## Why Does Inclusion work?

*Community:* An inclusive approach enables the student with disabilities to benefit from being a member of their local community. Instead of being removed from their community to another school, or isolated from their community in a separate room, they become a full member of their community and benefit from being part of the social fabric.

*Support, Infrastructure, Planning:* Successful inclusion is achieved through planning, commitment and resources. The same resources used to support segregated learning environments can be re-deployed to support an inclusive environment. Costs per child normalize. The resources now used to support inclusion can help typical students as well.

*Peer Modeling:* In a segregated environment children with special needs tend to be grouped with a random set of students of various ages, abilities and behaviors. The behaviors that a student may encounter can be negative relative to a typical peer environment. Children with Down syndrome in particular adapt well through peer modeling and benefit from socialization with typical peers.

*Higher Expectations:* Children isolated from their typical peer group more often than not suffer from diminished expectations. In inclusive environments they are expected to socialize and behave consistent with their peer group and are expected to access some aspect of the same curriculum.

*Advancement:* Children isolated often are exposed to less variety of learning opportunities and progress from one topic of study to another more slowly. By accessing some aspect of the same curriculum as their typical peers, and by advancing through topics, the special needs student is continually exposed to new learning opportunities. While an appropriate balance between achievement and advancement needs to be managed, inclusive environments clearly expose a child to more learning contexts.

**Why private schools have advantage over public schools:** The public school approach to inclusion, and to providing for children with special needs, is based on a "system" approach. The system is a vast infrastructure that requires funding to maintain itself. The services the system provides are based on federal funding. Without supporting the system first, there are no services. The child with special needs becomes the vehicle by which funding in achieved. Using a medical model the focus is on the child's deficiencies and diagnosis as a means to capture funding. The system approach focuses on deficiencies and not capabilities, with the goal of getting funding and fixing the student before they enter society.

Private schools have the flexibility of not having funding dependent on a diagnosis. In this context the child comes first. People don't belong in "systems", they belong to themselves, families and communities. All children have "capacities" and less so deficiencies. Instead of servicing someone in a system, the focus shifts to how to support student in their peer environment and to live good lives in the community. Systems aren't all bad, but tend to be wired for their own self interest at the expense of the person. So, instead of a person fitting onto a system, private schools h the opportunity to ensure their resources adapt to the needs of a person.