

SIXTH EDITION

INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS



Nancy L. Hutchinson • Jacqueline A. Specht

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A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS **NANCY L. HUTCHINSON**

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

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*For our dear friend and colleague, John Freeman, who left us too early.
We miss you. And we thank you for all you taught us, especially to
always be true to who we are and to be kind and include everyone.*

Brief Contents

Preface xv

Introduction So You Want to Be a Teacher xx

Chapter 1 Inclusive Education: The Canadian Experience 1

Chapter 2 The Teacher's Role in an Inclusive Classroom 30

Chapter 3 Exceptional Students: Learning and Behaviour Exceptionalities, and Mental Health Challenges 56

Chapter 4 Exceptional Students: Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder 90

Chapter 5 Exceptional Students: Communication Exceptionalities, Physical Exceptionalities, and Chronic Health Conditions 116

Chapter 6 Teaching for Diversity: Including Indigenous Students, Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds, and Students at Risk 155

Chapter 7 Climate, Community, and Classroom Management for Student Well-Being 192

Chapter 8 Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) 224

Chapter 9 Differentiating Assessment and Using Assessment to Differentiate Teaching 259

Chapter 10 Enhancing Social Relations 283

Chapter 11 Enhancing Transitions for Children and Youth Identified as Exceptional and those At-Risk 313

Conclusion Thriving as a Teacher 336

Glossary 343

References 355

Name Index 384

Subject Index 396

Contents

Preface xv

Introduction **So You Want to Be a Teacher** xx

Chapter 1 **Inclusive Education: The Canadian Experience** 1

Introduction 3

Exceptional Education in Canada 3

Canada: Inclusive Society, Inclusive Schools 4

The Current State of Inclusive Education for Exceptional Students: Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction 5

Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction 5

Progress Monitoring: Response to Intervention 8

The Current State of Exceptional Education in Each Province and Territory 9

Cross-Country Summary: Individual Education Plans and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education 14

How We Got Here: Highlights in the Development of Inclusive Education in Canada 14

Community and Inclusive Education 18

Who Are Learners with Exceptionalities? 18

Descriptions of Students with Exceptionalities 20

Using the ADAPT Strategy for Adapting Teaching to Include Exceptional Learners 24

Step 1: Accounts of Students' Strengths and Needs 24

Step 2: Demands of the Classroom on Students 25

Step 3: Adaptations 26

Step 4: Perspectives and Consequences 26

Step 5: Teach and Assess the Match 27

Evaluating Internet Resources 28

Summary 28

Key Terms 28

Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 1 29

Chapter 2 **The Teacher's Role in an Inclusive Classroom** 30

Introduction 32

The Role of the Classroom Teacher in Identifying Needs of Learners Identified as Exceptional 32

Making Classroom Adaptations and Keeping Records	34
Mentoring and Induction of New Teachers	34
Using the ADAPT Strategy	34
Collaboration: Working with Teachers, Principals, and Other Professionals	38
The Classroom Teacher and the In-School Team	38
Suggesting a Meeting of the In-School Team	39
The Work of the In-School Team	40
The Teacher and the Individual Education Plan	42
Planning to Meet Individual Needs	42
Example of an IEP for a Student with a Learning Disability	43
Changing Context of IEPs in Canada	45
The Teacher and the Educational Assistant	45
The Role of the Educational Assistant	45
Your Role in Working with an Educational Assistant	47
The Teacher and the Parents	48
Understanding the Parents' Perspective	48
Collaborating with Parents	50
Parent-Teacher Conferences	51
Summary	54
Key Terms	54
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 2	54

Chapter 3

Exceptional Students: Learning and Behaviour Exceptionalities, and Mental Health Challenges 56

Introduction 58

Teaching Students with Gifts and Talents or Developmentally Advanced 59

Description of Students with Gifts and Talents 59

Characteristics of Students with Gifts and Talents 60

Implications for Learning and Differentiating in the Classroom for Students Who Are Gifted 61

Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students Who Are Gifted 62

Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) 65

Description of Students with Learning Disabilities 65

Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities 67

Implications for Learning and Classroom Differentiation: Students with Learning Disabilities 70

Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Learning Disabilities 74

Teaching Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) 74

Description of Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 74

Characteristics of Students with ADHD 76

Characteristics of ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive	76
Implications for Learning and for Differentiating in the Classroom: Students with ADHD	78
Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with ADHD	80
Teaching Students with Emotional and Behaviour Exceptionalities and Students Experiencing Mental Health Challenges	80
The Changing Context for Emotional and Behaviour Exceptionalities: School-Based Mental Health	81
Description of Students with Emotional and Behaviour Exceptionalities	82
Challenges that Lead to the Behaviours We See in Classrooms	82
Characteristics of Students with Behaviour Exceptionalities	83
Implications for Learning and Differentiation in the Classroom: Students with Behaviour Exceptionalities	85
Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Behaviour and Emotional Exceptionalities	87
Summary	87
Key Terms	88
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 3	88

Chapter 4 **Exceptional Students: Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder** 90

Introduction	92
Teaching Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities	93
Description of Intellectual Disabilities	93
Incidence of Mild Intellectual Disabilities	95
Characteristics of Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities	96
Implications for Learning and Differentiating in the Classroom	97
Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Intellectual Disabilities	98
Teaching Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities	99
Description of Severe Intellectual Disabilities	100
Characteristics of Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities	100
Differentiating Curriculum and Teaching for Students with Severe Intellectual Disabilities	101
Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	104
Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA)	105
ASD: Prevalence	106
Students Requiring Very/Substantial Support: Characteristics	108
Students Requiring Very/Substantial Support: Implications for Learning and Differentiating in the Classroom	108
Students that Require Support: Characteristics and Teaching Strategies	112
Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	113
Summary	114
Key Terms	114
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 4	114

Chapter 5

Exceptional Students: Communication Exceptionalities, Physical Exceptionalities, and Chronic Health Conditions 116

Introduction 118

Teaching Students with Communication Needs 118

Communication Disorders 118

Description of Communication Disorders 119

Characteristics of Students with Communication Disorders 121

Implications for Learning and Classroom Differentiation: Students with Communication Disorders 121

Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Communication Exceptionalities 122

Teaching Students Who Are Hard of Hearing: Students Who Are Deaf or Have Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss (MMHL) 123

Description of Students Who Are Hard of Hearing or Deaf 123

Characteristics of Students Who Are Deaf 124

Implications for Learning and Classroom Differentiation for Students Who Are Deaf 124

Characteristics of Students Who Have Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss 125

Implications for Learning and Classroom Differentiation for Students with Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss 126

Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Hearing Loss 128

Teaching Children with Vision Disabilities and Blindness 128

Description of Students with Visual Impairment 128

Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments 129

Implications for Learning and Classroom Differentiation for Students with Visual Impairments 129

Implications for Social and Career Participation of Students with Visual Impairment 131

Teaching Students with Physical Disabilities and Chronic Health Conditions 132

Nervous System Impairment 133

Musculoskeletal Conditions 141

Chronic Health Conditions 143

Diabetes 144

Summary 152

Key Terms 152

Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 5 153

Chapter 6

Teaching for Diversity: Including Indigenous Students, Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds, and Students at Risk 155

Introduction 157

Diversity and Equity in Canadian Society 157

The Unique Role of Education, Schools, and Educators 157

Indigenous Education 158

History of Indigenous Cultures and Education in Canada 158

Differences Between Issues in Indigenous Education and Multicultural Education	163
The Importance of Education and Community in Preserving Disappearing Cultures and Languages	163
Strategies and Approaches: Putting Community at the Heart	164
Teaching Students from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds	169
Being Culturally Aware and Questioning Assumptions	170
High Expectations Coupled with Support and Encouragement	170
Culturally Responsive Teaching and Culturally Relevant Curriculum	171
Using Collaborative Learning and Co-operative Learning	173
Teachers as Role Models	173
Teaching Students Who Are English Language Learners	175
Teaching Students Who Are Immigrants or Refugees	176
Welcoming Students	177
Teaching Strategies	177
Communicating High Expectations	178
Differentiating Assessment	178
Other Issues of Equity in the Classroom	179
Responding to Incidents in Your Classroom	179
Proactive Teaching to Minimize Incidents in Your Classroom	179
Issues of Gender Equity	179
Teaching Students Who Are Vulnerable Due to Poverty, Homelessness, and Maltreatment	181
Teaching Students Who Live in Poverty	182
Teaching Students Who Have Experienced Homelessness	184
Teaching Students Who Have Experienced Maltreatment	186
Summary	190
Key Terms	190
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 6	190

Chapter 7

Climate, Community, and Classroom Management for Student Well-Being

Introduction	192
Introduction	194
Creating a Community	194
Common Vision	195
Parents, Teachers, and Students as Partners	195
Time for Collaboration and Joint Planning with Your Students	195
Clear Communication	196
Developing an Inclusive Climate and Developing Relationships with Students	197
Caring Relationships	197
Making the Physical Space Efficient, Inviting, and Accessible	198
Teaching Norms for Classroom Interaction and Learning	199
Negotiating and Enforcing Classroom Rules and Procedures	202
Negotiating Rules	202

Establishing Procedures	205
Monitoring Student Actions	206
Applying Consequences Consistently	207
Understanding and Responding to Behaviour in the Inclusive Classroom	207
Managing Behaviour in the Inclusive Classroom	209
Increasing Appropriate Behaviour	210
Decreasing Undesirable Behaviour	210
Enhancing Self-Management	215
Positive Behavioural Supports and Classroom Management	218
Do Harsh Punishments Ensure Safe Schools?	219
Alternative Approaches to School Discipline	221
Summary	221
Key Terms	222
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 7	222

Chapter 8

Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) 224

Introduction	227
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	227
Universal Design (UD) in Architecture	227
Center for Applied Special Technology's Model of UDL	228
Katz's Three-Block Model of UDL	229
Using the ADAPT Strategy to Analyze and Differentiate Teaching for Individuals and Groups	231
Step 1: Accounts of Students' Strengths and Needs	232
Step 2: Demands of the Classroom on Students	233
Step 3: Adaptations	233
Step 4: Perspectives and Consequences	233
Step 5: Teach and Assess the Match	234
Choosing and Combining Strategies for Differentiating	234
Teaching Through the Mismatch	234
Teaching Around the Mismatch	234
Teaching to Overcome the Mismatch	235
Examples and Non-Examples of DI	235
Analyzing Teaching: What You Can Adapt	235
Adapting Substance of Teaching	236
Adapting the Environment	237
Adapting Student Engagement	237
Differentiating Teaching of Listening, Reading, and Writing	238
Building Listening Skills, Storytelling, and the Use of Environmental Print	238
Background to Differentiating Teaching of Reading	239
Differentiating to Promote Learning to Read: Phonological Processing and Balanced Reading Programs	239
Teaching Phonics	240

Enhancing Fluency 240
Differentiating Reading to Learn 241
Teaching Vocabulary and Comprehension Strategies 243
Enhancing Written Expression and Facilitating Note-Taking 244

Differentiating Teaching of Mathematics 246

Number Sense 246
Computation 247
Problem Solving, Representation, Symbol Systems, and
Application 248

Differentiating Teaching in Content Areas: Science, Social Studies and Literature, Visual Arts, Music, Drama, and French 249

Differentiating Science 249
Differentiating Social Studies and Literature 250
Differentiating Visual Arts 253
Differentiating Music 253
Differentiating Drama 254
Differentiating French 254

Differentiating Homework 255

Summary 257
Key Terms 257
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 8 258

Chapter 9 **Differentiating Assessment and Using Assessment to Differentiate Teaching** 259

Introduction 261

Using the ADAPT Strategy for Assessment 261

Large-Scale Assessment in Canada 262

Comparison with the United States 265
Summary of Large-Scale Assessment in Canada 265

Classroom Assessment 266

Changing Conceptions of Classroom Assessment 266
Preparing Students and Parents for Equitable (but Not Necessarily the Same)
Assessment 271

Differentiating Classroom Assessment of Learning 272

Preparing Students for Classroom Tests 273
Adapting Classroom Tests During Test Construction 274
Adapting Administration of Classroom Tests 274
Adapting Scoring or Marking of Classroom Tests 276
Using Performance Assessments 277
Portfolios as Classroom Assessments 278
Adaptations and Alternatives to Report Card Marks 279

Summary 281
Key Terms 282
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 9 282

Chapter 10	Enhancing Social Relations	283
	Introduction	285
	The Importance of Social Development and Social Acceptance to Inclusion	285
	Perspectives of Exceptional Students and Their Teachers on Peer Relations	285
	Perspectives of Peers on Social Relations with Exceptional Classmates	287
	The Role of Friendship in Development of Well-Being	290
	Elementary and Secondary Schools as Social Environments	292
	Informal Teaching: Climate and Role Models	293
	Facilitating Friendships	293
	Safe Schools	294
	Schoolwide Approaches and Teachers' Roles	297
	Schoolwide Behaviour Management Systems	299
	Using the ADAPT Strategy to Analyze Social Demands in the Classroom: Peer Teaching, Co-operative Learning, and Collaborative Learning	304
	Peer Teaching	304
	Using Co-operative and Collaborative Learning to Meet Academic and Social Goals	305
	Planning for Formal Teaching of Collaboration	305
	Teaching Students to Collaborate and Co-operate	307
	Challenges to Collaborative Learning	309
	Summary	311
	Key Terms	311
	Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 10	311

Chapter 11	Enhancing Transitions for Children and Youth Identified as Exceptional and those At-Risk	313
	Introduction	316
	The Importance of Transitions in the Lives of Children and Youth	316
	The Role of Advocacy and Self-Advocacy in Inclusive Education and Transitions	317
	Parent Advocacy	317
	Self-Advocacy	318
	Transitions During the School Day	320
	Transition into School	321
	Transition into Junior High School and into Secondary School	323
	Transition from School to Further Education and the Workplace	324

Helping Exceptional Students to Transition to College and University with a Focus on Mental Health and Well-Being	324
Helping Exceptional and At-risk Students to Transition to Work	329
Career Development and Career Education for Exceptional Individuals and Other Vulnerable Youth	330
Developing Self-Awareness and Career Awareness	330
Career Exploration	331
Why Career Development Is Critical to the Participation of Youth in the Labour Market	332
Career Experience	333
Summary	334
Key Terms	335
Challenges for Reviewing Chapter 11	335

Conclusion	Thriving as a Teacher	336
	Succeeding as a Beginning Teacher	336
	Being a Change Agent	337
	Handling Stress and Staying Well	338
	Focusing on Your Well-Being	340
	Being a Teacher Who Makes a Difference	341
	Glossary	343
	References	355
	Name Index	384
	Subject Index	396

Preface

Preparing this edition of *Inclusion of Learners with Exceptionalities in Canadian Schools* has been a new adventure. Nancy Hutchinson, who has worked on the five previous additions alone, brought on a new co-author, Jacqueline Specht. Nancy has retired from Queen's University and is making the gradual movement to retire from the book. Jacqueline was thrilled and honoured to be asked to work alongside someone whom she has admired for years for the integrity of her work. Jacqueline has used many editions of the text while teaching and was up for an adventure. It has been a humbling experience. During this process, we learned by doing background research in areas with which we were less familiar; by discussing current issues with colleagues, graduate students, parents, teacher candidates, and individuals with exceptionalities. And, always, we learn by challenging our assumptions about teaching children and adolescents. When we accept the challenges of teaching students with exceptionalities in inclusive settings, we must be prepared to challenge assumptions about what they can and cannot do and to find new ways to help them reach their potential. We hope this book will help you to challenge your assumptions and to reflect critically on what it means to include ALL students in the classroom.

We are proud of Canadian approaches to inclusion and inclusive education. However, inclusion is a journey and we must continue upon it in a global way. Countries around the world are working towards inclusive education and look to Canada's commitment to inclusion as a model and an inspiration. Engaging in dialogue about the successes and failures that we see helps us to understand how best to move forward. We are aware of the incredible challenges facing parents, educators, employers, and students in making inclusion a reality. We hope that this book may serve as a research-based, practically-focused resource on inclusive education for teacher educators and pre-service and in-service teachers.

We have tried to include many references to Canadians—individuals with exceptionalities, schools, educators, and educational researchers—including their locations in the country. We believe it is critical that we know our history, stories, legislation, and heroes. Perhaps we are too self-effacing—we have observed that Canadians are among those least likely to be aware of how we lead by example in our field. We have tried to point to the contributions of individuals such as Terry Fox and Rick Hansen, heroes and leaders of advocacy for the disabled, and of organizations such as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, winner of national and international awards for advocacy and service. We believe that Indigenous students, learners from diverse cultures, and students at risk can benefit from inclusive environments, universal design for learning, and differentiated teaching. We have tried to draw attention to significant recent developments in Indigenous education especially in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action. Whenever possible, we have given Canadian examples and cited Canadian research. We hope that the extensive listings of Canadian books, websites, and programs will help teacher candidates, teacher educators, and parents to locate our resources and our experts, of which there are many.

Perspective

For many years we have organized our pre-service and in-service teaching about learners with exceptionalities around topics such as planning, classroom organization

and climate, and differentiating teaching and assessment—using a non-categorical approach. We are reminded each year, as we work in the university and in schools in our community, how much is expected of beginning teachers. If they are to meet these expectations, we think they must begin, from the first lesson they plan, by thinking about the range of strengths, needs, and interests of the individuals in the class. The first question they need to ask is, “How do I use universal design for learning and differentiated instruction to include all students?” Given the recent emphasis on well-being, the second question they need to ask themselves is, “How do I ensure that what I am doing contributes positively to my students’ mental health and to my own well-being?” That is the perspective you will find in this book. We have tried to focus on the kinds of information, skills, and strategies that recent teacher candidates have reported they found both thought-provoking and practical, and have included current information about mental health in every chapter. We have tried to acknowledge the different opportunities in the elementary and secondary settings because, as children develop, certain needs change.

Organization

This textbook is informally divided into two main sections.

The first section provides fundamental background knowledge in the field of exceptional education in Canada.

- Chapter 1 describes the current situation in Canada and provides a brief history of how we came to be where we are. It also introduces universal design for learning and differentiated instruction and includes a step-by-step strategy for adapting instruction, called ADAPT, that will help teachers to meet the needs of exceptional students.
- Chapter 2 introduces the individual education plan, and describes the role of the classroom teacher in the education of exceptional learners and the kinds of partnerships that teachers forge with parents, educational assistants, and other professionals.
- Chapter 3 focuses on students with learning and behaviour exceptionalities—that is, teaching gifted students as well as students with learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, emotional and behaviour disabilities—and includes discussion of school-based mental health.
- Students with intellectual disabilities (mild intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities) as well as students with autism spectrum disorder are the focus of Chapter 4; the characteristics of these students and strategies to meet their learning needs are discussed.
- Chapter 5 provides information about characteristics of and differentiated teaching for students with communication exceptionalities (students with speech and language disorders and students who are hard of hearing or deaf), physical exceptionalities (including vision loss, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, fetal alcohol syndrome, and many other disabling conditions), and chronic health conditions (such as diabetes, allergies, and asthma).
- Chapter 6 turns attention to equity and diversity. There are strategies for differentiating teaching for Indigenous students; culturally diverse students; English language learners; and students at risk for a variety of reasons, including poverty and maltreatment.

The second section of the book presents the heart of any course on inclusive practices: instructional approaches that emphasize teaching students effectively regardless of exceptionality or other forms of diversity.

- Chapter 7 focuses on the climate, organization, and management of inclusive classrooms.
- Chapter 8 provides approaches to using universal design for learning and differentiating teaching.
- Chapter 9 focuses on differentiating assessment. There are many examples representing a range of grades, exceptionalities, and teaching subjects.
- In Chapter 10, you will find information on enhancing social relations of exceptional students.
- Chapter 11 deals with the many transitions that challenge teachers of learners with exceptionalities; these include transitions within the school day, the transition from early childhood education into school, and transitions between schools and out of school into post-secondary education and the workplace.
- The Conclusion turns the focus from learners to those who teach them most successfully and how they thrive on challenges and cope with stress in their professional lives.

Features

This book offers the following features designed to help readers learn effectively:

- Chapter-opening vignettes serve as introductory cases to help readers relate the chapter content to the real world of Canadian schools.
- Learner objectives at the beginning of each chapter point to key content within that chapter.
- TED Talks and other video presentations are suggested that are related to the main idea of the chapter.
- Key terms throughout the chapters appear in boldface type, and easy-to-understand definitions often appear in the text and always appear in the Glossary at the back of the book.
- Chapter summaries at the end of each chapter highlight important information in the chapter.
- Margin notations are designed to stimulate critical reflection and to introduce additional resources, including weblinks, that have been researched and tested for quality and relevance.
- *Focus* boxes offer readers inspiring examples of Canadian schools, programs, and educators that may serve as models.
- *Theory and Research Highlights in Educational Psychology* boxes provide a theoretical grounding in the psychology that informs the education of exceptional students and their inclusion in Canadian society.
- *Challenges for Reviewing . . .* features at the end of each chapter present review questions to help students apply what they have learned in the chapter.
- *Activities for Reviewing . . . with Your Peers* features at the end of each chapter present review questions for students to work on collaboratively with peers to apply their learning.
- *Annotated Bibliographies* in each chapter provide brief descriptions of current resources on school-based mental health resources relevant to the focus of the chapter.
- Canadian references throughout help students locate practical supports, resources, research, curricula, people, and websites within the exceptional education community in Canada.

Highlights of This Edition

This edition has been updated to include new, cutting-edge information.

- Chapters 1, 8, and 9 are excellent resources for using universal design for learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction (DI) and assessment to make classrooms welcoming and efficient for all learners.
- Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide an extensive discussion of the spectrum of exceptionalities which many students experience. This discussion looks at chronic illnesses, emotional exceptionalities, and mental health issues.
- Chapter 4 includes an extensive discussion of intellectual disabilities, providing in-depth information on mild and severe intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), providing teachers with accurate descriptions of the students' needs, and tips for ways in which they can be successfully integrated into classrooms settings. An added section on Functional Behavioural Assessment for teachers will assist teachers in understanding the function of behaviour.
- Chapter 6 includes an extended section on education of Indigenous students and about teaching for reconciliation in addition to a discussion of environmental exceptionalities such as poverty, homelessness, and maltreatment.
- Chapter 11 focuses on transitions, one of the most challenging aspects of inclusive education.
- Throughout, there is a focus on creating safe, functional environments to discourage bullying.
- NEW TEDx Talks and other video presentations are identified that are related to the main idea of the chapter. Each short video is accompanied by a few questions to think about in relation to the content.
- Throughout, there is a focus on the well-being of students and teachers; every chapter includes one or two annotated bibliographies on school-based mental health resources relevant to the topics in the chapter.

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to the completion of this project, so many that, out of necessity, we will name only a few. First, thanks to our families—Jen, Deb, Jim, and Sandy; Erich, Dylan, Meghan and Bette—for always supporting our need to get the book done. To our outstanding graduate students, for their persistence in locating elusive references and for their positive perspectives no matter how much work was left to be done; and to our colleagues, for collaboration, stimulation, and endless support. Specific to this edition, we thank the following instructors for their comments and suggestions:

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Introduction

So You Want to Be a Teacher

You may have heard educators in Canadian schools say, “I didn’t realize there would be so many exceptional students in my classes.” Or “I wanted to teach English literature, not special education.” Allow us to begin talking directly with teachers, using the second person “you”—so you want to be a teacher. One of the purposes of this book is to help you become more knowledgeable about the realities of teaching all your students. In Canada, early in the twenty-first century, being a classroom teacher means you are certain to have students identified with exceptionalities in your classes, and you may feel like a special education teacher some days—even if you were hired to teach classes in advanced physics. This is because, as a country, we have made a commitment to the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in Canadian society. This commitment is expressed formally through federal and provincial legislation and has been supported by many court decisions. Although you and your teaching colleagues were not consulted individually about inclusion, all Canadian citizens have repeatedly participated in this decision—through elections, public debates, polls, and research.

The polls and research studies suggest that Canadians support inclusion, but individuals who must fulfil these expectations, whether they are employers or teachers, report that they need guidance and support. They repeatedly express that, while they want to treat everyone fairly, they simply don’t know enough about disabilities and about the changes that must be made in schools, workplaces, and society.

Our intent in writing this book has been to help you and your fellow educators to access the information you need to be confident and competent when you teach in inclusive classrooms. Research has shown that when regular classroom teachers use differentiated teaching practices within inclusive classes, the result is increased achievement for typical students, low achievers, and students with disabilities. These studies are cited throughout this book. The differentiated teaching practices used in these studies included guided inquiry, group work, monitoring and facilitating student thinking, and recursive opportunities for students to develop and refine investigative processes. Actions that you can take to differentiate instruction include attending to the dynamics of students working effectively with peers; conferencing with students about how they are thinking and why they are making specific decisions; providing a variety of presentation and practise opportunities for students so they have choices; and accepting multiple methods for students to show what they know. A number of studies that you will learn about in upcoming chapters point to the same conclusion: the teaching approaches used to increase the learning of students with exceptionalities—universal design for learning and differentiated instruction—also increase the learning of students who are low achievers, average achievers, or gifted.

These teaching approaches represent a paradigm shift, from educators’ belief that “one size fits all,” to ensuring that variety and flexibility for diverse learners are built into instructional design, delivery, and assessment. No one would say that such approaches are without dilemmas or that we have all the research we need to inform our teaching decisions. However, many researchers are focused intently on advancing our understanding of the issues associated with these approaches to teaching.

You are joining the profession at an exciting time for advances in practice and in research in the field of inclusion.

The Role of Classroom Teachers

As you have probably already deduced, schools and classroom teachers have a pivotal role in the creation of an inclusive society. First, unlike other institutions, schools are legally responsible for preparing children and adolescents with disabilities to participate meaningfully as educated adults in a democratic society. This means that as teachers we are expected to teach ALL children and adolescents knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to them. In recent years, we have adopted policies in every jurisdiction in Canada that reflect our commitment to carrying out this teaching in regular classrooms alongside peers without exceptionalities whenever possible. (This topic is explored fully in Chapter 1.) Second, schools have a legislated responsibility to prepare all children and adolescents to participate in an inclusive society and to accept individuals with disabilities as peers, co-workers, employees, employers, and so forth. This responsibility follows from one of the primary purposes of public education: preparing citizens to live in the democratic society that we have shaped, with its values, laws, and high expectations for participation. This means that Canadian educators, educational researchers, and policy-makers have to direct their efforts to understanding and reconciling these potentially conflicting responsibilities. As the discussion below suggests, it is impossible to hold dialogues in Canada about inclusive education without acknowledging and matching the extensive efforts of other institutions to include persons with disabilities.

While teachers are central to the Canadian project of inclusion, it is important for you as an individual teacher to remember that you are neither the cause of nor the solution to all of the problems that arise in your classroom. You can come to feel overwhelmed by guilt about your inability to be all things to all people. Crucial to your survival is judicious and frequent use of the resources provided to support classroom teachers and their students, the focus of much of this book. You also need to think about your advancement as inseparable from the advancement of the collective of educators in your school, your school district, and your province or territory. Both seeing yourself as part of a collective and learning to collaborate are essential to your effectiveness and to your well-being as an inclusive educator.

The Place of Inclusion in Canadian Society

In Canada, inclusive education is an issue within the context of Canadian society, not just within the context of Canadian schools. In 1982, the Canadian constitution was patriated from Britain. At that time, we adopted the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which has influenced every aspect of our society. The Charter guarantees rights for minorities and specifically names persons with disabilities. The Charter not only guarantees rights but also specifies responsibilities of the Canadian government, of provincial governments, and of institutions to ensure that these rights are attained and maintained. This means that in Canada, inclusion is closely related to equity: inclusion of exceptional persons follows from our commitment to equitable treatment guaranteed in the Charter.

Inclusive Schools

Inclusive schools are a natural part of inclusive society, and equitable treatment of students regardless of ability is closely related to equitable treatment of students regardless of gender, race, and so on. In Canada, if we choose to teach, we are choosing to teach in inclusive settings.

Dilemmas in Inclusive Schools

We are sure you are aware that dilemmas are a constant and pressing feature of teachers' lives. Rarely do we get through a day, let alone a week, of inclusive teaching without confronting some kind of a dilemma. Many of these may look, at first analysis, like they only involve decisions about teaching methods. However, upon critical examination, they frequently turn out to have implicit ethical dimensions. Do you allow a student's insensitive comment to a classmate to go unanswered? How do you maintain your commitment to every student participating in hands-on learning when some can only complete the activities with a lot of assistance? How much differentiation of assessment is fair, and why is it easier for people to accept these changes for students who are blind than for students with learning disabilities? The reality is that we live on the horns of complex ethical dilemmas every day of our teaching lives and that these dilemmas are only intensified by our commitment in Canada to an inclusive society and inclusive classrooms.

Becoming a Teacher

Throughout this book you will hear the voices of students, their parents, and teachers who are working together to enhance the learning experiences of students with exceptionalities in regular classrooms. We hope that their words will strengthen and inspire you to use all your available resources to meet the challenges of inclusive teaching. Teaching is an awesome career. Welcome! We've been waiting for you.

Inclusive Education: The Canadian Experience



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LEARNER OBJECTIVES

After you have read this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe the current state of social inclusion in Canadian society.
2. Describe the current state of inclusive education for students with exceptionalities in Canada.
3. Discuss the concepts of universal design for learning (UDL), differentiated instruction (DI), and progress monitoring, including response to intervention (RTI), and how they are used in inclusive education.
4. Trace highlights in the development of inclusive education in Canada.
5. Describe briefly various exceptionalities that are identified across Canada.
6. Discuss what it means to differentiate teaching and classrooms to meet the needs of learners, and describe the steps of a strategy for adapting teaching to include learners with exceptionalities.

GURJIT IS A BRIGHT AND ARTICULATE GIRL IN GRADE 3 WHO WAS IDENTIFIED AS GIFTED IN GRADE 1. On the first day of the social studies unit about Canada, Gurjit answered all of Ms. Wang's questions about the provinces. She asked questions the teacher had not thought of, especially about Nunavut, which became a separate territory on 1 April 1999. In a bored voice, Gurjit asked how long they would have to "do Canada." Gurjit read reference books independently, surfed the Internet on her family's computer, and wrote pages while most of her classmates penned a few sentences. Gurjit had already met the unit's outcomes and needed a challenge. The next day, Ms. Wang assigned a province or territory to each group of students. She challenged Gurjit to research the human and physical geography of Nunavut and to work closely with the small group who were focusing on the adjacent Northwest Territories. Gurjit found information about Nunavut on the Web, and contributed many ideas to the small group about life in the Northwest Territories.

While the rest of the class prepared booklets about their provinces, Gurjit developed activities for her classmates to complete at a centre on Nunavut, which remained available to the class for the next two months.

BEN HAS A LEARNING DISABILITY THAT WAS IDENTIFIED IN GRADE 9. His grade 9 teachers said he rarely handed in assignments or contributed to class discussions, but when he did speak he had good ideas. Ben was often late for classes and forgot his books. His report card comments included, “Could work harder” and “Ben is disorganized.” An assessment showed that Ben’s reading comprehension was below grade level. He skipped over words he didn’t understand and could not answer interpretive questions. At Ben’s request and with the approval of his teachers, Ben transferred from the academic to the applied stream at the beginning of grade 10. The resource teacher, who then began to work with Ben and his teachers, focused on organizational strategies. She showed him how to use an agenda book to keep track of activities, classes, and assignments, and how to break an assignment into parts and set a date for the completion of each part. The resource teacher also taught Ben to use the RAP strategy—**R**ead, **A**sk yourself questions, **P**araphrase—for comprehending one paragraph at a time. She encouraged Ben’s teachers to make adaptations, that is, to differentiate their teaching. One teacher used a paired reading strategy, another taught RAP to the entire class, and the chemistry teacher adopted occasional open-book tests. Ben passed all his applied courses in grade 10 but says that the courses were too easy. Now he wants to return to the academic stream.

1. Why are both Gurjit and Ben considered students with exceptionalities?
2. How common do you think it is to teach a student like Gurjit or Ben in your classroom?
3. What should teachers be expected to do to meet the learning needs of students like Gurjit and Ben?
4. What expectations might Gurjit have after engaging in the enriched experience about Nunavut, while her classmates completed more traditional projects?
5. How do you think Ben’s teachers and parents should respond to his request to return to the academic stream?

Introduction

As a classroom teacher, you will find students like Gurjit and Ben in every class you teach, because learning disabilities and giftedness are common exceptionalities. Occasionally, you will teach students with less common exceptionalities, perhaps students who are deaf or blind. This book will prepare you to include all students in the life and learning of your classroom. You will find that kids such as Gurjit and Ben are like other students in most ways: first, they are children or adolescents; second, they have exceptionalities.

This chapter introduces you to the context in which we educate students with exceptionalities: the current state of inclusion of persons with disabilities and of inclusive education, policies across the country, and historical and legal roots. We discuss how instructors can help students to reach their potential, using universal design for learning and differentiated instruction. The chapter includes brief descriptions of exceptionalities and closes by introducing a strategy for differentiating or adapting teaching to include learners with exceptionalities: ADAPT.

Exceptional Education in Canada

In Canada, **students with exceptionalities** include both pupils who are gifted and those who have disabilities. These students are entitled to **special education programming** which is founded on the belief that all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching, and appropriate resources (<https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626539/standardsforspecialeducation.pdf>). Many provinces use two terms to describe these changes: accommodations (changes to *how* a student is taught) and modifications (changes to *what* a student is taught). Increasingly, to ensure inclusion, teachers use universal design and plan proactively to meet the needs of all their students, including those who need special education programming (Robinson, 2015).

Accommodations include alternative formats (e.g., Braille or audio books), instructional strategies (e.g., use of interpreters, visual cues, cognitive strategy instruction), and changes to assessment (e.g., highlighting the important words in a question on a test). **Modifications** are changes made to the grade-level expectations (or *outcomes*) for a subject or course to meet a student's learning needs. These changes to outcomes draw on outcomes from a different grade level in the curriculum, or increase or decrease the number and complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations. Gifted grade 3 students may have modifications that include outcomes from the grade 5 math curriculum. A third type of adaptations, **alternative expectations**, focus on the development of skills in areas not represented in the curriculum, such as mobility training for students who are blind and anger management for students experiencing **mental health** challenges.

You will need to become familiar with your provincial and school district documents about exceptional students because, since Confederation, provinces have had the authority to pass laws about education. These laws must be consistent with the *Constitution Act*, which contains the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Government of Canada, 1982; www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/index.html). The **equality rights** that apply to education are contained in section 15(1): "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."

WATCH: TEDx Talks for Chapter 1

Disabling Segregation

Dan Habib

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izkN5vLbnw8>

Dan has a son named Samuel who has Cerebral Palsy. Listen as Dan discusses his journey as a dad of a son with a disability and how his thinking on inclusion has changed over his lifetime. What are your thoughts on inclusion versus segregation for people with disabilities?

How I Fail at Being Disabled

Susan Robinson

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_robinson_how_i_fail_at_being_disabled

Susan discusses the hidden biases that exist surrounding disability. Have you had a time when you displayed such biases or saw someone else do so? What changes would result in education if we did not have such biases?

Under the Table: The Importance of Presuming Competence

Shelly Moore

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGptAXTV7m0>

Shelly provides an experience she had as a new teacher and how it taught her the importance of not thinking that a student could not do something. How might your teaching be different if you presume competence rather than incompetence?



Weblinks

SNOW (SPECIAL NEEDS OPPORTUNITY WINDOWS): EDUCATION, ACCESS, AND YOU
<http://snow.idrc.ocad.ca>

COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
www.cec.sped.org

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA
www.publichealth.gc.ca



Weblinks

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS
www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cs-jc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd1

CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TEACHER RESOURCES
<https://humanrights.ca/search/site/ctfdb>

IMAGINEACTION: CANADIAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION
www.imagine-action.ca/hr-dp

Canada: Inclusive Society, Inclusive Schools

Participating in all facets of society, including educational institutions, is a fundamental right of all Canadians. Many developments worldwide contributed to Canada's adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. For example, all members of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Education was one of the fundamental human rights listed in the Declaration; however, there was no mention of people with disabilities. In 1975, the United Nations declared that disabled persons had the same rights as other people (including community living, education, work, voting, etc.) in the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* of 1977 states that no one should be discriminated against for reasons of physical or mental ability. Subsequently, 1981 was proclaimed the International Year of Disabled Persons, causing heightened awareness of disabilities and enhancing the self-advocacy of people with disabilities. That year, the Canadian parliament was debating the terms of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. When people with disabilities were not named in an early draft of the Charter, they protested on Parliament Hill and got their story into the newspaper headlines and *Maclean's* magazine. The result was that when the Charter was passed, Canada became one of the first countries to guarantee rights to people with disabilities in its constitution.

The United Nations continued to champion the rights of persons with disabilities, and in 1993 it adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, targeting eight areas for **equal participation**, including education.

On 13 December 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the United Nations; it came into force on 3 April 2008, after it had received its twentieth ratification. The United Nations has described the Convention as a paradigm shift in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities because it views them as “subjects” with rights who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society. The Convention clarifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with all types of disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations

have to be made so persons with disabilities can exercise their rights. For more information on the Convention, visit <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>.

Canada's policy on persons with disabilities emphasizes **inclusion**. In 2013, the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for social services (except the minister from Québec) released a document titled *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability* (on the website of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities; www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/poverty-citizenship/income-security-reform/in-unison#sec-canadian-approach). The document includes a vision: “Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of



Eric Hayes

Activists with intellectual disabilities at the People First Conference. In 1981, people who were blind and people with physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities held conferences and rallied on Parliament Hill demanding equality.



persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society.” However, our aspirations for inclusion still outstrip our accomplishments. And as educators, we have an important role: schools prepare the next generation to honour our national commitment to inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society.

The Current State of Inclusive Education for Exceptional Students: Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction

It is challenging for us as educators to consider the implications of broad social movements for the policies and procedures that guide our work with learners with exceptionalities. As you think about the expectations our society holds for inclusive education, for students with disabilities and gifted students learning the same content as their typical peers, you may be asking yourself how this can be accomplished effectively. It is clear that more research needs to be conducted in regular classrooms, research that focuses on how to include students with exceptionalities successfully while teaching all the other students. And you will experience dilemmas of practice as you learn your role as an inclusive educator and have to make decisions about how to teach. Inclusive education in our schools means that students who require special education programming receive it, but rather than bringing the student to the services, we bring the services to the student.

Three concepts that are receiving increasing attention will help you to ensure “education for all.” This phrase served as the title of a 2005 report in Ontario that introduced these three concepts to teachers. These concepts are universal design for learning (UDL), differentiated instruction (DI), and progress monitoring (with one specific form called response to intervention (RTI)).

Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction

Universal design for learning (UDL) was inspired by work in architecture on designing buildings, right from the start of the design process, that can be accessed by all people, including those with physical disabilities. This eliminates the need for retrofitting when a person with accessibility needs arrives; for example, the building already has ramps and wide doorways to accommodate wheelchairs. As it turns out, wide doorways and ramps are advantageous for many people, not just for those with physical disabilities. UDL involves a set of principles for developing curriculum and teaching that give all students equal opportunity to learn. As per Burgstahler and Chang (2009) and Katz (2012), here are eight guidelines for planning teaching and activities that will be accessible for all:

1. Adopt practices that value diversity and inclusiveness to create a positive climate.
2. Communicate so everyone can understand to enhance interactions among students and between students and the teacher.
3. Make the physical environment safe for everyone and its products available to all.
4. Communicate high expectations and provide a high level of support for all.
5. Vary instructional methods so learning is accessible in many ways.

What do you think?

As you read this text, search for current news articles on issues related to social inclusion in Canadian society. Discuss with your peers the progress we have made as a country and what we can do in our role as educators to advance inclusion in Canada, so all people are valued participants in our society.



What do you think?

Read two of the following Canadian resources and contrast their perspectives on disabilities. Think about why we need a range of perspectives to fully understand the experience of life with a disability and to understand how to ensure valued recognition and social inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Talk with your peers about your differing points of view.

Tichkosky, T. (2011). *The question of access: Disability, space, meaning*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Bendall, L. (2008). *Raising a kid with special needs: The complete Canadian guide*. Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books.

Prince, M.J. (2009). *Absent citizens: Disability politics and policy in Canada*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press (Google eBook).

A Vision Paper Federal/ Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services SP-113-10-98E. (2013). *In unison: A Canadian approach to disability issues*. Retrieved at www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/poverty-citizenship/income-security-reform/in-unison#sec-canadian-approach (website of Council of Canadians with Disabilities).

6. Make course materials and technology engaging and flexible so they can be understood by all.
7. Provide specific feedback frequently.
8. Assess student progress frequently and flexibly so everyone can show what they know.

In her book *Teaching to Diversity*, Jennifer Katz of the University of British Columbia (2012) considers UDL to be an overarching concept composed of three main blocks that are all essential to making inclusion work. The most fundamental block is social and emotional learning, which demands that we develop compassionate learning communities. The role of teachers in social-emotional learning of students is the theme of the annotated bibliography in Figure 1.1. Students' social-emotional well-being is the focus of Chapters 7 and 10 and a recurring theme in this book. The second block is inclusive instructional practice, and is often called differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment, which is the focus of Chapters 8 and 9. The third block in Katz's three-block model focuses on systems and structures, from policy to planning teams. Many of these administrative aspects essential for inclusive education have been introduced in this chapter and are elaborated in Chapter 2.

Rather than developing a unit and making changes after the fact for students with exceptionalities, English language learners (ELL), or students from diverse cultures, UDL encourages teachers to plan from the beginning to provide means and pedagogical materials that meet the needs of all students. Of the three blocks in Katz's model, the one that generally receives the most attention is block two, which she identifies as inclusive instructional practice.

Differentiated instruction (DI) acknowledges that students differ in many important ways that contribute to learning in our classrooms: interests, strengths, needs, modalities on which they rely (especially students with vision or hearing loss), current level of knowledge, level of functioning, ability to read fluently, ability to use visual arts to express their understanding of the world, and many others. While UDL can be seen to operate at the overarching level, DI helps teachers to make decisions at the student level to address specific characteristics, experiences, backgrounds, skills, and difficulties. The aspects of teaching that teachers can differentiate are often described as content, process, and product (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017). You will learn throughout this text about using such strategies as tiered assignments (created at varying levels of difficulty), small-group instruction in which intensity is increased, learning centres at which students can engage with a range of tasks, and varied pacing (Chappuis, 2014). Katz (2012) describes planning for an entire school year and provides many examples of how the three blocks, including the block on inclusive instructional practices, can be used together to ensure that UDL is implemented effectively. Strategies for making DI work in your classroom will be our focus in Chapter 8. As an introduction, we offer the following ten principles that are often used to guide DI:

1. Use respectful tasks; consider the perspective of all students.
2. Make groupings flexible, purposeful, and short-term.
3. Use heterogeneous groupings.
4. Choose multi-level texts so everyone is reading something they understand.
5. Offer varied response formats that enable everyone to respond meaningfully and offer choice.
6. Demonstrate how students can make connections between what they know and what they are learning.

7. Model strategies, that is, make the invisible visible, to students who will not develop those strategies on their own.
8. Consider student interests and try to engage everyone; offer choice.
9. Begin where students are and ensure that everyone learns and recognizes they are learning.
10. Develop diverse assessments that show you and the students what they have learned.

The Special Education Association of BC suggests that teachers begin small (using DI for a lesson or unit and work up to using UDL to plan all their teaching for the year) and suggests you collaborate with a colleague who teaches at the

FIGURE 1.1 ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON TEACHERS' ROLE IN THE WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS

Students do not leave their concerns and uncertainties about mental health at the door of the school. This can prove challenging for teachers who feel they are not experts and fear “doing the wrong thing.”

Improving Mental Health in Schools (2014)

by Eric Rossen & Katherine Cowen, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(4), 8–13.

There is a solid foundation of research for schools to use to provide a multi-tiered system of supports for students. Such interaction between students and teachers enhances student well-being, but also promotes student learning and reduces stigma.

Building Mental Health as a School Community (2014)

by Suzanne Hughes, *Nurture*, 48(3), 16–18.

This paper gives a brief description of the actions taken by one school to enhance student mental health, including making the topic a focus, creating committees to address health issues, and providing professional development to help staff recognize mental illness.

Emotional Health and Well-Being in Schools: Involving Young People (2013)

by Lindsey Coombes, Jane Appleton, Debby Allen, & Paul Yerrell, *Children and Society*, 27(3), 220–232.

When asked, adolescents suggested that issues of mental health and well-being should be addressed more in the curriculum but also cautioned that teachers determine the effectiveness of these lessons through their enthusiasm and creativity. They expressed concerns about confidentiality, and they were more comfortable having these conversations with peers. Seeking student input might be an important first step for a secondary school developing an intervention for mental health and well-being.

Dr. James Gallagher's Concern for Gifted Learners Beyond Academics (2015)

by Del Siegle, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 38(1), 58–63.

We may not associate mental health issues with students who are gifted. However, especially if they are bored in school, gifted students may not thrive unless their teachers take an active role in both challenging and supporting them.

A Combined Intervention Targeting Both Teachers' and Students' Social-Emotional Skills (2014)

by Cristina Iizuka, Paula Barrett, Robyn Gillies, Clayton Cook, & Welber Marinovic, *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 24(2), 152–166.

Teachers working in a school in a disadvantaged community received professional development to teach social and emotional skills to students and participated in a resilience program for themselves. The intervention was well received by the teachers and it helped students to decrease their anxiety. The FRIENDS program has shown positive results in other schools as well.



Weblinks

ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION/
EDUGAINS WEBSITE PROVIDES
RESOURCES, INCLUDING LESSON
PLANS

www.edugains.ca

ALBERTA EDUCATION: MAKING
A DIFFERENCE: MEETING
DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS WITH
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
PROVIDES A TEACHER RESOURCE

https://education.alberta.ca/media/384968/makingadifference_2010.pdf

SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
OF BC HOSTS A WIKI FOR TEACHERS
USING DI: FIRST STEPS

<http://seabc.pbworks.com>

same grade level. Having well-established routines and a safe and positive environment will make it easier to embrace DI and UDL. The more you help students to understand themselves as learners, that is, to be metacognitive and to advocate for their own learning (ideas developed throughout this book), the easier it will be for students to make good choices of tasks. Help them to know themselves as learners, understand what they are good at, and recognize what they need to work at (<http://seabc.pbworks.com>).

Think of DI as the basis for offering learning opportunities in varied, adapted, and engaging ways so you can ensure that everyone learns and demonstrates their learning in meaningful ways. Approach it as one key part of using UDL to inform all aspects of your practice so that, right from the initial planning, you are focusing on making learning accessible to all.

As the website of Alberta Education reminds teachers, “Differentiated instruction is a philosophy and an approach to teaching in which teachers and school communities work to support the learning of *all* students through strategic assessment, thoughtful planning, and targeted, flexible instruction” (2010; https://education.alberta.ca/media/384968/makingadifference_2010.pdf). So when you use UDL and DI, you will not disadvantage any students; this approach gives all students multiple opportunities to make sense of what they are learning and to demonstrate what they are learning.

Progress Monitoring: Response to Intervention

When the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced its teachers to UDL and DI in *Education for All* (2005), it included a third key concept that can contribute to this approach to teaching, learning, and assessment: continual **progress monitoring**. Progress monitoring is important for learners of all ages. One specific form of progress monitoring, more often focused on primary students until recently, has received considerable attention; it is called **response to intervention (RTI)**. RTI is a way of thinking about how we can intervene before students fail by intensifying and improving teaching for struggling learners. It is often described as tiered intervention or a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) (Witzel & Clarke, 2015). Children who are struggling after receiving excellent instruction (tier 1) are given a different type of instruction, which is more intense and of longer duration than regular classroom instruction (tier 2). For example, if some students in a grade 1 class are not learning to read with their peers, they could be taught in a small group of two to five; this may take place for ten to twenty weeks for forty-five minutes on most days. At the end of this intervention, those who have learned to read return to regular classroom instruction, while those who are still struggling move to the next tier (tier 3) of more intense and more individualized teaching.

A 2007 Canadian study by Marcia Barnes of the University of Guelph and Lesly Wade-Woolley of Queen’s University suggests that learning disabilities can be decreased by up to 70 percent by a combination of early screening, progress monitoring, and intensive teaching. RTI has received much attention in the past decade, and many states in the United States have already recognized it as an appropriate means of identifying learning disabilities. A review by Kent McIntosh and colleagues from UBC (2011) describes the state of implementation of RTI for identifying students with learning disabilities in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Ontario’s *Education for All* (2005) describes UDL, DI, and RTI in a document for teachers and administrators.

Further Reading

About RTI:

National Center on Response to Intervention. *Essential components of RTI: A closer look at response to intervention*. Washington, DC: National Center on Response to Intervention. www.rti4success.org

National Center on Response to Intervention. *Tiered interventions in high schools*. Washington, DC: National Center on Response to Intervention. www.rti4success.org

Witzel, B., & Clarke, B. (2015). Benefits of using a multi-tiered system of supports to improve inclusive practices. *Childhood Education, 91*(3), 215–219.

Turse, K.A., & Albrecht, S.F. (2015). The ABCs of RTI: An introduction to the building blocks of response to intervention. *Preventing School Failure, 59*(2), 83–89.