little bit of a willy-nilly process. You have to push them a little bit [out of their comfort zone].

In these ways, the teachers not only provided “every student ... opportunities to share his or her gifts, abilities, and passions” (Swedeen, 2009, p. 9), but more significantly, created opportunities where passion not yet explored, interests not yet

known could flourish in students. In this way “each member of the teaching team express[ed] ownership for all students” (Swedeen, 2009, p. 7).

No to the new exclusion: Overreliance on paraprofessionals. Too often in schools, paraprofessionals operate as part of students’ comfort zone; and the inclusive education literature has recognized for some time the potential pitfalls of overreliance on this resource (Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010). Ironically, within inclusive settings students with disabilities may have limited contact with students without disabilities; paraprofessionals may hover too much and usurp social opportunities. Consequently, there may be an invisible but very real bubble separating the paraprofessional and their student from the rest of the class.

It has been our experience that some parents feel comfortable in knowing that their son or daughter has their “own” paraprofessional—that their children are safe, free from bullying, that the paraprofessional really knows their child, etc. School-based teams can alleviate such concerns,

All of our kids [with disabilities] are in [all] classes. There’s been more meaningful participation going on. The peer relationships with everyone being accepted—I know some of the students in here mentioned that this morning, that we really focus on their strengths... the EAs [educational assistants] are support for the entire class; they’re not just tied to a student. We really try and avoid that. (Pamela, student support teacher, Mountainview)

What was surprising and heartening in our data is the extent to which Mountainview parents held the same opinion as Pamela; Linda, Tony’s mother, commented,

They [students] don’t just have one [educational assistant]. They [students] can learn to generalize and get used to a lot of people, because a lot of these, of our kids, don’t like change. And so they get used to one person, and then it’s very hard on them when they lose that person, or whatever. Or maybe they only have skills with the one teacher aide, because they have confidence with that one.

Similarly, Ken’s mother said,

Yeah, me too. Like that they get so attached to a certain teacher’s aide. You know, it’s like they are the whole day with them. And when Ken was little, it sometimes was a problem when the next school year the teacher got put in a different school or one of his aides, she retired. This was traumatic, really.

The fact that parents identified an overreliance on paraprofessionals as an issue, may speak to the confidence they had in the entire school—confidence to deal with issues such as bullying, socializing, engaged learning, etc.—thus providing further evidence of the authentically inclusive nature of the school and its pedagogies.

Rejection of false dichotomies: Specialized care vs. social inclusion. Overreliance on paraprofessionals was not the only issue upon which Mountainview parents and staff agreed. Proponents of segregated placements often appeal to arguments relating to specialized treatment for students with disabilities, as well as claims for increased safety. At the same time, inclusion may be misunderstood to be primarily concerned with social aspects for students with disabilities. Inclusion then is seen as a feel-good practice that contributes to students’ sense of belonging, first and foremost. In contrast, specialized,

segregated schooling may be seen to foster necessary functional skills, and perhaps some academic skills; while socially inclusive schooling is seen to foster social skills. The dichotomy is education that addresses either academic or social skills, but not both. Parents in this study from Mountainview clearly wanted no part of such a binary. Susan, Ken's mother, explained,

I have to admit that actually I was totally against this school [Mountainview]. Because my husband and I, we work in our spare time with special needs athletes, Special Olympics ..., and there's a lot of them who are older who went to school here [before the school had become fully inclusive in 2009]. And when they heard that Justin's gonna go soon to high school, they said, "Oh, you've gotta go to Mountainview because they go for walks, they go bowling, they do puzzles and games." And I thought, "Well, I want him to learn something!"

Susan thought to herself:

"Okay. I'll give him six months." And it [the school] was awesome. I was really very impressed, and I still am. And I do recommend it now to other parents. There's no more, "Yeah, we go for a walk" ... he wants to learn to read now.

Debbie, mother of Kelly, who is in a wheelchair, commented,

This year, which is a huge milestone for her, she actually likes math class. She's in a math class now with her peers, Grades 11 and 12. And she's doing a modified version of math, more meaningful math for her.

Although to a lesser extent, we also found such examples in the Plainsview data. Elizabeth, a Plainsview teacher, stated "nothing's impossible...I have a young man who has taken four years to be, to show he reads ... so we've taken some of that skill set [i.e., reading] and got him connected in Sask Native theater." So, parents, staff and students dismantled the specialized care vs. social inclusion debate, for it is in that dismantling, in the spaces between these two well worn arguments, where authentic inclusion lies.

The Hope Factor

Thus far, we have explained how authentic inclusion was "everywhere" and we offered insight into how authentic inclusive pedagogies operated. Our purpose was to describe examples of schools actively working toward authentic inclusion for students with disabilities. By and large, the techniques and teams needed to produce authentic inclusion in high schools have been documented (Dolmage, et al., 2009; Jorgensen et al., 2012). Certainly the role of administration cannot be underestimated in terms of motivation, leadership, and accountability. Although described slightly differently, our results resonate with another one in the "Voices of Inclusion" project, where "learning and relationships for all students, shared commitment to inclusion, general classroom teacher responsibility and collaborative team work" (Lyons et al., 2016; p. 889) were found to be key in effecting authentic inclusion.

Our larger purpose was perhaps inspirational—to encourage by example others working toward such aims, and, as is consistent with appreciative inquiry, to focus on the positive. Not only does an "appreciative inquiry give attention to evidence of successful practice" (Giles & Aldersen, 2008, p. 466), it also "enables dialogue that is

restorative, generative and hope-filled” (p. 468). Hope can be a strong dynamic. In the case of authentic inclusion, perhaps hope is an outcome, a characteristic, and a sustaining value. Though our data around hope may not be quite as robust as our triangulated thematic results; we think it still important to take up. Indeed, as researchers, it was hard not to feel optimistic in conducting this project. And so, we raise a hopeful discussion: We first describe students’ hope-filled school experiences followed by students’ hope—for the future.

Hope-Filled Schools

Throughout the interviews, school-based personnel, parents or guardians, and most notably students with and without disabilities used hopeful language; they used words like *confidence*, *respect*, *support*, and *equality*. Kelly, a Mountainview student, stated, “I always participate in every activity there is. And I have gotten better because I found, and I said this to my mom, I said to her, ‘I’ve come to a point where I found my confidence better’.” Ken’s mother agrees: “It would be the confidence. And I think if you’re confident, it’s easier to learn.” Barbara, a teacher from Plainsview, stated that “each of these kids are respected,” a sentiment echoed by Ken’s father: “They [peers] respect him” ...[and]... “treat him as equal.” When asked what he is most proud of in school, Steven, a Plainsview student, replied, “That I’m succeeding.”

Perhaps Ivy, Tessa’s mother, stated it best, confidence, respect, support, and equality are not just words, but embedded values—practised values that contributed to anti-bullying:

In grade school she [Tessa] was really left out, and they [students with disabilities] were easy targets. Whereas here it’s like everybody’s the same, they’re just learning differently. They [the school personnel] are very good at making sure that there isn’t bullying.

Indeed, Plainsview clearly addressed such issues and appears to have made the school safer for students with disabilities. But we leave this section with an even more hope-filled story that Susan, a mother at Mountainview, recounted:

My granddaughter came to me and was crying. She’s in first grade. And she said, “Oh, the kids said I’m so skinny and blah, blah, blah.” And she cried. And Ken [her son with a developmental disability] said [to the students], “Stop bullying.” I said, “Woah!” You know? And I was—I called Kathy [the teacher] and said, “He knows it.” It is amazing sometimes after months when you really don’t know [if he understands] anything that he learns, then suddenly when it’s the right time and the right moment he shows me that he does get it. You know? We love it.

To underscore the optimism in this story, the most powerful element here is the role reversal: The student with an intellectual disability is the intervener in a bullying incident, and the nondisabled student is (unfortunately) the victim. So, when Swedeen (2009, p. 7) asked, “Are the students supporting each other?” we may go deeper and identify ways in which students with disabilities are supported, but almost more significantly, identify ways in which such students with disabilities may offer support to others.

Students' Hopes for the Future ... and Our Hope

We have made the point that an authentic inclusive school must provide possibilities for students with disabilities beyond the usual stereotyped ones—whatever the nature of those possibilities. Given that, one might expect students with and without disabilities to dream big about their futures—not to be constrained by disablement. Such was the case in this research. In this final section, we have purposefully left out the student descriptors regarding disability status (see Table 1); we think it hopeful to allow students to speak about their futures in their own (unencumbered and optimistic) words. In this way, there seems little distinction between those with and without disabilities.

When asked about life after high school, Kelly said, “What I really want to do when I finish school is get my music career in line.” Cindy said, “I would love to learn courses of how to work with kids and elderly people because I’ve been involved in daycares and I really enjoy working with little kids. But I also love working with elderly people.” Tabatha responded, “I take college.... Yes. And think of all the stuff, you can move out, you can get paid lots of money.” When probed further, “Do you know what kind of job you want when you get paid? What job you would have?” she replied, “I like fashion ... I take fashion show stuff ... and magazine suits like again lots of people. I like to get lots of fashion.” Lynn stated, “I really want to be a graphic designer. I’m really interested in computer design or even like being like a photographer or something like that. I really enjoy being hands on, I guess you could say.” At Plainsview, Steven stated, “I want to make TV shows. Drawings... [animation pictures] I like watching them. Cause I, you know, I feel a little bit more mature when I watch them. They’re mostly for teenagers, not kids.” Fred appreciated that

when I took welding last year, the teacher said after, I had one parent/teacher interview, which I was a very good welder and I should take—like he would help me out and get in [a local polytechnique/trade school] because I was so good of a welder. So that made me feel pretty proud because I didn’t think I welded that well.

Although, Fred also stated that he “want[s] to go into the military.” To sum up then, career aspirations included working in music and radio, being involved in the fashion industry, and being a daycare worker, a computer graphic designer, a welder, or a soldier. What is interesting is that the career aspirations are quite varied, and beyond the typical stereotyped interests one may experience in another kind of educational setting.

Conclusion

Where to from here? On what basis hope? (Danforth, 1997). After such a discussion, we must acknowledge another truth: In some ways this research feels unnecessary. The first author remembers years ago listening to David Hingsburger, a passionate advocate and writer for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (e.g., Hingsburger, 1999). Hingsburger evaluated many residential settings; after a while, he noticed that much could be gleaned just from walking—walking around the halls, walking around the yard, even walking from the curb to the home’s front doors. What does the house or building sound like? Who greets you? What does the artwork look like on the wall? Maybe the same is true for schools; maybe an authentically inclusive school looks, sounds, and even feels different from one that is not—and maybe such a determination

can be made fairly quickly upon entering a building. In other words, the issue may not be one of describing what an authentically inclusive school is, as much as it is about simply providing evidence that it can be done.

This article described two schools that valued authentic inclusion and actively worked to achieve it. Although not by design, but through our nominated sampling procedures, what this research did not do was describe authentic inclusion in a large secondary school; however, it must be restated that smaller school sizes are not unusual for Saskatchewan. For example, in secondary schools the student populations ranged from 77 to 1524 (Ministry of Education, 2015, September). Having said that, high schools in other jurisdictions typically have larger student populations; for example, the average secondary school in Ontario is 775 students (People for Education, 2013, p. 4). Perhaps the next logical step in this line of research is to investigate sizeable secondary schools that are actively working toward authentic inclusion.

At the same time, we are reminded of the starfish story. An old man lectured a young boy suggesting his attempt to save thousands of starfish by throwing them back into the ocean was, in fact, futile. The young boy threw another into the water, and famously replied, “It made a difference to that one!” Mountainview School may be small and there may be many more large secondary schools in other areas, but in the spirit of hopefulness we leave the last words to Tabatha, a Mountainview student, who said:

I like music. And I like to dance because I like to dance because I take hip hop stuff ... And I like to sing in rock band a lot. And then enjoying singing in rock band. And I'm amazing voice and I'm an amazing person.

Mountainview staff, parents, and community certainly made a difference to her.

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