

Re: Christy Clark's column of February 25, 2007

I agree with the principle Christy Clark invokes in her February 25 column. Public schools should value diversity, not simply conformity and that is the reason why separate public schools for children with autism or aboriginal children is wrong-headed.

In Clark's twisted logic, which echoes that of Education Minister Shirley Bond, valuing diversity becomes a platform for segregation of children based on ability or ethnicity. Both Clark and Bond are hijacking the concept of diversity in a move toward the privatization of public schools (under a guise of "parental choice").

The parents and children of British Columbia need public schools that have the freedom and resources to meet the full spectrum of needs that learners bring with them to the classroom. Separate schools based on ability, ethnicity, or gender are counter-productive for individual students and a society as whole.

There is no place for segregation in schools that value diversity. Rather schools that take diversity seriously understand that collaboration among staff in partnership with parents in the community is key, as is providing authentic, multi-level instruction without ability grouping or segregation. Schools that include all children, learning together across culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender and age are schools that will truly help learners to maximize their life opportunities and become active citizens in a democratic society.

These are the kinds of schools our government should be funding.

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