Preface

As experienced inclusion facilitators and staunch advocates for inclusive education, we've often observed that others were interested in inclusive education, but unsure of how to actually implement inclusive practices on a day-to-day basis. Over time, we've chatted together about this observation and realized that we have quite a few tried-and-true strategies that we've found useful and were eager to share them with others. We believe that inclusive education is important for students with and without disabilities, and we hope to share with others the many practical strategies we have identified. We also believe that many educators have learned strategies and tips in workshops and teacher preparation programs that are difficult to implement in everyday practice. The strategies in this book are based on our own experiences as inclusion facilitators searching for practical tools in books and on the Internet, re-creating resources shared at workshops, and independently developing tools to further inclusive education at our schools.

With this experience in mind, we set about writing this book as a practical tool for educators (special and general education teachers), support staff (paraeducators and administrators), and parents who are interested in promoting inclusive practices. We have shared with our readers the many tools and strategies we have gathered on our journey toward more inclusive schools and share them on a website so that our readers can adapt the tools for their own use and particular circumstances. For these reasons, we also call our book a toolbox: Like any good toolbox, we want to stock it full of a variety of useful tools so that the inclusion facilitator can find, and use, the right tool for the job.

The book is organized into three main sections: Part I: Setting Up Inclusive Education, Part II: Implementing Inclusive Education, and Part III: Expanding Inclusive Practices. Part I focuses on activities that are most useful in newly developed inclusive programs or at the beginning of a new school year. The tools in this section focus on laying the groundwork for effective and efficient inclusive education. Part II describes the variety of ongoing, day-to-day practices that are done to keep inclusive education working for students, teachers, and parents. Finally, Part III focuses on those strategies that would be used in established inclusive programs, with the aim of strengthening and expanding inclusive services. The book contains many tools and case studies at elementary and secondary levels demonstrating possible uses of the tools in real-life situations. In these ways, this book is unlike others available. We do not focus on inclusive education as a value, but instead provide practical, everyday tools to make inclusive education a reality. The tools we provide are based on our experiences working as inclusion facilitators for many years, our research in inclusive education, and the tips we have learned from others on our journey. We think that the tools and strategies shared in this book are useful for all who believe in inclusive education and seek to promote it, from the novice to the experienced inclusion facilitator who is eager to add tools to his or her toolbox.