



Inclusive Learning
Everyone's In

Learning Guide

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This document is available on-line at
epsb.ca/inclusivelearning



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Inclusive Learning: *Everyone's In* Learning Guide

This Learning Guide is a companion document to the Inclusive Learning: *Everyone's In* video series. The guide provides information for all videos in one document and a copy can be printed for review and planning. Included in the guide are: school summaries, pre and post questions, additional questions for further discussion, as well as inclusionary tips and strategies used throughout the eight schools.

As a complement to the videos and accompanying questions, this document can be used to plan professional learning sessions.

Action on Inclusion

“... we need to foster the atmosphere of inclusion... allowing every child to know that he or she, whatever their circumstances may be, will have the opportunity to flourish to the maximum of their potential.”

Diversity in Alberta Schools: A Journey in Inclusion

Each one of us has a fundamental need to belong.

From an early age, sense of belonging shapes our identity, bolsters self-esteem and fuels personal growth – in fact, it is the guiding force in all of our business, social and personal interactions.

Educators nurture that sense of belonging and create an optimal learning environment where all students feel supported and valued, and Alberta has a long history of meeting the educational needs of students with diverse needs. But, for too long, many students have been left outside the circle of belonging.

Over the years, the system has focused on finding the best ways to support students with these diverse learning needs which includes supporting teachers in developing their capacity in working with these students. However, attitudes and practice with respect to special education sometimes created a glass wall between students with diverse learning needs and their classmates.

Every student has unique needs.

A new initiative, formerly called “Action on Inclusion,” is a new way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for, all students. It is a complete cultural transformation, focused on three key strategic priority areas – curriculum, capacity, and collaboration.

Alberta Education has committed to supporting all school authorities in the valuable contributions they must make as the education system moves to inclusive practices.

Over the past year, change agents were identified as those school authorities that can provide the necessary system-wide information to support implementation on a much broader scale.

Action on Inclusion aims to have “one inclusive system where each student is successful” – and is an attempt to break down those glass walls to ensure every child feels a true sense of belonging.

Edmonton Public Schools

– *Everyone's In*

*"My challenge to leaders...
is how do we create a district
where everybody's in?"*

Edgar Schmidt

Former Superintendent of Schools

In today's rapidly-evolving society, the "one size fits all" model of education is no longer appropriate. Individual achievement is dependent on various factors such as learning styles and educational environment.

Edmonton Public Schools is recognized internationally for offering curriculum in ways that complement the unique backgrounds and talents of its students, and is committed to expanding programs wherever it will support and foster student achievement.

The Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) is proud to take part in the inclusion initiative with the vision of "providing an environment that will allow all students to learn at their full potential and develop the ability, passion and imagination to pursue their dreams and contribute to their communities."

This project identifies the indicators of success in nine selected schools, capturing these indicators on videotape and in written documentation which can, then, be used to build capacity within other schools and school authorities as part of a continuous improvement emphasis.

Nine schools within the EPSB district were chosen to act as a change agent for the Action on Inclusion initiative, providing nine different perspectives, which include:

- 1) Whole child well-being – looking at the social, emotional, physical, and cultural supports that allow children to "get ready" to learn
- 2) Play-based learning for early education
- 3) Universal design for learning – providing the necessary tools and skills for all learners
- 4) Collaborative planning
- 5) Strategic utilization of Educational Assistants
- 6) Diverse support programming for high school students
- 7) Strategic collaboration of elementary and secondary programming
- 8) Creative strategies with limited resources

The project is designed to provide the District with tips and strategies to create effective processes and approaches to support implementation on a much broader scale.

The Action on Inclusion initiative requires a shift in thinking and bold steps to build capacity within the jurisdiction's leadership and school staff. EPSB is already making great strides.

Resources

- ▷ Ten videos, that can be viewed online:
 - One preview video
 - Nine videos, each highlighting a change agent school with inclusionary best practices
- ▷ Summary of each school
- ▷ Pre and post discussion questions that accompany each video
- ▷ Learning guide that includes information on each video as well as extra questions for further discussion and inclusionary tips and strategies used in the nine schools.

The Videos

The preview video provides a brief overview of the various illustrations of inclusion along with a snapshot of eight schools. Educators can get a sense of the various practices and strategies that are the focus of each of the schools. The change agent schools include one early education site, four K-6 schools, two K-9 schools and one high school (10-12). Each video focuses upon strategies and practices for students and staff that exemplify inclusion.

There is no particular order to watching the videos. They may be of viewing interest by level or by focus. Keep in mind that the strategies depicted in the videos can be applied between grades and division levels.

Educators can watch the videos on-line individually and reflect upon the questions to further their own growth in inclusionary best practices. As well, the videos can be viewed in preparation for a collaborative school PD session or as part of a professional community of learners. This would lend itself well to a planned series of PD sessions covering the videos and practices over a period of sessions. The videos can also be shared and discussed at a general PD opportunity with any number of people. The value of the videos is being able to have the opportunity to learn and share ideas.

Additional questions for each school are included in the Learning Guide under "For Further Discussion" for those who want to study the focus in more depth.

Preview Video

“When we talk about inclusive education, it’s how we make sure everyone’s in, that everybody has a place and that they are participating. How we do that is something we are constantly learning.”

Edgar Schmidt

Former Superintendent of Schools

The Preview video gives an overview of eight schools and their inclusionary focus. This video and the questions that follow can be used as a prompt for an initial discussion on inclusion.

For Discussion

- ▷ What phrases/words do you associate with the term “Inclusion”
- ▷ What does Inclusion mean to you?
- ▷ What are your school’s beliefs on Inclusion?
- ▷ What are some challenges you/your school faces regarding inclusion?
- ▷ What does an “Inclusive setting” mean to you?
- ▷ How does your school encourage the contributions of all learners?
- ▷ How does your school create an environment in which all students are included as one community?
- ▷ How important is it to build relationships with students?
- ▷ What factors need to be considered in building the school vision and culture?
- ▷ What challenges do you/your school face regarding curriculum in an inclusive setting?
- ▷ How does your school promote curriculum that is equitable and inclusive of diversity in students’ learning needs?
- ▷ What does it mean to have a collaborative culture in a school?

Beacon Heights Early Education Program: Play-based Learning

“Play is what children are all about. So whether they have any specified needs or not, or they are typically developing children, play is the avenue we use to help them with their growth and development.”

Cathy Pattison
Assistant Principal

Beacon Heights Early Education Program serves children between the ages of 2 ½ to 5 ½, who have been identified with developmental delays. The children in the program have been diagnosed with a severe developmental delay or two moderate delays in the following areas: cognition, communication, gross motor, fine motor, self-help, and socialization/play.

Beacon Heights school staff believe that inquiry, play-based learning meets the varied and diverse needs of all young children. Within the Early Education Program, children and teachers are co-constructors of their learning as the adults closely observe the growth and development of each child and create appealing spaces that invite exploration.

The environment invites children to explore, create and question. Through play, children learn concepts and skills that contribute to their overall emotional, social, physical and cognitive development, which are the foundation for later success in school. The involvement of therapists is embedded into daily routines and activities to ensure children’s learning needs are met in the most natural environment.

Video

Before Viewing: Preparing

- ▷ Why is play important for a child’s growth and development?
- ▷ How is “play” turned into authentic learning?
- ▷ How do you respond to parents who believe that their child is not learning if they are “playing?”

"Every activity... has a purpose."

Teacher

After Viewing: Reflecting

- ▷ What does it mean to be co-constructors in learning?
- ▷ How does play-based learning help to support the diverse needs of children?
- ▷ What strategies can be used to help parents understand the importance of play in their child's learning?
- ▷ How can you foster an environment where children are able to take risks in their learning?
- ▷ What assessment strategies help to determine the learning needs of young children?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ What strategies (teaching and learning/assessment) did you view that could be applied to your school setting?
- ▷ What strategies/practices that work for me were reinforced?
- ▷ Based on the comment, what are the variety of purposes an activity could have?
- ▷ How effective is 'role release' where everybody is the teacher?
- ▷ How can you apply the parent activities observed to suit the needs of your parent community?

Crawford Plains K- 6: Maximizing Resources, Maximizing Learning in Inclusive Education Classrooms

"We look at the students and the needs of those students and we plan how we're going to implement curriculum given the learning styles and strategies we have in the classroom."

Jeanne Carter
Principal

Crawford Plains is a K-6 school with a population of about 300 students. Crawford Plains honours and celebrates diversity. Learning happens everywhere with everyone. Staff collaboration is essential to communicate students' goals and plan for successful transitions. Technology including netbooks, iPads and classroom laptops is in all classrooms to support the diverse needs of students. Staff is familiar with and uses a variety of software programs to support all learners.

Educational Assistants are an integral part of the team and scheduling reflects support for all students. The teachers and educational assistants believe that the students belong to all staff and so educational assistants are flexible and support the needs of all students rather than following one specific student. Collaboration between teachers and educational assistants is key; planning reflects the input of both groups.

Video

Before Viewing – Preparing

- ▷ How can you help students to understand that all children are different in the way they learn?
- ▷ Is it more effective for teachers to focus on the needs of the students in the class rather than working together to focus on the needs of all the students in the school?
- ▷ Comment on the quote "Plan around the student, not the curriculum."
- ▷ In what ways can educational assistants be used to their full potential in meeting the needs of students?
- ▷ Does support for students with diverse learning needs end when they leave the school?

"I feel competent going into a classroom. I feel empowered. I feel at ease in working with the teachers because I am knowledgeable about what the school wide focus is."

Educational assistant

After Viewing – Reflecting

- ▷ What advantages are there when the educational assistants are a critical member of the planning team?
- ▷ What are the benefits to having an educational assistant assigned to the class rather than the student?
- ▷ What other resources can you call upon to help with students if you are limited in educational assistants?
- ▷ How is technology effectively used to meet the needs of all learners in the class?
- ▷ How has Crawford Plains utilized student leadership to help build a community where everyone has something to offer?
- ▷ What strategies were used to help students make good choices?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ What supports did the school have for educational assistants that would result in a comment like the one on the left?
- ▷ How can you use the strategies viewed here without the availability of educational assistants?
- ▷ What are the positive consequences for students when they interact with many educational assistants?
- ▷ Can focusing on the needs of the group help to meet the needs of an individual learner?
- ▷ How can we support students to be not only receivers of help but givers of help?

Elizabeth Finch K-9: Literacy – Bridging the gap between elementary and high school

“... with junior high you will have the small group of students that will always contribute, and the other ones that are able to hide in the numbers...getting them into smaller groups works because now they all have a voice.”

Tenille Stadnick
Junior High Teacher

When opening the new K-9 school in the fall of 2010, Elizabeth Finch staff honoured its namesake by embracing Betty Finch’s ideal of “All students can learn and succeed.” Relationships developed quickly and the discussions began about how they could best complement and collaborate with each other to meet the needs of all learners. It wasn’t just about differentiating learning. It was about embracing the strategies the students already had, and building upon the routines and expectations already present. Collaboration was cross-divisional, so that grade one, four and seven teachers could meet to observe each other’s classrooms and share literacy strategies that helped students learn and succeed. The idea emerged quickly: If it works in grade one and grade four, why not in grade seven?

Small sets of novels were purchased, flexible reading groupings were formed and a truly inclusive learning environment was created. Strategies remained consistent with what was known and practiced at earlier levels; students were reading at their appropriate level and sharing their ideas in a smaller group setting. Each group was engaged in different sorts of reading activities based on their needs, while still participating in large whole class instruction and discussion. Addressing different learning styles and needs became easier. Student accountability was heightened in the group discussion model, and voices were now reclaimed. No longer could a student stay lost in the crowd, or hide among his or her peers. Small groups demanded engagement and provided the safety to share one’s ideas.

The small grouping allowed the teacher to step back from “leading” and instead embrace the role of “coach.” Students were empowered to learn, and apply in a conscious way, the tactics and strategies for improving their own literacy. This was the metacognition piece – students in their groups were able to explain what they were doing and more importantly, why they were doing it. Assessment happened daily as the “teacher-coach” interacted with the group members, and students were guided in the self-assessment process, so that groupings continued to change as students’ needs changed.

"When we are in large groups only some of our ideas get out,in small groups all of our ideas get out and we can actually talk about it."

Junior High student

Video

Before Viewing - Preparing

- ▷ When a student reaches grade seven, do the learner expectations change and therefore change the teaching strategies?
- ▷ How can skills/strategies successfully used in Div. I and II be communicated and continued in Div. III and IV?
- ▷ How does having students talk about thinking and learning help with teaching and learning?

After Viewing - Reflecting

- ▷ What practices can we observe at the elementary level that can transform our practice at the junior high level?
- ▷ How do these practices reflect the spirit of inclusion?
- ▷ What factors contribute to success in collaborating between divisions?
- ▷ What advantages are there in using strategies in reading that are consistent across multiple grade levels?
- ▷ What factors contribute to success in collaborating between divisions? If you teach in a Grade 7-9 school, how can you make this work?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ How can you build a consistent culture of inclusion when teachers who are new to the school have come from varying experiences?
- ▷ What are the benefits to flexible reading groups? How can you determine if the groups are successful?
- ▷ What are the benefits for students working in a smaller group?
- ▷ Why is it important to establish expectations when working in groups?
- ▷ What questions can you ask to activate metacognitive skills?
- ▷ How can you apply the collaborative strategies viewed in this video to other subject areas?

Ellerslie K-9: Inclusion through Collaboration

“Collaboration is king because it means my child, your child gets the expertise of 3 or 4 or 5 teachers working together to be able to determine how that child is going to be successful.”

Henry Madsen
Principal

Ellerslie Campus is a K-9 school with a school population that includes a large number of ELL students and students with diverse needs. An essential focus of the staff is on student-centred teacher collaboration using a pyramid of intervention to improve the engagement, participation and achievement of all students. This learner-centered collaboration leads to pyramid of intervention response, and managed through the principles of universal design.

At Ellerslie, the culture of collaboration is designed to impact teachers' planning and assessment through a lens focused on evidence of student learning to build teacher capacity, determining needs and creating learning opportunities to differentiate instruction.

The Professional Learning Community at Ellerslie Campus centres around three big ideas and four questions:

Big Ideas

- ▷ Focus on Learning (rather than Teaching)
- ▷ Focus on Collaboration (on the right things)
- ▷ Focus on Results (formative assessment)

Questions

- ▷ What is it we expect our students to learn?
- ▷ How will we know when they have learned it?
- ▷ What will we do when they have not learned it?
- ▷ What will we do when they have learned it?

Video

Before Viewing- Preparing

- ▷ How important is collaboration between staff when planning for meeting the needs of diverse learners?
- ▷ How would teachers interact to effectively collaborate?
- ▷ What do the two phrases “by the student, by the skill” mean to you?

"It has to be a place where kids are going to feel free, safe, be proud, and want to express themselves."

Teacher

After Viewing - Reflecting

- ▷ How did the teachers collaborate to determine student learning opportunities for flexible instructional groupings?
- ▷ What advantages and risks are there in students having more than one teacher within a subject area? For students? For teachers?
- ▷ How would you explain to parents that their child had three teachers for mathematics?
- ▷ How does the school support learning with the "I can" statements?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ How does instilling pride in school impact student learning?
- ▷ How can the strategies for horizontal planning be adapted for situations where there is only one of each grade?
- ▷ What advantages are there in vertical planning between Div. I and Div. II? Div. II and Div. III?
- ▷ Why is continuum of support across grades important?
- ▷ What are the advantages in following the big ideas and questions? How can you apply this to your school?

Fraser School K-6: Creative strategies for learning using limited resources

"We have to make it work... meeting diverse student needs... with what we've got. What can we do differently with what we have? One of the resources we do have is the people in the building and our time. So the staff looked at a creative way to use these two.

Judy Welch McCorquodale
Principal

Fraser school is a small school of approximately 160 students, with single grade classrooms. The school has a high number of students with diverse learning, medical, and behavioural needs that are included within the regular program.

Fraser school has a strong history of demonstrating exemplary inclusive practices. The school has an environment that supports diversity in learners and provides the opportunity for every learner to achieve to their full potential. Working within a small school setting, the staff at Fraser collaborates to creatively provide support to the needs of the students.

Fraser staff actively and purposefully encourages parental engagement and involvement through frequent, positive communication. Various supports and strategies are also used by staff to involve parents as active partners in their child's education. As well, teachers access school resources and teacher consultants that support all learners and contribute to an inclusive environment.

Video

Before Viewing – Preparing

- ▷ What challenges does a small school with limited resources face in supporting the needs of all learners?
- ▷ How do you build parent relationships to maximize their child's growth as a learner?
- ▷ How might the role of the Principal at a small school be different from that of a school with greater available resources?

After Viewing – Reflecting

- ▷ At Fraser school, all students are included in school activities (e.g. Science Olympics). How might this contribute to an Inclusive Learning environment, and what supports would need to be in place to make this possible?
- ▷ What is the role of the Principal in planning and implementing the various interventions outlined in the video?

"A lot of teachers have a hard time saying to a parent 'I think there are issues you have.'"

Parent

- ▷ What strategies are successfully used to help parents understand and support their child's learning? What strategies help parents to grow as learners as well?
- ▷ What are the benefits of "intervention" time for students? For teachers
- ▷ How have the teachers at Fraser, despite the school having limited resources, worked to meet the needs of the students, removed barriers to learning, and helped to promote a caring school where students are successful? How can these strategies be implemented at your school?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ The Principal at Fraser school used geese as a metaphor for staff unity and collaboration. What is the power in having a symbol for the staff?
- ▷ How could an intervention model be implemented at your school? What elements would need to be in place?
- ▷ Why do you think the parent's comment is important? How would you respond to this comment?
- ▷ What factors do you need to consider in order to make achievable, successful learning goals for students?

M.E. LaZerte High School: Programming for Success

“At M.E. LaZerte, we’ve been doing inclusive education for years and not because it’s been a policy, but because it’s a belief we have about what’s right for the kids.”

Kathy Muhlethaler
Principal

M.E. LaZerte honours diversity through inclusive practices evident in all areas of the high school life. A school-wide Assessment Plan supports inclusion by ensuring that students are provided with various opportunities to demonstrate their learning. In the Academic Support Centre, students work with an educational assistant in a small group setting to ensure the strategies and accommodations to support student learning are provided. Teachers in the Knowledge and Employability classrooms work in collaboration to support the diverse learning needs of their students using routines, scaffolding lessons and building relationships with their students. The Student Leadership Program builds school community and involves all students

M.E. LaZerte High School is rich in diversity; students speak different languages, come from different cultural backgrounds, devote themselves to different religions, and have different stories to tell. There is respect and learning from each other’s differences.

Video

Before Viewing

- ▷ What are some challenges when promoting inclusion at a secondary level?
- ▷ How are assessment practices used to support all students?
- ▷ What challenges do you face in meeting the diverse needs of students in all areas of the school culture?

After Viewing

- ▷ How do the various programs offered meet the needs of the diverse learners?
- ▷ What supports are in place to meet the social/emotional/physical/academic needs of all students?
- ▷ What strategies does the school promote in assessment practices? What strategies can be applied to all settings?
- ▷ The educational assistants at M.E. LaZerte work with many students rather than just one. What impact does this have on student learning? Building relationships with staff?
- ▷ What does Student Leadership mean at M.E. LaZerte?
- ▷ What strategies and supports are in place so that all students are successful?

"The teachers offer a lot of support. I like that they offer me certain courses I can take so that I can earn higher goals."

Student

Enrolled in Knowledge and Employability courses

For Further Discussion

- ▷ How is the meaning for "getting ready to learn" different in a secondary setting than elementary setting?
- ▷ What challenges does a high school face in having students come from a variety of schools and settings?
- ▷ How does your school support leadership in all students?
- ▷ How important are life skills in the educational journey of a student?
- ▷ What strategies does the school use to transition students into the real world?
- ▷ How important is it in a secondary setting to have all students be positive about their learning?
- ▷ What advantages are there to having students extend themselves within a grouping rather than move into other courses outside the grouping?
- ▷ How could you use the strategy of the Academic Support Centre to suit the needs of your school?
- ▷ What strategies did you view that reflect "assessment for learning"?

Montrose Elementary School: Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child

"I believe we need to start the day with joy. I believe we need to be a community and we need to be a family."

Raelene Finlayson
Principal

"It has to start with having that vision that this is the kind of school we want to create".

Cory MacTaggart,
Assistant Principal

"Before curriculum you need to build a sense of community in your classroom and have a place where (students) feel safe but be willing to share and express themselves."

Teacher

"Some people say I have a behaviour code."

Student

Montrose School is a K-6 school with an enrollment of approximately 190 students, 70 having identified special learning needs. Montrose provides a positive inclusive learning environment that ensures quality teaching and engaging learning experiences for all students.

The foundational belief at Montrose School is that "everyone belongs to all of us", therefore they have made it their purpose to put in place numerous supports both in and out of the classroom.

The school, family and community partners work together effectively to help each child do their best. Staff and community partners model caring, supportive relationships, positive cultural beliefs and expectations, while providing opportunities and skills for students to participate and contribute in meaningful ways.

Video

Before Viewing – Preparing

- ▷ What are the necessary skills that are needed by children in order to have them "ready to learn?"
- ▷ What does it mean to address the needs of the whole child?
- ▷ What challenges do you face in seeing to the differing learning needs of students in your class?
- ▷ How do you deal with students in your class that socially, emotionally, and/or behaviorally struggle?

After Viewing – Reflecting

- ▷ What strategies can help to make a student's school experience a positive one?
- ▷ Is it realistic to assume that you can differentiate every aspect of a lesson? What are some strategies you use to differentiate a lesson?
- ▷ Following the examples from Montrose, how can you draw upon the community to help support student growth experiences?
- ▷ How do you feel about the student comment? From the student perspective? From the teacher perspective?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ How does my school solve challenges that deal with life experiences of the student?
- ▷ How do you access and use support from the immediate community your school resides in?
- ▷ How do you access support from the greater community?
- ▷ How does Montrose solve issues and challenges that deal with the life experiences of the student? (provide breakfast, exercise, etc.)
- ▷ How are students made to feel valued and included at Montrose school?
- ▷ What strategies did you observe that help build a sense of community where students feel safe to express themselves?
- ▷ What strategies were used to address “We all learn and behave differently?”
- ▷ How is the staff addressing the needs of the “whole child”?

Westglen K- 6: Universal Design for Learning

"It really is the beginning of a journey. Teachers have different levels of skill, and varying levels of comfort with technology, so we are working together as a staff to implement a universal design for learning approach across classrooms."

Jody Lundell
Principal

Westglen is a vibrant community school that serves approximately 250 students with diverse learning needs. At Westglen, we are committed to creating a welcoming, supportive and challenging learning environment in which all students experience academic success and personal growth.

Using principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), staff is beginning to implement effective inclusive practices across classrooms that recognize that barriers to learning often exist within the environment, not the student. Teachers, parents and specialists work together to identify supports and services that match student strengths and needs and facilitate quality teaching and meaningful learning opportunities for all. Access to technology plays a key role in our work and has made a significant difference for many students.

Video

Before Viewing

- ▷ What strategies do you use to create a learning environment that works for all students?
- ▷ What are some barriers to student learning?
- ▷ How can technology make a difference for students with diverse learning needs?
- ▷ What is the difference between 'teacher' and 'student' choice when considering tools and strategies?
- ▷ What strategies do you use to communicate with parents?

After Viewing – Reflecting

- ▷ How is diversity a strength?
- ▷ How do universal supports help in planning for the diverse needs of learners?
- ▷ What universal tools and strategies did you observe in classrooms? How can you adapt these to support students with diverse learning needs in your classroom?
- ▷ How is technology used to meet the needs of diverse learners?
- ▷ Cameron is able to express his strengths and challenges. How does this impact teaching and learning in his classroom?

"Sometimes I yell out or call out and it will distract other people, but it's good that I have quiet space where I rest."

Cameron

For Further Discussion

- ▷ How can you support programming for students with complex needs in a community school?
- ▷ What strategies positively impact parent-teacher communication?
- ▷ How can universal design for learning be applied to curriculum and assessment?
- ▷ What tools demonstrated do you feel could benefit the diverse needs of students in your class?
- ▷ What additional tools do you use that can benefit students?

Mount Royal/Virginia Park K-6: Building Relationships Brings Us Together

"A school starts to take on an identity and that identity is a reflection of the students, the parents, the community and the staff that work within the school."

Donna McIsaac
Principal

"In that community called a school, kids learn not only the academic requirements, but they also learn how to get along, they learn how to manage conflict, they learn a variety of citizenship skills and knowledge related to learning how to work and live together."

Edgar Schmidt
Former Superintendent of Schools

Mount Royal and Virginia Park are on a shared journey as a multi-campus Arts Core Program. Both are K-6 schools with approximately 160 students in each school. Having two campuses ensures that there is accommodation for students interested in participating in an Arts Core learning environment. Every effort is made to offer similar programming to students on each campus. This reality helps to shape not only a shared theme for both schools, but also shared staff, shared leadership, shared professional learning, shared pedagogy, and shared philosophy.

The two campuses have also started on a journey of social inclusion that uses the Tribes process; a sequence of events that builds community and promotes a caring environment for cooperative learning and positive interaction between and across school staff, students and parents.

The common language across both campuses focuses on:

- Attentive listening
- Appreciation/no put downs
- The right to pass – the right to participate
- Mutual respect

Video

Before Viewing – Preparing

- ▷ Describe the "identity" of your school. What characteristics contribute to that identity?
- ▷ What does academic inclusion mean? What does social inclusion mean? How are the two terms related?
- ▷ What is the importance of
 - teachers building relationships with students?
 - teachers building relationships with fellow staff members?
 - students building relationships with other students?
- ▷ What are examples of learning goals for students? For staff?
- ▷ How can we help students plan and develop their own learning goals?

"The power of being included and valued by peers motivates students to active participation in their own learning."

Jeanne Gibbs

Tribes Learning Communities,
p.10, 2006

"I am really looking forward to having a common language between all the grades and all the staff that work in the school."

Teacher

"What students can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow."

Lev Vygotsky

After Viewing – Reflecting

- ▷ As a teacher, why is it important to model positive behaviour within the class and the school?
- ▷ What are the benefits to implementing a universal program such as Tribes that has expectations for both students and staff?
- ▷ The Tribes program has a parallel program for both staff and students. There are activities that staff work together on similar to the activities undertaken by students. How does doing this help teachers to implement the program into the classroom?
- ▷ How can building relationships between school staff enhance learning and teaching?
- ▷ What are the benefits to having teachers learn together?
- ▷ The four community agreements shown in the video are:
 - Attentive listening
 - Appreciation/no put downs
 - The right to pass – the right to participate
 - Mutual respect
- ▷ Which of the four agreements has the most meaning for you?
- ▷ Which agreement would you emphasize first with your class?
- ▷ How does this comment reflect your meaning of academic inclusion and social inclusion?
- ▷ How does having common language affect student behavior and learning?

For Further Discussion

- ▷ When do you think it is more important to recognize the needs of the individual over the needs of the group?
- ▷ What does this comment mean to you?

Supports for Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

"It's our job as educators to see how we can best meet the needs of that student in an inclusive setting."

Principal

The following supports for learning summarize the strategies, skills, and resources displayed in the videos, and provide further suggestions and ideas to enhance what is already underway in classrooms and schools. These supports are used and reinforced throughout the nine schools highlighted in the videos and illustrate a universal design for learning – to expose learners to a variety of strategies in order to find the one most suitable for their needs.

The four categories of supports for learning are:

- ▷ Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment
- ▷ Creating a Positive School Culture and Collaborative Community
 - with staff
 - with students
- ▷ Creating a Collaborative Culture with Parents
- ▷ Working with the Community

Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

Using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), teachers can begin to implement effective inclusive practices across classrooms that recognize barriers to learning often exist within the environment, not within the student. Teachers, parents and specialists can work together to identify supports and services that match student strengths and needs, and facilitate quality teaching and meaningful learning opportunities for all.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework that helps develop a learning environment that accommodates differences in student learning. UDL follows three guidelines:

- ▷ Provide multiple means of representation
- ▷ Provide multiple means of action and expression
- ▷ Provide multiple means of engagement

Following these guidelines gives students opportunity to understand and express this understanding in a variety of ways, and reduces barriers to learning.

(See a chart that illustrates UDL on the following page.)

"What I love about UDL is that every child has access to the materials whether they have a disability or not."

Teacher

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines



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Examples of targeted support

- ▷ Space – allow students to occupy a space that is conducive to individual learning; be flexible as to where students can set up for learning (eg. near a table, surrounded by dividers)
- ▷ Tools
 - Flexible stools and chairs that allow students to move while listening or working
 - Fidgets – small objects that can be squeezed or pulled to help maintain focus (eg. koosh balls, soft bean bag)
 - Wiggle cushions that gives students feeling of movement
 - Bungee cords that attach to chair legs for gross motor support
 - Visual schedule of the day's activities to act as a guide for visual learners
 - Buckets to help organize materials
 - Extra materials for students who have anxiety when they are not able to find materials
 - Visual cues (charts) to help students prioritize activities
 - Headphones to keep out distractions
 - Talking stick or sharing ball – held by student during community circle
 - Emotion thermometer – to demonstrate how students are feeling
 - Breathing ball – to aid in anxiety; calming down/relaxing students

"I believe...with the access we have to technology, that a reading disability should not be a barrier to being in a regular class...to being able to get a great job and functioning in the world."

Principal

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology increases the learners' ability to accomplish tasks they may have not been able to accomplish before. This allows the learner to communicate and demonstrate understanding. It removes barriers to performance. Assistive technology is available for physical, communicative, and cognitive tasks and can be easily integrated into the curriculum. Assistive technology can be used with all students.

- ▷ Low Tech examples – less complicated, usually more cost-efficient
 - Pencil grips, highlighters, special paper, rubber grips to turn pages
 - Weighted pencils, magnets to hold down paper
 - Oral exams, taped responses, readers, scribes to assist with literacy
 - Calculators, dictionaries, spell checkers
 - Quiet room, extra time to help students with focus
 - Manipulatives, adaptive scissors to help students with reduced fine motor skills
 - Copy of assignment, copy of peer's notes
 - Phonebook for foot rest
- ▷ High Tech examples – sophisticated technology; computers, software; usually training involved
 - Talking calculators for visually-impaired students
 - Interactive white board for student interaction
 - Portable keyboards for students to take to their desks; works with interactive boards
 - Electronic spell checkers
 - Text to speech software
 - Speech recognition software
 - Reading device that reads scanned books out loud
 - Mouse alternatives – trackpad, joystick to help with fine motor skill development
 - Braille input and output
 - Electronic pointing device
 - Screen readers and magnifiers

"I know I am learning something when I try to solve the problems that are created."

Student

Other Supports

- ▷ Daily classroom community circle – students can share how they are feeling and why
- ▷ Role playing to help with problem solving
- ▷ Tiering a lesson – teaching one concept but designing the lesson and activities to meet the different learning needs of the class
- ▷ On the Go Activity organizers – teacher or student choice
- ▷ Reading groups – plan the same activities using different novels
- ▷ Flexible grouping – changing the groups on a continual basis based on prior learning

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) or Pyramid of Intervention is a three-tiered intervention model where students receive instruction, are monitored and assessed for growth in their learning, and move up the intervention tiers based on their needs.

- ▷ Tier One – general instructional practices (best practice and differentiation)
- ▷ Tier Two – targeted instruction based on identified gaps in learning
- ▷ Tier Three – more individualized and intensive support
(See a chart that illustrates RTI on the following page.)

General Pyramid of Intervention

(also called RTI or Response to Intervention)

Tier Three

- Intensive Intervention
- 5-10% of students
- intensive, daily, systematic intervention over a long period of time
- Students not progressing in this tier are referred for specialist assessments through the district

Tier Two

- Supplementary Intervention
- Students with demonstrated gaps in learning
- 15-20% of students
- Intensive, systematic, 3-5 times/week for a term or portion of the year
- Students who do not progress at this tier are moved to Tier Three intervention

Tier One

- Universal Supports for Learning
- Differentiation (Universal Design for Learning Principles)
- Implementation of research-based best practices in instruction
- Emphasis on frequent formative assessment and valid feedback to students, parents and teaching teams
- Students identified as not progressing at this level are moved to tier two intervention

Baseline: Universal Screening tools in Literacy and Numeracy to quickly identify students who require differentiation and further diagnostic assessment.

"You look around the school and we have this amazing community and culture of acceptance."

Educational Assistant

Creating a Positive School Culture and Collaborative Community

A positive school culture is essential to student and teacher success. When students feel safe, respected, happy, and valued with people they respect and value, learning happens.

- ▷ Set up core values and beliefs for staff and students
 - Eg. Montrose' four beliefs: attentive listening, show appreciation, mutual respect, the right to pass (having the ability to say no)
- ▷ Begin the day with whole school community involvement
 - Breakfast club
 - Daily physical activity in gym
 - Appreciation recognition
- ▷ Assign tickets for being in hall when class has begun
- ▷ Create an Academic Support Centre – for all students
- ▷ Create a student leadership club for everyone
- ▷ Build a SWAT team – Students Who Assist with Technology
- ▷ Promote cultural activities – celebrations, food events
- ▷ Organize science or math olympics
- ▷ Have a school pride day
- ▷ Create an appreciation wall – comments of appreciation from and for students and staff
- ▷ Utilize the entire staff in small group reading activities so teachers can focus on intervention
- ▷ Assign a Dragon's Den where students can read at a designated spot in the school
- ▷ Encourage buddies – grade buddies working together, model social skills
- ▷ Review Steven Covey's "Leader in Me" program (seven habits of student leadership)
- ▷ Celebrate student success

"We talk about the collective expertise of the whole building. We talk about reciprocal accountability. So it's not my job to meet the needs of the students, it's all of our jobs."

Teacher

"Now it's a culture."

Assistant Principal

Creating a Staff Culture and Collaborative Community

- ▷ Horizontal planning – same grade planning, grouping and teaching for literacy and numeracy
- ▷ Vertical planning – by division (I, II, III, IV) , all grades in school (K-9) – school focus (eg. literacy, setting consistent standards for writing, knowing what comes before and after)
- ▷ Plan intervisitations between grades
- ▷ Planning Strategies
- ▷ Set up a time table for scheduled meetings
- ▷ Combine classes for physical education
- ▷ Organize tutorials for the end of the day
- ▷ Involve entire school staff in daily reading time so teachers can work in small groups
- ▷ Collaborate with educational assistants
- ▷ Involve educational assistants in planning
- ▷ Ensure educational assistants have knowledge of programs (eg. guided reading)
- ▷ Encourage educational assistants to form learning communities or cohorts with other schools
- ▷ Have educational assistants work with many teachers and students
- ▷ Use art as a source of communicating about oneself
- ▷ Set up a design team to plan professional learning

“One of our guiding principles is that families are partners in education. And that we have to help families understand that they are in this. They are part of the school culture.”

Principal

Creating a Collaborative Culture with Parents

Involving parents is more than classroom conferences and attending monthly school council meetings. Parents are partners in the education of their child and so, as partners, are an integral part of the school. When there is collaboration between staff and parents, the outcome is children’s success.

- ▷ Utilize staff and outside agencies to plan and present workshops for parents
 - Eg. How to help your child play (parents and child participation)
 - Eg. How to access community services (bank, grocery store, clinics, etc)
 - Eg. Parenting skills
 - Eg. How to help your child with homework
 - Eg. Organizing cultural events
- ▷ Enlist parents as volunteers
- ▷ Work with parents to plan their child’s learning
- ▷ Allow parents to share stories about their child’s needs.
- ▷ Assist parents with a transition to a new school
- ▷ Tutor parents on how to help their child with homework
- ▷ Include a two-way communication mechanism such as a question and answer section or mini survey in each edition of your newsletter
- ▷ Match new families at the school with buddy families to show them the ropes
- ▷ Create an open and friendly environment for parents
- ▷ Be visible in the hallways. Greet parents by name if possible to increase the perception of openness
- ▷ Initiate a classroom volunteer program
- ▷ Create a parent resource centre stocked with information on issues that may be of concern to parents
- ▷ Invite parents in to the school to present or to talk about specialized knowledge or skills

"We spend time talking to outside agencies to ensure they are: 1) a good fit for the school and 2) they are providing the supports needed."

Assistant Principal

"It takes a community to raise a child."

Aboriginal social worker

Working with the Community

By working with organizations within the school community and community at large, many of the social, emotional and physical needs of children can be met. Collaboration with a variety of organizations can also help to support and educate parents.

- ▷ Cultural groups and leaders can help students understand their heritage, customs, and rituals (eg. having an Elder visit), offer educational resources, literature, and traditional ceremonies.
- ▷ Community Services such as a nurse, speech therapist, or a family worker to assist families with parenting information, health issues, effective family communication and support services.
 - Provide workshops for teachers and parents
 - Work with students in class
- ▷ Church organizations – will often help to support nutrition programs, new immigrants
- ▷ Senior homes – readers, visits
- ▷ Public Library – readers, community events, author visits
- ▷ Business Organizations – mentors and learning partners off site and at school
- ▷ Big Brothers/Big Sister Clubs – coordinates activities
- ▷ Local Grocery stores – sponsor snack programs
- ▷ Community High School – mentoring program, learning coaches, CTS support (eg. High school students enrolled in CTS food module can cook meals for students)
- ▷ Sports Facilities and sports teams – activities, role models