"Be Strong; Know What You Need": A Narrative on Inclusive Leadership

Angela Valeo

Ryerson University

Abstract

Based on an in-depth interview with a retired school principal, this paper explores questions around what it means to practice inclusive leadership in an Ontario school board from the mid 1970s into the 21st century. Using semi-structured interview questions, the investigation specifically sought to understand the practice of creating inclusive schools for students with disabilities. A narrative style using found poetry was used to give voice to the interviewee. Central to the practice was the need for a strong moral purpose and a vision of inclusion, as well as the ability to build relationships across parents, teachers, students, and other school staff. Additional insights included the need for the sharing of knowledge among all levels of school personnel. Instructional leadership, formal decision-making approaches, and legislative procedures did not appear to be as important in ensuring inclusion.

Keywords: inclusion; inclusive leadership; disabilities; special education

"Be Strong; Know What You Need": A Narrative on Inclusive Leadership

My recent research on the role of the principal in fostering and creating inclusive schools has created a need for me to talk with a principal who has successfully created and run such schools. Thus, I have conducted, tape-recorded, and transcribed an in-depth interview with a retired school principal who is well known in Ontario among pro-inclusion advocacy organizations (e.g. Community Living Ontario, Marsha Forest Centre, Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education). Robb (a pseudonym) was a principal with a mid-sized school board in Ontario between 1968 and 2002, and he began running inclusive schools at a time when the concept of inclusion was still relatively unknown and limited. While the interview began with a list of pre-set questions, it quickly evolved into a purposeful conversation in which I followed-up with additional comments to draw out details and more specific descriptions. The main goal of the interview was to juxtapose the research literature on the role of the administrator in inclusive schools against an in-depth personal narrative to add intensity and meaning to the often general research findings which arise out of survey methodologies. In addition, a case study approach was used to delve into a singular type of knowledge which Flyvberg (2006) states is central to developing what he refers to as "expert activity." He notes:

> Common to all experts, however, is that they operate on the basis of intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases in their areas of expertise. Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method or to put it more generally still, as a method of learning. (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 219)

However, after reading, reviewing, and analyzing the interviews, a much more personal story arose which, while not a definitive description of practices that can be generalized to all situations, may, as Butler-Kisber (2002) notes, allow "others to take away from the particular what resonates with their experiences and use these understandings to enhance educational practices in other settings" (p. 2).

Applying a narrative lens to the issue of leadership in fostering inclusive schools, appears to be particularly relevant given that qualitative approaches do not seem to be able to fully identify or describe what an administrator who has successfully implemented inclusive policies and practices in a school actually does or experiences. A disconnect seems to exist between research in the field and the dynamic/practical problems of the field. Polkinghorne (1988) notes the "loss of faith in the ability of research in the human disciplines to deliver on their original promise of helping to solve human and social problems" (p. ix). Ryan (2006) notes that although there currently is a large body of information on inclusive leadership, "the challenge is sifting through the reams of material in ways that will help us understand and promote inclusive leadership" (p. 55). On the issue of leadership and management, Fullan (2001) describes a similar situation when he states, "Management books contain reams of advice, but the advice is often contradictory, general, and at the end of the day confusing and non-actionable" (p. 5). The intent of this paper then is to try to enhance understanding of key texts on leadership in an inclusive environment by drawing on a personal story.

However, I should first define inclusive schools. In the context of this paper, *inclusion* refers to the "routine placement of learners with disabilities, regardless of type or degree of challenge to learning, in regular classrooms of community schools alongside age appropriate

typical peers. In inclusive regular classrooms learners with disabilities receive acceptance and respect as would any other learner" (Bunch, Finnegan, Humphries, & Doré & Doré, 2005, p. 35). Inclusion is distinguished from the practice of "integration" which is the:

> Attendance of learners with disabilities in regular classes on a full-time or part-time basis in the company of typical peers. It involves a process involving determination of the amount of inclusion and development of a supportive regular class instructional program, and of supportive special education instruction in or out of the regular classroom. (Bunch, Finnegan, Humphries, Doré & Doré, 2005, p. 47)

Governments across North America have adopted or legislated inclusive policies (e.g. Policy 1.6.1 in Alberta, Bill 82 in Ontario, Bill 13 in Manitoba, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the United States). In addition, the Salamanca statement established by UNESCO (1994) urges all governments to adopt laws or policies based on the principle of inclusive education; thus, ensuring that the education of students with disabilities in a regular classroom setting will become an enduring feature of public education in many countries. Inclusion is a social movement and there is considerable pressure from some parent groups, educators, and government agencies to have all students with disabilities eventually spend all of their time in a regular classroom. While many personnel are responsible for meeting the needs of children with disabilities who are included in the regular classroom (e.g. regular classroom teachers, special education resource teachers), it is the school principal/administrator who is responsible for ensuring the successful learning of these children. The literature shows that the role of the principal, her or his understanding and support of integrative/inclusive practices, is critical in ensuring the success of inclusive programs (Katsiyannis, Conderman & Franks, 1996; Weisel & Dror, 2006). Much appears to rest on the capabilities of the school administrator and the literature strongly supports a link between an administrator's actions and student achievement (Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Deizell, 2006).

As a researcher, I usually begin all inquiries with a literature search to expose the current thinking and findings on my subject of investigation. Thus, I begin from what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call a formalist approach; they note: "Formalists begin inquiry in theory, whereas narrative inquirers tend to begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories" (p. 40). I have not begun with a research question or problem which is autobiographical in nature and moved from this directly into field studies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Instead, I begin from a formalist perspective and move to the field with questions framed not by autobiographical experiences, but by the literature on the topic at hand and by the need to understand what actually happens at the human level.

My search led to the identification of the administrator interviewed here. Robb has a long history of running fully inclusive schools in which all students regardless of ability were serviced only in regular classrooms. Although he has now been retired for eight years, he continues to present at conferences and work with parents and community groups interested in inclusion. Robb was interviewed on two occasions for a total of five hours. The research project has been approved by the Ryerson University Board of Ethics.

My investigation really asks the questions: What does an inclusive principal do? How does he or she behave? What is essential in setting up and maintaining an inclusive school environment for children with disabilities? How knowledgeable must a principal be about special needs? What characteristics does an effective leader demonstrate? The literature on leadership in

inclusion tells me that school leaders need to be able to demonstrate instructional practices; that is, they need to be able to model teaching practices, implement curriculum, and be able to find quality resources —both material and people (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Fullan, 2001; Rafoth & Foriska, 2006). In fact, effective instructional leadership has been identified as the single most important aspect to effective leadership in building successful, inclusive schools (Ryan, 2006). At the same time, administrators must also supervise the running of all aspects of the school from building concerns, budget concerns, and other personnel concerns. These responsibilities often create what Bays and Crockett (2007) have referred to as competing priorities in an administrator's life. In addition, administrators must be able to develop a culture of inclusion, have an understanding of disabilities, and understand the legislation around disability (Zaretsky, 2008). Wakeman et al.'s (2006) study found that although principals thought that they were well informed regarding the legal requirements concerning students with disabilities, they did not have a good understanding of assessment and program modification practices for these children. The principals, in their study, who felt comfortable with these aspects often had had personal experience with a person with a disability. This important finding demonstrated that the more knowledge a principal has about disability, the more involved they are in supporting students with disabilities.

On another level, school support teams are now mandated in both Canada and the U.S. to assist teachers in supporting students with disabilities. Discussion has occurred in the literature regarding the extent to which the principal should be involved in these teams. While administrator leadership is crucial to the success of these teams, the direction of participation required is still unclear. Too much involvement appears to stifle creative responses, while too little involvement undermines leadership (Rafoth & Foriska, 2006). School administrators must be good at promoting collaboration between different levels of teachers (Bays & Crockett, 2007). While these researchers have conducted excellent studies and identified over-arching key elements which can help define the role of the administrator in inclusive structures, the methods used in many of these studies are either large scale surveys or large scale interviews and, as such, they have been limited in capturing the processes involved in supporting those structures on a personal level. Specifically, answers to questions concerning what leadership looks like on a day-to-day management of an inclusive school are missing, and a need to look more closely at the personal characteristics and day-to-day strategies of administrators has been recognized (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Rafoth & Foriska, 2006).

It is against this backdrop that I have pursued a narrative approach towards understanding the role of the administrator in supporting students with disabilities in an inclusive context. Robb was directly asked a number of questions concerning the role of instructional leadership, involvement in school teams, and promotion of collaboration. What now follows is Robb's story narrating, explaining and remembering what he did as an inclusive principal and describing what he feels is at the essence of inclusive leadership. After transcribing, reading, and re-reading Robb's interview I had a strong sense of what Robb was saying and how what he did meshed with the literature. But I also came up against the difficulty of communicating what he said in a succinct, yet powerful manner while also including as much of his voice as possible so that the essence of what it means to truly run an inclusive school could be captured. To this end, I have decided to use found poetry as the format for Robb's voice. Found poetry is, now, a common method in arts-based inquiry and narrative research (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Finley, 2005; Prendergast, 2006). Prendergast (2006) notes that, "Research poetry used in this context offers an alternative method for understanding and representing key theories and texts in inquiry" (p. 369).

She describes found poetry as being "metaphorical, narrative, and affective in nature" (p. 370). And while it represents the interviewee's voice, it also is influenced by the researcher's involvement to create new meaning. While what is represented are Robb's own words in the order in which they were said, I have arranged them for maximum impact by playing with line breaks for emphasis on particular points. Also, although much of the story is arranged chronologically from the beginning of the interview, I have at times moved excerpts to align them in a more coherent manner.

Robb's Story

Why Inclusion?

> For me,
> it was the old way of doing things
> where everything is special.
>
> They may have additional needs,
> because of the challenge they need to live with,
> but the needs are still basically the same.
>
> Special ed.
> I don't like any of those terms;
> they defy definition for me.
>
> This is the only way I can put it;
> I taught.
>
> I trained as a teacher.
> I wanted to teach
> and, honestly, I really believed
> in what I was doing as a teacher.
>   It was part of a professional way of doing it.
>
> We didn't use the term inclusive.
> I didn't think about inclusive education.
> We didn't use the term at all.
>
>   It was just my own gut feeling that it
> was right to include all students.

Difference Between a Special Education Model and Inclusion

>   In an inclusive structure
> You had to have a vision for the school.
> That was essential.
>   Then you had to share that vision
> with your staff,
> with parents.
>
> And sharing that vision also meant
>   you practice that vision
> with your staff,
> with your teachers.

    To model what inclusion looked like.

Influential Advice From Others

    Don't forget
you have to
know your neighborhood.
You have to know everybody there.

Everybody knows who the hell you are.
They all know.
Don't act,
don't be going around with your bloody nose in the air,
I'm the principal!

You're the principal.
You run the school.
    Run it.
Know what you want your school to be.
Know how you want children
and parents
to be treated.
Show the staff.

Relationships

    How do you develop relationships with people?
Some meetings have to be in the school.
Some meetings should be in the office.

    It's appropriate and professional to be there.
Other meetings can be off site
in the local pub, or Tim Horton's.

It's just knowing your people.
    You know there's the pub meeting;
there's the across the desk meeting;
there's the being in class meeting
showing them how much you support them;
    And then there's the meeting where you demonstrate –
I do what I say and think.
    I have a vision.
    We have a philosophy in the school.

It's about understanding where people are coming from
and saying,
    'if she feels that way,
let's deal with that.
    Let's not try to deal with it as,
she shouldn't feel that way.'

But let's not be calling all those teachers bad teachers
or unfeeling.
Let's look at it and say,

    'where are they coming from?' and
    'what can we do to help and support them.'

So feel free,
if you think that's no way.
It's an impossibility to do such things.
Say it, and we'll work together.
    But gotta make it clear –
that's the way we're going to do it.
    It's not a question of asking your permission.

I don't have the answers.
You have the answers.
    They started to realize
    that I rarely came up with answers.

The way I see it is this way.
But we've got to come to some sort of consensus
about how we're going to approach this [issue]
    I do not have all the answers.
    None of us do.
I need suggestions from everybody.

Also the ability to try;
you can never, ever step in somebody else's shoes
In my opinion – never.
    I think you should try
to be able to look at things from different perspectives
not just your own.

Personal Characteristics

    Strength of mind
and a strength of purpose.
    Ability to focus
while at the same time,
be able to see that in relationship
to the whole picture.

At the same time,
specifically for inclusive schools,
have that willingness to listen.
    Half of an awful lot of information
comes directly from parents, kids, teachers, EAs.[1]

An awful lot of inclusive principals
are not
really listening.

Sit
and make sure that
you listen well,
and take note of,
and then be able to
act upon
what other people's views are.
    You have to be a flexible person.
Flexible in some ways
And yet very strong in other ways.
    So you have to keep to your philosophy and vision.
'This is definitely where we're going…

We'll work through it
together.
And the first thing we're going to do is talk to
Debra - right opposite here.
    She'll be delighted to help
    and she'll give us some ideas.
She's got much better ideas than me.
Don't be thinking I can solve.
I can't.

I'll tell you what I did learn:
that there were many more people around,
supportive people
than I ever imagined.
    A lot of people who were like-minded came out of the woodwork.
I learned an awful lot from those people.

You have to be a person who cannot feel threatened.
    This happens a lot in senior administration.
I got this a lot from people who thought I was threatening their role.
Because they were superintendent.

But in the long run,
I think they realized that I had nothing to do
With threatening their authority
Or walking in their territory.
    I think they actually
Did begin to realize that everything I was doing
was always for the benefit of the child

and keeping the perspectives I gained of the teachers.

On the one hand I'm saying you gotta be flexible
and have insight into who these parents are.
    But you also gotta establish your authority.
You also have to make sure that people understand the rules
and in that school the rule is that:
    All kids are included.

It's fine to have things that we know work.
But for many of the kids who we're talking about,
who we want included,
I think that the leader has to be someone who
is willing to try many different things.
that's also risk taking.

Supports Needed

    I went into classrooms
two half days a week…to release them,
to work with a group of children.
    That really influenced teachers.
    That is very good for morale; I think it's very good for interpersonal relationships.

One of the keys,
I think, for inclusion
Is being seen so much.

We all know
in good teaching you take children from where they are
and guide them and support them
using strategies to bring them on.
    It's got to be done exactly the same way
    with teachers.

Giving teachers the support.
That they need;
    The support that teachers see
As essential to them.
    Not what's essential to the administrator which
is a very different view.

Part of every staff meeting
Was on some aspect of professional development.
    I had, for instance, EAs who went to the Geneva Centre;[2]
I had parents come in.

That sort of thing to me was crucial.
Collaboration is crucial
and getting that collaboration at all different levels.

You know that no smoking sign?
I had one – no whining.
You can come and talk to me about anything,
but I can't stand whining.
If you have concerns about a child,
if you have concerns about things in the school,
or you have personal concerns I should be aware of
and I can help you with,
then, come to me
And say, 'this is what I'd like to talk about.'
And you do it in a professional manner.

However, if you have concerns
and if you have problems with people,
you come with suggested solutions.

But you don't just bring them to me and dump'em all on my back and say,
'there you go,
there are all the problems I have.'
What am I supposed to do.
You teach in that class, not me.

I said, you see there's ways of working.
We work through problems together;
we work through concerns together;
we do it in a way that we need other people
to work with us.

But I think there's an element there
to show them that you get a lot of support
if you do it
in a professional way,
and you have
clearly defined concerns and problems.
Not just some vaguely defined,
'he talks out a lot and it bugs me.'

I think they sorta got used to that
Cause they used to make jokes about it at parties;
you know like at Christmas parties.

Formal Supports

And that's when I established the in-school support teams.

I was talking about getting everybody's help
In solving problems.
    Now the support teams were part of that.[3]

I only chaired those meetings for one year because
I want leaders through out the school.
    Sometimes a SERT[4]

        and sometimes, not.
    It's always me sitting in the chair.

Those teams were,
I can't emphasize enough how important they were.
    No one ever thought they were a waste of time.

It's absolutely crucial to develop
    leadership amongst staff.
They should know that they are all
    well equipped to lead;
that they have good knowledge themselves.

For instance, I'd say to them:
'now I don't always want these groups of support here,
because we're going to have this day or this concert.
    I'm going to come up with a few suggestions for a few groups
we're going to have.

I know that all you guys work together just great,
So I don't have any big concerns.
    I'm going to come up with some suggested list.

So I think as a leader you got to have
Subtle ways of being able to say: 'we're going to have all this.'
    Sometimes the excuse is, 'ahh it's already five after five.
Why don't I come up with some lists
and it'll help you get established.
Very important in inclusive schools.
    Pick your fight.

You will not be able to change the people at the end
Of the attitude spectrum.
    It's the people in the middle you need to be working with.
    - They will influence others.

Recommendations For Others

> I think it would be good for them to have some knowledge of how
> Children can be accommodated.
>   It would be good for them to have met with a few people
> about accommodations.
> What sort of things teachers were doing,
> and the hard work it is for teachers to do.
>   To have an appreciation of that.
>
>
> In the areas of professional development
> there's loads of opportunities to see what others
> are doing and to visit schools where
> you can see inclusive schools in reality
> and see how things are run.

Discussion

The interview began with my asking Robb to help me understand why he chose to practice the inclusion of children with disabilities at a time when the school system was so rigidly segregated along those lines (Stainback & Stainback, 1985). That schools should accept responsibility for the education of all students with disabilities, did not enter the legislative consciousness in Ontario until the passage of Bill 82 in 1980. Even with Bill 82, most school systems preferred to continue segregating children with disabilities from other students through placements in special education classes for as much as 70 percent of the school day. Robb was a principal in the 1970s. Inclusion as a social concept, as a movement did not appear to be part of Robb's consciousness. Rather, it appears that Robb (quite simply) had a personal philosophy about what it means to be a teacher and what it means to teach any child, and for reasons which did not come out in the interview, he felt strongly about not discriminating between children with challenges and typically developing children. It was difficult for Robb to answer questions pertaining to why he adopted inclusion in his schools. It is uncertain whether, through this discussion, any insights can be gained into how to train current day principals to become inclusively minded, or how to go about examining school personnel's conceptions of disability. However, it is important to note the very personal nature of Robb's philosophy. His deep personal belief indicates that there is a moral purpose to Robb's actions. For Fullan (2001) having a moral purpose is at the heart and center of effective leadership. Fullan defines moral purpose as "acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole" (p. 3), and it guides all the other attributes necessary to become an effective leader. This strong sense of purpose is evident throughout Robb's story and clearly influences how he acts to communicate his vision for the school. Fullan (2001) also notes that having moral purpose is not only about the ends, but also about the means to the end. In this respect, Robb has some clear ideas about those means.

Trying to understand the position of others and beginning to work from where they are is a recurring theme in Robb's story. He continually tries to appreciate others' positions so that he can decide what his own actions should be. Understanding others, for Robb, means that knowing the community is important and that relationships do not begin and end at the school walls.

Furthermore, he is aware that the office of principal can create barriers to the building of relationships if a principal is too heavily invested in the title of his office and that there is no need to expend energy maintaining a hierarchical structure of which others are already fully aware.

For Fullan (2001) relationship building is another key attribute essential to effective leadership and he notes, "Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups – especially with people different than themselves" (p. 5). Robb's comments indicate that his meetings can assume a formal or informal tone. He noted that it was important at times to have a discussion with the school custodian in a coffee shop, or that meetings with his special education resource teachers could take place in the local pub over a glass of wine. These actions helped Robb build relationships.

But what is also evident from the above excerpts is that Robb is very clear about his vision for the school and that it is non-negotiable. In this, he has asserts his authority. This aspect of leadership is noteworthy and has been noted in the literature as an effective way of garnering support for inclusion (Ryan 2006). At the same time, he is also clear that he does not and should not be expected to have answers to the problems, which will invariably arise, and that, furthermore, he expects others to have suggestions for solutions. Fullan (2001) acknowledges that leaders are expected to have the solutions and answers, but he also states that to expect leaders to have answers is incorrect. He describes a different view of leadership: "Leadership, then, is not mobilizing others to solve problems we already know how to solve, but to help them confront problems that have never yet been successfully addressed" (p. 3). For Robb, truly listening is the real key to leadership because to listen is to "mobilize" and to ensure the creation of answers and sharing of information.

Fullan (2001) states that exercising effective leadership involves the continuous generation of knowledge not only within the organization, but also from without and Robb's willingness to acknowledge what others, such as parents, had to offer led to making visible knowledge that had previously stayed hidden. It should also be noted that according to Fullan (2001), an exchange of knowledge cannot occur without good relationships and he states:

> What has been discovered is that, first, people will not voluntarily share knowledge unless they feel some moral commitment to do so; second, people will not share unless the dynamics of change favor exchange; and third, that data without relationships merely causes more information gut. (p. 6)

Building relationships, keeping the moral message clear, and truly welcoming the suggestions of others appeared to be key for Robb's success. The need for the vigilant communication of his vision for the school is uppermost in Robb's story and he can talk of being adaptive without compromising that vision.

But what about actual, hands-on supports? What did they look like at Robb's schools? His no-whining sign can hardly be described as a formal process, but according to Robb it served to keep discussions constructive. Also stressed is the sharing of information among all levels of staff, and the direct support he offered to teachers by spending two half days per week in the classroom. It should be pointed out though, that during those days in the regular classroom, Robb was not directly involved in instructional leadership. He asked teachers to give him a group of children with whom to work; he was clear that he was not there to observe teachers. He also stated that he would often take the whole class for the half day to allow teachers to meet with

parents or others. In a sense, Robb was involved in program delivery on a regular basis, but in Robb's view his involvement was not for the purpose of educating teachers in curriculum delivery; rather, it served to cement and reinforce trust with teachers as well as allowing Robb to get some insight into the teachers' perspectives which he notes may often be different than his. Wakeman et al. (2006) found that principals who knew more about the needs of children with disabilities regularly met with teachers and were more involved in program delivery. Wakeman et al. (2006) postulate that one reason for principals' higher involvement in program delivery may be because "principals who understood what teachers need to teach and why they need it are more apt to provide resources to meet the instructional needs of the students" (p. 167). Being in the classroom regularly may have given Robb a better understanding of the kind of supports teachers needed.

There is now considerable literature which investigates the role of the in-school support team, also known as "problem-solving teams." Rafoth & Foriska (2006) note that principal leadership on these teams is crucial, but tricky, and somewhat elusive. They state that "the desired administrative support seems to come from some dynamic combination of leading and allowing leadership, problem solving and helping others to problem solve, and sharing of responsibilities" (p. 131). Robb appears to have been very much aware of the need to develop leadership and, at times, doing so in subtle ways. Rafoth and Foriska (2006) go on to support Anderson's (2004) study which found that the "interactive approach," in which information is shared from the whole staff, and in which formal and informal leadership is exercised, seems to be the best approach for inclusion. Although Robb does not define the kind of leadership exercised in his discussion, his story does imply that he has a highly developed awareness, a sense of when and how to advance leadership in his teachers. I can only speculate that this ability comes from the continuous efforts he seems to put into relationship building. However, there will always be staff who cannot be persuaded to adopt inclusion as a philosophy. Robb's position on this issue tells us that he understands that he could not reach everyone, but he feels confident in reaching many and it is the many who matter.

Robb's recommendations mirror what the literature argues is required in building inclusive schools, that is the need to attend to the professional development of principals. Wakeman et al.'s (2006) study supports the idea that the more principals know about instructional procedures (e.g. universal design) for students with disabilities, the more likely they are to adopt an inclusive philosophy. Robb supports the idea that principals should develop knowledge regarding accommodations and other supports for students with disabilities; however, it is clear that he strongly advocates for the power of modeling and seeing accommodations implemented rather than a workshop approach where others talk to principals about strategies.

Conclusion

What did I learn from talking to Robb? What seemed to be most striking about Robb's story was the minimal discussion regarding formal supports and structures concerning the running of an inclusive school. Reading of the qualitative literature consistently discusses and examines the role of formal administrative structures needed for successful inclusion. Research appears driven to finding the formula for inclusive leadership. This "recipe" seems to include coordination of services, establishment of procedures for ensuring communication between teachers, in-service training for staff, and understanding of the legislation around special needs.

For Robb, running an inclusive school was primarily about having an unwavering moral vision for the school, which depended on building relationships with teachers, parents, children, school janitors, secretaries, and school board superintendents. Is there a recipe for inclusive leadership? If there is, Fullan's (2001) appreciation of the need for moral purpose and the insistence on relationship building must be on the list. These two aspects dominate Robb's reminiscences of what he did as an inclusive leader. In addition, while the administrative responsibilities of running any school are many and varied, it is revealing that Robb's focus was mainly on the personal aspects of leadership. In this regard, what Robb seemed to demonstrate was simply just good leadership – leadership with its focus on improving the lives of children. In short, he maintains the following:

My advice to them would be: be strong, know what you need, make sure your superintendent knows, understands your vision, and really begins to understand that everything you do is for the benefit of those kids which means any support you ask for is not just to make teachers' lives easier, it's about making good support for teachers to help service the child in an appropriate way and its always child focused, bottom-line always.

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Endnotes

[1] Educational Assistants

[2] The Geneva Centre is an organization in Toronto involved in research and teaching on Autism.

[3] School based support teams are now mandated in schools as part of the special education process. However, they were not part of the process during the early years of Robb's principalships.

[4] SERT is an acronym for Special Education Resource Teacher.