Social Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

By

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We accept the Applied Project as conforming to the required standard.

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Abstract

This project contains curricular guide to help educators successfully create an effective inclusive educational setting where all students benefit. Social acceptance does not happen without active participation of students without disabilities. This project helps to provide students with direct teaching of empathy, understanding of differences, and strategies for facilitating inclusion. The purpose of this project is encouraging positive attitudes toward inclusion and providing tools to effectively implement inclusion by encouraging non-disabled peers to take an active role in inclusive settings,

Keywords: Social inclusion, social, inclusion, students with disabilities,

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the education system has developed an increased

understanding of students with special needs. The educational system in British Columbia, for

example, now promotes an "inclusive education system in which students with special needs are

fully participating members of a community of learners" (Ministry of Education, 2013 p 2).

Within the context of British Columbia's education system, the philosophy of inclusion is legally

grounded in Ministry of Education documents that state, "students with special needs are

included in educational settings with their peers who do not have special needs, and provided

with the necessary accommodations [to enable success]" (Ministry of Education, 2013 p 2). This

creates an emphasis on educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms to

meet the needs of all learners, as well as respecting and learning from each other's differences

(Salend, 1999).

True inclusion is achieved when students with disabilities have "equal access to social

and academic opportunities" (Loreman, 2008, p. 2). This means that inclusion goes beyond

physical placement in classrooms with age appropriate peers, and must support the academic,

social, emotional, and physical well being of all students. The efficacy of inclusion is measured

by the impact on the education of all students, both with and without disabilities. This ideology

provides the opportunity to explore how teacher behaviour and language facilitates or negatively

impacts the social acceptance required to implement true inclusion. Providing tools and

knowledge that encourage understanding of the social needs of students with disabilities helps to

create true inclusion. This project seeks to help future educators in their development of

inclusive education settings by involving all students in the creation of those settings.

This project is intended to encourage true inclusion of students with disabilities by providing teachers with a curricular guide of lessons that focus on encouraging and creating truly authentic inclusive social settings in general education classrooms. The intent is to encourage social acceptance by providing non-disabled students with strategies and knowledge to encourage, facilitate, and maintain inclusive settings. In the sections that follow, the characteristics of inclusion and inclusive educational settings will be described, as well as the characteristics of non-disabled students, students with disabilities, and the influence of teacher behaviour and language will be introduced and described. Lastly, a statement of the problem and purpose of the project will be stated.

Inclusion

An inclusive education system is focused on the development and design of schools, classrooms, programs, and activities so that all students learn and participate together (Inclusion BC, 2016). For students with disabilities this means they participate in specially designed instruction and support to meet their needs as learners (Loreman, 2014). Inclusive education is context dependent as schools and classrooms comprise students from different backgrounds and operate on varying philosophical, economic, and social circumstances (Loreman, 2014). Inclusive settings may operate differently for each individual but function on the same principle of providing access to social and educational experiences.

In British Columbia, The Ministry of Education promotes an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members in a community of learners. This means that students with disabilities are educated alongside their non-disabled peers in their neighbourhood schools. It involves schools and classrooms adapting the ways in which they work to ensure all students are educated and are treated equitably, both socially and academically

(Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008). One instructional framework for inclusive education that provides the opportunity for social and academic inclusion of all students is Universal Design for Learning (Katz, 2013). Universal Design for Learning recognizes the need to create opportunities for the inclusion of diverse learners through providing curricula and instructional activities that allow for multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement (King-Sears, 2008 as cited in Katz, 2013). Inclusion is accommodating the learning needs of all students regardless of ability to ensure equal access.

The practice of inclusive education systems "goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others" (Ministry of Education, 2013 p v). An inclusive system promotes education, empathy, and social acceptance for all members of the school community and is considerate of individual student needs. Inclusive education settings are a "means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, and building an inclusive society and achieving education for all" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 9). Inclusion ensures that all students have "equal access to social and academic opportunities" (Loreman, 2009, p. 2). Loreman notes that inclusion is more than a "place" in a classroom; it is social justice and equality for all students.

Loreman (2009) identified the following as key factors to an inclusive education setting: all children attend their neighbourhood school; schools and districts have a 'zero-rejection' policy when it comes to registering and teaching children in their region- all children are welcomed and valued; all children learn in regular, heterogeneous classrooms with same age peers; all children follow similar programmes of study, with curriculum that can be adapted and modified if needed; modes of instruction are varied and responsive to the needs of all; all children contribute to regular school and classroom learning activities and events; all children are

supported to make friends and be socially successful with their peers; adequate resources and staff training are provided within the school and district to support inclusion.

As Loreman highlighted above, being socially successful with peers is an important factor in inclusive settings. In these criteria for inclusive settings, social success is the only key factor that adults do not take the sole role in; non-disabled peers play a significant role. This creates an opportunity to educate non-disabled peers to take responsibility for the role of creating social inclusion for all members in their learning communities. Non-disabled peers then need the tools to be able to facilitate that criterion. This project aims to give students the tools to promote meaningful interactions with their peers who have disabilities through a series of teacher-directed lessons.

Students

Classrooms contain many diverse students who live, play, and learn in infinitely individual ways. This project will be targeted for elementary ages students who are being educated in inclusive systems. For the purpose of this project, students with disabilities are defined as students who have identified disabilities of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioural nature (Ministry of Education, 2013). They will fall under one of the ministerial special needs categories: intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, behavioural needs or mental illness, physically dependent, deaf/blind, physical disabilities, or chronic health impairments (Ministry of Education, 2013). They may also be referred to as special needs students. Students without disabilities are students who do not have special needs as stated above and are typically developing cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally, and physically. They may be referred to as general education students or typically developing students. Both these groups of students have a variety of educational, social, and personal experiences that they bring with

them to the classroom. In inclusive education systems, general education teachers are cognizant of the individual academic and social needs of all their students and work to meet all of their needs.

Students with disabilities often have special educational needs "that make it necessary to provide a student undertaking an educational program with resources different from those which are needed by most students" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. vi). Along with the different resources, students with special needs are further differentiated from the norm through additional adaptations or modifications. Adaptations are "teaching and assessment strategies designed to accommodate a student's need so he or she can achieve learning outcomes and demonstrate mastery of concepts" and modifications are instructional and assessment-related decisions made to accommodate a student's educational needs that are different that learning outcomes of a course or subject (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. v).

Along with academic differences, students with special educational needs may also have an Educational Assistant to aid in the implementation of appropriate adaptations or modifications. Students with disabilities may have a wide variety of differences that change the way they must participate, communicate, or interact within their communities. This may include "alternate formats (e.g., braille, books-on- tape), instructional strategies (e.g., use of interpreters, visual cues and aids) and assessment procedures (e.g., oral exams, additional time, assistive technologies)" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 2). Students with disabilities may also communicate or process their surroundings in ways different than their non-disabled peers. They may use tools, or require extra support, to meet these social needs and enhance access to the school community. Additionally, educators may need to adapt the physical space (desks, classroom setup, school facilities such as washrooms and coat rooms) to ensure the least

restrictive environment. All of these differences that students with disabilities experience in our school system are often noticeable and obvious to their non-disabled peers. This may lead to misunderstanding, confusion, and a lack of empathy without adequate exposure and direct teaching of the philosophies of inclusion.

Educators must be responsive to non-disabled peer perceptions of students with disabilities. They can then work toward social acceptance, to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and to build empathy and understanding in students who do not have disabilities. Teachers are faced with the challenge of creating these environments in today's diverse classrooms. General educator or classroom teachers may have a student with disabilities in their class and are responsible for designing, supervising, and assessing the educational program for that student. Where the student requires specialized instruction, this is best done in consultation with the special education teachers (Ministry of Education, 2013). Special education teachers play an active role in the identification, assessment, planning, implementation, and reporting and evaluation process for students with special needs. As a member of the school-based team they: provide collaborative consultation, assist with pre-referral interventions and work closely with teachers to plan for, organize and access support services for students with special needs (Ministry of Education, 2013). This project is designed to teach non-disabled students the behaviour and language to encourage the social acceptance required for inclusion.

Impact of Inclusion

Inclusive education is not without controversy. In recent years, research has demonstrated both the positive impact and concerns of inclusion for teachers, students with disabilities and students without disabilities. The impact of inclusion has been studied from these different perspectives.

Teachers are central to realizing inclusion. In British Columbia, general education teachers and special education teachers work together to deliver educational programs designed to meet the needs of students. With inclusive policy, districts and schools provide a variety of means for classroom teachers to access the supports required to address diverse needs in classrooms. Collaboration among teachers, support professionals, administrators, and parents is an essential feature of inclusive schools (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008).

Overall, teachers were positive about educating students with disabilities in a general education setting and felt that it was beneficial to the many stakeholders involved (Idol, 2006; Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008). Many teachers were conservative about how to best do this, with many preferring to have students with disabilities be accompanied by a special education teacher or educational assistant (Idol, 2006). Idol found that teachers valued the specialized educators and were proud of the inclusive programs being implemented at their schools.

Implementing inclusion can be challenging. Most teachers are accepting of inclusion but are hesitant about inclusive policy and practice (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, and Barber, 2008). Educators generally believed in the benefits of inclusion but were cautious of how to adequately implement it. Teachers may feel like they need to be offered more professional development to successfully implement inclusion; others expressed desire to see other schools model the successful execution of inclusion (Idol, 2006). Furthermore, there was a desire for special education assessment processes more relative to classroom application and better training for education assistants (Idol, 2006). Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, and Barber (2008) found that some educators had varying attitudes towards inclusion with some educators

preferring inclusion "to a point" (p. 217) rather than full inclusion for students with more serious disabilities.

From the perspective of students with disabilities, the major benefits of inclusive education are well noted and include equal access to social and academic opportunities (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008). Academic inclusion of students with disabilities implies that all students are part of the life of the classroom. This means that "they learn in interaction with their peers- not separately or parallel, and not solely through adult (e.g. educational assistant) support" (Katz, Porath, Bendu & Epp, 2012, p. 3). Inclusive classrooms boast students with disabilities who feel like they learned more, made more friends, and had higher levels of self-concept, including self- efficacy and self-esteem (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008). Placement in an inclusive program has also "resulted in fewer incomplete assignments, more positive interactions with peers, and improved attitudes towards school and learning" (Salend & Duhaney, 1999, p. 115).

Social inclusion is vital to student development because social well being is directly related to resiliency, citizenship, and mental health (Katz, 2013). The experience of "segregation in the early school years seems to threaten children's social development directly" (Koster, Pijl, Nakken & Houten, 2010, p. 60). Social inclusion means that "all students have a sense of belonging, being included and cared for, and of interconnectedness with something larger than themselves- of being part of the community" (Katz, Porath, Bendu & Epp, 2012, p. 3). This requires that all students are part of the social life of the classroom and thus have opportunities to interact with their peers, develop friendships, and allow for families to be involved with one another (Katz, Porath, Bendu & Epp, 2012).

Students with disabilities are often at a disadvantage socially as they tend to have few friends and fewer interactions with their classmates, which leads to lower social acceptance (Koster, Pijl, Nakken & Houten, 2010). Non-disabled students may observe peers with disabilities as not exhibiting acceptable behaviours and reject them on that basis (Bunch & Valeo, 2004). However, research shows that inclusive settings tend to support students with disabilities who have a more positive sense of self from those in either segregated or traditionalist classrooms (Fitch, 2003). Inclusive settings also aid students with disabilities in the acquisition of social skills (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008). Advocates of inclusion believe that friendships between students with disabilities and students without disabilities develop best in inclusive settings (Bunch and Valeo, 2004).

When considering the impact of inclusive education on students without identified disabilities, it is important to look at both social and academic repercussions. One assertion that is made is that the presence of students with disabilities detracts from the instructional time that teachers provide to students without special needs (Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007). Academically, findings do not indicate a decline in academic or behavioural performance of students without disabilities educated in an inclusive setting (Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007; Katz, 2013; Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008; Sharpe, York, & Knight, 1994). Furthermore, teachers indicated that they felt there was no negative impact on students without disabilities who were educated in inclusive settings (Idol, 2006). Socially, students without disabilities experience high degrees of friendship and advocacy, as well as lower levels of degrees of abuse towards students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Bunch & Valeo, 2004).

The purpose of this project is to give non-disabled students' tools and knowledge to contribute to inclusive education settings.

Statement of problem

Including students with special needs does not automatically lead to an increase of friendships between students with disabilities and students who do not have disabilities (Koster, Pijl, Nakken & Houten, 2010). Social acceptance can not happen without active participation of students without disabilities. This emphasizes the need for educators to provide students with direct teaching of empathy, understanding of differences, and strategies for facilitating inclusion. Encouraging positive attitudes toward inclusion and providing tools to effectively implement inclusion will be the purpose of this project. Through encouraging non-disabled peers to take an active role in inclusive settings, the intention is to contribute to future educators' philosophies, questions, and approaches around the construction of inclusive educational settings. The findings will also allow teachers to look to methods of creating awareness or areas of added support to work towards developing acceptance in order to create true inclusion.

There is a body of literature that speaks to the importance and effectiveness of inclusive education settings (Berry, 2006; Loreman & McGhie-Richmond & Lupart, 2008; Salend & Duhaney, 1999). There is support for both the social and academic impact that inclusive settings have on all students, regardless of their abilities. Inclusion represents the ideals of social justice and equality for all students (Loreman & McGhie-Richmond & Lupart, 2008).

There is additional research that considers the relationship between student perspectives of inclusion and teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, & Lupart, 2008; Salend & Duhaney, 1999). This emphasizes the importance of educators' responsiveness to non-disabled perceptions of students with disabilities and the need to aid in the development

of these settings. If an educator accepts a student with disability, non-disabled peers would also be accepting (Bunch & Valeo, 2004). This would lead to students getting to know and accept each other.

Students without disabilities comprise a majority of the current education system (Statistics Canada, 2012) and they are important stakeholders in inclusive settings. Adding to students' capacity to facilitate inclusion, the goal is to create lifelong empathetic citizens. This project will reach this goal by providing teachers with a repository of methods for creating awareness, as well as methods for developing acceptance of peers with disabilities in order to foster true inclusion. Additionally, it aims to give students without disabilities the tools, knowledge, and strategies to enhance and facilitate inclusive settings.

This project aims to answer a question that many educators face today in vastly diverse classrooms: how to successfully create an effective inclusive educational setting where all students benefit.

Purpose of Project

The preliminary purpose of this project includes understanding what non-disabled students know and understand about inclusion and their peers with disabilities. Further, understanding how they came to develop their beliefs and attitudes can help educators to create and gain an understanding of the students they are working with and what level of understanding they are beginning with. Only with this information can educators begin construct a better inclusive education system.

Social acceptance of peers who have disabilities is the focal point of this project. In Loreman's (2007) criterion for successful inclusive settings, all but one is educator driven. This

criterion is "all children are supported to make friends and be socially successful with their peers" (p.1). This idea provides the opportunity to give students without disabilities the opportunity to facilitate those criteria independently. Students will not be able to do this on their own, and will require direct teaching to adequately facilitate this.

Research by Katz, Porath, Bendu, and Epp (2012) supports this idea. These authors suggest that it is important to provide students without disabilities with strategies and skills for working cooperatively with students with disabilities. Students without disabilities also need an "awareness of both the gifts [students with disabilities] bring and the challenges these students face" (Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012, p. 12). Furthermore, results of a study by Berry (2006) suggests that "providing explicit instruction and preparation regarding expected social interaction" (p. 521) for students without disabilities will aide in opportunities for legitimate participation for students with disabilities. It is on this principle that I have chosen to create lessons plans that focus on understanding differences, disability awareness, and teach ways to adapt games or social situations for their classmates who have disabilities.

Many studies have shown that students perform in the manner that their teachers expect them to perform (Klehem, 2014). The phenomenon of behaving and achieving in ways that confirm the expectations of others is known as the Pygmalion effect (Brehm & Kassin, 1996). This suggests that teachers' expectations and actions can predict changes in student achievement and behaviour (Klehem, 2014), consequently affecting students' perceptions of inclusion. To create an inclusive educational setting where all students are socially accepted, modelling effective teacher behaviour and language would be beneficial.

However, adults cannot take the sole role in creating peer social acceptance of students with disabilities. Through direct teaching, exposure, and modeled empathy educators need to equip non-disabled peers with the strategies and resources to take on this responsibility.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Understanding the values of friendship, empathy, and inclusion are important parts of the inclusive education systems within British Columbia. Inclusion is achieved when "all students are welcomed, valued, and learn together in regular education classrooms, regardless of their particular learning characteristics and needs" (McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, & Lupart, 2013, p. 197). It is measured by the impact it has on all students. Students are provided with the appropriate adaptations in order to meet their learning needs. While simplistic notions of inclusion rely on the exceptional student's physical inclusion in the classroom environment, more modern and subtle notions focus on social acceptance and equity in learning. In inclusive education settings, diversity is expected, making each child a valued and welcomed member in the school community. Inclusion promotes education, empathy, and social acceptance for all. It is considerate of individual student needs. This project will culminate in a tool to help teachers support non-disabled students' attitudes and behaviours towards the social inclusion of their peers with disabilities, with the goal of supporting full inclusion.

Although beliefs and attitudes about inclusion are varied within the education community, McGhie-Richmond and colleagues state, "teachers are generally quite positive on the different aspects of inclusion" (p. 220). Educators were cautious about how to best implement inclusive settings, but understood the benefits to the many stakeholders involved. Educators expressed a need for further professional development, increase of educational aide time, and an assessment process more relevance to classroom application (Idol, 2006; Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, and Barber, 2008).

There are also several research studies that have shown the positive social impact for both students with and without disabilities in inclusive settings (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007; Ekeh & Oladayo, 2013; Katz, 2013; Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012). These benefits include empathy, understanding, increased levels of friendship, and leadership skills.

Teacher competencies and attitudes affect student attitudes (Smart, 2014); thus, understanding what students think about inclusion, and how they acquired that knowledge, is "important in the process of restructuring for inclusion" (Lupart, Odishaw, & McDonald, 2006, p. 45). Katz, Porath, Bendu and Epp, (2012) state, "it is imperative to learn from students without disabilities what facilitates inclusive education and what may pose a barrier" (p. 3).

This chapter includes a review of selected literature and research outcomes related to creating inclusive educational settings and the role that students without disabilities play in this creation. This chapter is divided into sections that review research outcomes related to: (a) inclusion in elementary schools, (b) concerns about inclusive education, (c) outcomes of inclusion for students with disabilities, (d) outcomes of inclusion for students without disabilities and their perspectives of inclusion, (f) social belonging and peer relationships, (g) impact of teacher language as a facilitator, and finally concluding with a summary.

Inclusion in elementary schools

The principles of inclusion set out in various governmental and international documents can be used as the foundation for the justification of inclusive education settings. Inclusion represents the ideals of social justice and equity for all students (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008). The core of inclusive education is the human right to education pronounced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

Everyone has the right to education…Education shall be directed to the full development

of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and

fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among

all (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

Thus meaning, "Education must be viewed as a facilitator in everyone's human development and

functionality, regardless of barriers of any kind, physical or otherwise" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 11).

Furthermore, at the provincial level in British Columbia, there is a mandate that inclusion

be the delivery method implemented by schools (Ministry of Education, 2013). Under this

policy, schools must take steps to ensure that all students are able to meaningfully participate and

to promote interaction with others through "equitable access to learning, opportunities for

achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs" (Ministry

of Education, 2013, p. 2). In inclusive classrooms, teachers adapt their instructional practice so

that all students, including students with special learning needs, are able to achieve in ways that

are meaningful (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Hutchinson, 2007; Loreman, 1999, as cited in

McGhie-Richmond et al, 2013, p. 197). Lupart, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006) state that

"students who were once served within special education classrooms are being moved into

general education classrooms for the purpose of creating learning communities for all students"

(p. 44). Teachers in British Columbia are mandated to develop and foster inclusive settings in

their schools. This equitable access to education creates opportunities for all students to interact

and learn from each other, further highlighting the need for social inclusion of all.

In British Columbia, 57,060 or 10.4% of students in public schools have some kind of

designated disability (Ministry of Education, 2015). Inclusive settings provide that large

population, along with their "typical peers," a meaningful education and social experience (Cole,

Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007; Ekeh, & Oladayo, 2013; Katz, 2013)

Educating all learners has many benefits to the students and to the system. Loreman

(2007) supports that there are "social, academic, and even financial benefits for the school

system and all children involved in inclusive education" (p. 22). The financial cost of education

is a critical matter to school systems and governments. UNESCO, in 2005, contended that

adopting inclusive education is in fact cost effective as it negates the need for extra programs.

Making "minor adjustments to accommodate all learners" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 18) is less costly

than the alternative. The authors of the report also argued that *not* providing an education to all

would have large financial burdens on society, because education is an important investment for

the future. Providing meaningful, inclusive education to all learners helps build social skills and

teach meaningful life skills. These opportunities "reduce societal costs of supporting these

individuals later on in life" (UNESCO, 2005 p. 19).

Inclusive settings have benefits beyond the financial. UNESCO, as a supporter of

inclusive settings, noted "an inclusive approach recognizes that while every learner has multiple

needs everyone should benefit from a commonly accepted basic level of quality education"

(UNESCO, 2005, p. 25). As such, inclusive schools provide meaningful academic supports (e.g.,

flexible pacing and grouping, reading and literacy specialists, tutoring) that create a supportive

environment for all learners. These supports not only help students with disabilities, but also

provide much needed differentiation and supports to better challenge and engage typical, gifted,

and talented learners by building a more responsive learning environment (Inclusive Schools

Network, 2015). Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers

(UNESCO, 2005, p. 15), which ensures participation and the ability to enable success. Inclusive education settings can be helpful to all students involved.

As noted previously, the efficacy of truly inclusive educational settings relies on equity in learning and social inclusion for all. Loreman (2007) notes that to facilitate truly inclusive settings, a school must have a culture of caring, kindness, and mutual support and respect. To foster such a school culture, staff must share those values and be willing to construct an inclusive setting. Essentially, the entire school must be committed to supporting and maintaining an inclusive environment. Loreman (2007) adds the following organizational factors which need to be considered to create and maintain and inclusive school environment: innovative scheduling of time and facilities for mobility, physical access, and safety; common planning time (collaboration) between educators for special education teachers and support staff to consider how their skills can enrich the education of all children; heterogeneous groupings to take advantage of mentoring, foster empathy, social skills, and academics; the need for classrooms to share human and other resources; teachers and assistants working in different roles to reach the same ends; and for educators to engage in meaningful professional development.

Berry (2006) also identifies attributes of classroom and school culture that underlie successful inclusive settings. These attributes include valuing student voices, accountability of students to each other, presence of relevant resources, attention to individual differences, and high levels of acceptance and expectation (Berry, 2006). She refers to these settings as "cultures," adding on to Loreman's (2007) ideas that inclusive schools require a culture of acceptance and understanding.

Concerns about inclusive education

Within the educational system, there exist educators who share the values needed to construct inclusive settings. However, some raise concerns that inclusive educational settings "watered down the curriculum" (Lupart, Odishaw, & McDonald, 2006, p. 42). By this, educators allude to a concern that standards will be lowered in order to accommodate the learning of struggling students. Loreman (2007) contends, "creative thinking and intelligent modification and adaptation of curriculum in these instances can overcome many of these issues" (p. 27) and that "perhaps where inclusion has not worked it is because it has been inadequately implemented or supported" (p.45).

As the result of challenges such as inappropriate instructional strategies and materials, large class sizes, teachers' lack of expertise in dealing with students with special needs, curriculum that may not be serving the special needs population, inadequate facilities, and lack of resources (human or otherwise), some have argued that students with special needs are not academically being served adequately in the general education classroom (Lupart, Odishaw, & McDonald, 2006; Ekeh & Oladayo, 2013).

McGhie-Richmond et al, (2013) assert that, "Teachers are central to realizing inclusion" (p. 200). This supports the findings of Lupart, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006), Loreman (2007), and Horne and Timmons (2009) that teacher attitudes play a central role in achieving true inclusion, which in turn impacts all students. Lupart, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006) found that although many teachers support the inclusion of students with special needs in general education classrooms, concerns regarding limitations in resources and professional preparation can limit this support. In a recent study, two thirds of teachers report that they do not have the resources to adequately plan their lessons to address students with disabilities (Klehm, 2014). A review by

McGhie-Richmond and colleagues supported the notion of staff feeling underprepared to deal with such a diverse student population. Teachers "expect the district to support and environment of inclusion and provide resources in order for inclusion to be possible (McGhie-Richmond and colleagues, 2013, p. 219). These resources include professional development, physical resources such as adequate staffing, and physical space. These authors add that younger teachers with fewer years of professional experience were more likely to be positive about inclusion. McGhie-Richmond et al.'s review adds that students with less severe disabilities or with physical disabilities are more accepted by teachers in general education classes than students with more severe disabilities or students who they perceive to be more disruptive in the classroom. These attitudes and beliefs about inclusion, therefore, affect all students. Klehem (2014) looked at the way teachers' beliefs may be affecting the teaching practices and achievement of students with disabilities. These authors found that students perform in the manner that their teachers expect them to perform (Klehem, 2014). The phenomenon of behaving and achieving in ways that confirm the expectations of others is known as the Pygmalion effect (Brehm & Kassin, 1996). Klehem (2014) suggests that teachers' expectations and actions can predict changes in student achievement and behaviour, consequently affecting students' perceptions of inclusion.

Inclusive settings have been criticized as resulting in general education classroom teachers not taking responsibility for students who have disabilities (Bunch & Valeo, 2004). Instead, many general education teachers look to special education teachers to assume functional ownership of those students with disabilities. Inclusive education calls for general education classroom teacher ownership of all students, regardless of disability, although collaboration of planning and program delivery is key (Bunch and Valeo, 2004).

Lupart, Whitley, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006) add that engaging all relevant stakeholders in the change process seems critical in ensuring systematic school change. This supports McGhie-Richmond and colleagues (2013) findings that collaboration was identified as the most "vital support in the educational setting" (p. 217). Collaboration occurred on many different levels including collaboration within the school, collaboration with other professionals, collaboration with families, and within the community. McGhie-Richmond and colleagues add that collaboration "with students themselves [is] also an important component of inclusion" as identified by some teachers (p. 217). These authors identified that an important aspect to collaboration was scheduled planning time, which was of concern to educators.

Regardless of the above concerns, research states that inclusive education benefits students with and without disabilities, both socially and academically.

Outcomes of Inclusion for students with disabilities

From the perspective of students with disabilities, Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, and Barber (2008) convey that the major benefits of inclusive education include equal access to social and academic opportunities.

A study by Fitch (2003) tracked students with disabilities for six years; some of whom were educated in segregated education settings (special needs only classrooms) and some of whom began in a segregated classroom then moved to an inclusive setting. The students with disabilities in segregated classrooms identified with feeling like an outsider and wanted to escape that setting. They reported feeling like they would not be smart enough for regular classrooms. Students in inclusive settings "conducted relatively confident hopeful sense of themselves as legitimate participants in the mainstream school culture" (Fitch, 2003, p. 237). Adding to this, students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms reported feeling like they learned more, made

more friends and had higher levels of self-concept, including self-efficacy and self-esteem (Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008).

A review by Salend and Duhaney (1999) found that placement in inclusion programs resulted in improved educational experiences by students with disabilities. Some of the outcomes these authors looked at were standardized test scores, reading performance, mastery of IEP goals, grades, on task behaviour, and motivation to learn. They found that some studies concluded that students with disabilities educated in inclusive settings interact with others more often, receive and offer increased levels of social support, and develop longer more rich friendships. However, Salend and Duhaney (1999) also noted that these interactions are often assistive in nature and tend to decline as the school year progresses.

Conversely, Koster et al. (2010) reported that students with special needs had fewer interactions with their classmates and more interactions with the teacher. They note that this might be viewed negatively because interactions with the teacher might be at the expense of social interactions with other classmates. They also found that students with special needs had a lower degree to which they were accepted by their classmates when compared to non-disabled students. It would then be expected that students with disabilities would have lower self-perception than their typical peers because of these findings. However, research shows that inclusive settings tend to support students with disabilities who have a more positive sense of self from those in either segregated or traditionalist classrooms (Fitch, 2003).

Students with disabilities educated in inclusive classroom settings have high academic achievement scores, compared to their counterparts educated in non-inclusive settings (Ekeh & Oladayo, 2013). These pupils had higher academic achievement scores in literacy, numeracy, general knowledge, and higher order thinking compared to their counterparts educated in non-

inclusive classrooms (Ekeh & Oladayo; Katz, 2013, 2013). These results align with findings by Cole, Waldron, and Majd (2004) and Dermis, Childs, and Jordan (2008). A study by Signor, LeBlanc, and McDougal (2005) on grade 4 students in New York compared the academic achievement of students with disabilities in self-contained versus inclusive education. Similar student groupings were formed by controlling for age, years in educational placement, significant behavioral problems, and IQ.These authors reported the same findings as above; however, they noted that no differences were found in math achievement between groups. These results appear to indicate that students who are educated in inclusive settings achieve at a rate that is comparable to, if not better than, those who are educated in self-contained settings. These results are strongly substantiating inclusive education systems.

Ekeh and Oladayo (2013) suggested that these results may be due to the fact that special needs pupils in inclusive classroom settings made some academic and affective gain than their peers in non-inclusive classroom settings, this was due to extra attention paid to pupils with special needs by regular teachers and pupils, adequate facilities, improved academic environment and good instructional materials in inclusive schools (p. 148). Salend and Duhaney (1999) report that negative experiences in general education related to the failure of their teachers to adapt instruction to meet their needs and the worry that special adaptations will further stigmatize them in the presence of their peers. These findings suggest that educators are validated in their notion of feeling underprepared to deal with such a diverse student population and perpetuate the need for resources for educators to adequately implement inclusion.

Outcomes of inclusion for students without disabilities and their perspectives

When looking at the impact of inclusive education settings it is important to consider all students involved. One assertion made is that the presence of students with special needs has a

negative effect on the academic growth of students without special needs by detracting from the instructional time that teachers provide to students without special needs (Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007; Ekeh & Oladayo, 2013). This argument hinges on the assumption that effective teachers focus their teaching on those students who will be successful (Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007). It implies that teachers gear their teaching towards a homogenous group of students who are high achieving. Demeris, Childs, and Jordan (2007) found that there is some suggestion that the quality of teaching is increased when teachers are skilled at meeting diverse needs.

However, there exists a body of research that refutes this argument. Researchers have found that the presence of students with special needs does not adversely affect academic achievement of students without disabilities (Demeris, Childs, & Jordan, 2007; Katz, 2013; Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, & Barber, 2008; Sharpe, York, & Knight, 1994). Research has found that students without disabilities educated in inclusive classroom settings had higher academic achievement scores compared to their counterparts educated in a non-inclusive setting (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Ekeh & Oladayo, 2013; Katz, 2013).

Demeris, Childs, and Jordan (2007) added to this research by looking at whether the number of students with special needs in grade three classrooms has an effect on the academic achievement of students without special needs. These results provide evidence to support the previous findings that the academic performance of students with disabilities educated in inclusive settings is not adversely affected by the presence of special needs students. They found that the number of special needs students does not contribute to predicting the achievement of students without disabilities.

Ekeh and Oladayo (2013) compared students educated in inclusive settings and students in non-inclusive classrooms academic achievement internationally in Nigeria. Their findings were comparable to the above findings; the difference in academic achievement was in favour of those in inclusive classrooms. They suggest that inclusive settings increase the emphasis on individual needs of each student in the widely diverse populations of inclusive education, the general education teachers pay attention to all learners needs. They also state the possibility that non-disabled students in inclusive settings are challenged to work harder midst the special needs students, as to remain noticable.

In addition to positive academic outcomes, social outcomes for students without disabilities are also reported in literature. Katz, Porath, Bendu and Epp (2012) looked that the experiences of students in the middle years who have grown up in diverse inclusive classrooms. They have experience learning with students who have disabilities and have demonstrated empathy towards students with disabilities. They were able to articulate the barriers and facilitators to inclusion. The authors confirmed that there is a need for disability awareness and the importance of friendship and belonging. These students even expressed the need for strategies that enable them to successfully include students with disabilities. This is a valuable study as it shows the social impact of lifelong learners in inclusive settings.

Additionally, Katz (2013) reported that students without disabilities educated in an inclusive setting "develop stronger communication and leadership skills, have more positive attitudes towards diversity, and may demonstrate superior reading and math skills to those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities" (p. 156). Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, and Barber (2008) found that students without disabilities reported higher

degrees of friendship and advocacy, as well as more accepting views of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Conversely, Lupart, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006) address the concern expressed that as students with special needs are included in the general education classroom, they may be at increased risk for bullying. This highlights the needs for social acceptance in a truly inclusive setting as it was found that "social inclusion is vital to student development, because social and emotional well-being is directly related to resiliency, citizenship, and mental health" (Wotherspoon, 2002; Zins & Elias, 2006 as cited in Katz, 2013, p. 155).

Katz, Porath, Bendu, and Epp (2012) interviewed middle school students about their perspectives regarding academic and social inclusion of students with disabilities. The authors noted a few trends: some students were impacted by the presence of an educational assistant which stigmatized the student as being different or "not normal;" the students were conflicted -- they emphasized with the student with a visible disabilities' desire for friends but had concerns about including him academically in terms of marks and completing the assigned task on time; students believed that the students with disabilities needed friends not just for social and emotional reasons, but so they could learn; and adults were not holding high enough expectations for the students with disabilities, and that the students with disabilities would benefit from peers who would help them learn. These authors suggest that inclusive education settings have promising social impacts. It appears that growing up expecting diversity, seeing and understanding differences, and understanding the value of contributing to a community had enabled students to being to close the social gap between themselves and children with disabilities.

Bunch and Valeo (2004) also conducted interviews of students in inclusive systems. Many of the themes they noted were similar to Katz, Porath, Bendu, and Epp, and echoed in the research of McDougall, DeWit, King, Miller, and Killip (2004). Some of their findings indicated that routine contact between typical students and peers with disabilities helped to foster friendships. One participant in Bunch and Valeo's study stated, "because she's with us, so we consider her our friend, and she considers us her friends" (p. 66). The authors also reported that in an inclusive system, students felt that because students with disabilities are their friends, they were less inclined to tease or insult those with disabilities.

Some students without disabilities believed that peers with disabilities would 'catch up' to regular class peers as a result of special class experience (Bunch & Valeo, 2004). The authors found that in inclusive schools there was belief as reported by students that the most suitable place for peers with disabilities was the general education classroom. Students in inclusive settings also realized and accepted that they had some responsibility for supporting their peers with disabilities to do well socially and academically (McDougall, DeWit, King, Miller, and Killip, 2004).

This literature suggests support for inclusive systems, according to students without disabilities. These authors conclude that inclusive education fosters tolerance and acceptance of differences and is academically beneficial to students without disabilities. The formation of friendships, social development, and learning are all themes noted but the negative impacts of grades, time pressures, and social stigma of an aide were students' concerns.

Social Belonging and Peer Relationships

Creating interactions between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers is an important aspect of inclusion. However, according to Koster, Pijl, Nakken, and Van Houten

(2010) students with disabilities experience difficulty making friends, particularly with non-

disabled students. Koster and colleagues also note that increased contact with peers with

disabilities does not necessarily mean more social acceptance. These authors found that students

with disabilities have fewer friendships, lower social acceptance, and fewer interactions with

classmates than their non-disabled peers. As a result, one might expect that students with

disabilities experience lower self-perception, which has been supported in the research literature

(Koster, Pijl, Nakken, & Van Houten, 2010).

The impacts of limited social acceptance were also found by Morrison and Burgman

(2009). The researchers point out that being a friend is an important occupational role for all

children, including children with disabilities. However, students with disabilities continue to

"experience barriers to equitable participation" (p. 146). Through interviews and resulting

narratives, a theme of longing for meaningful friendship connections emerged. The research

participants with disabilities had a desire to be valued by their peers and to experience belonging.

Children's "experiences of friendship are shaped by experiences in the classroom and in play (p.

151).

To improve the social outcomes of children with disabilities, there are actions that

educators and peers can take. Hurst, Corning, and Ferrante (2012) had students without

disabilities participate in a disability-simulation program. They found that after the simulation,

these students experienced an increase in their levels of acceptance of students with disabilities.

These findings point to the need for students to understand their peer's disabilities and lived

experiences, as this is an important ingredient for social acceptance. Loreman, McGhie-

Richmond, Lupart, and Barber (2008) suggest a collaborative approach of children with

disabilities, their peers, and educational staff working together to promote inclusion and

friendships in school settings. These authors' study pointed towards collaboration as an important component to inclusion. One aspect that was recommended was scheduled collaboration time. Teachers need allotted time to plan and collaborate with other key players in the students' instructional program. Other additional supports that aid in sound implementation of inclusive systems include technology, opportunities for personal time, and district support (McGhie-Richmond, Lupart, and Barber, 2008). Teachers need time to rejuvenate and plan, and expected the district to support an environment of inclusion through resources such as professional development, physical resources, and adequate staffing.

Calabrese, Patterson, Liu, Goodvin, Hummel and Nance (2008) looked into the results of a program that seeks to increase the levels of social inclusion for students with disabilities called Circle of Friends Program. It aimed to widen the social network of students with disabilities by linking them to a social network of general education students. Through this social experience the researchers found that through training of general education students, there were many positive social impacts. The self-esteem of the students with disabilities increased as they learned to better communicate and become a greater part of the school community and the general education student gained self-confidence and learned to accept differences in people. Parents spoke about how the social training provided a path for their children's integration into school life and thus ending a sense of isolation they felt for their children. General education students believed that as a result of this experience they became more accepting of others and acted with a higher degree of compassion; they saw themselves as taking a meaningful role in the lives of their classmates with disabilities.

Impact of Teacher Language and Attitudes

Negative teacher attitudes towards inclusion can have many sources and causes. Lupart, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006) suggest that with the recent shift toward inclusive practices, teachers may become confused and overwhelmed about their changing roles and responsibilities. "Some classroom teachers believe that students with disabilities included in the classroom detract from the teacher's time with other students, and consequently are less effective in teaching their non-disabled students" (McGhie-Richmond, et al, 2008, p. 202). Loreman (2007) adds that negative attitudes towards inclusive education have been correlated with low expectations for the achievement of children with disabilities, which in turn has a negative impact on student performance. Klehm (2014) found that some teachers have low expectations for students with disabilities in high stakes testing. Teacher's attitudes and expectations may be unintentionally passed on to the student causing a self-fulfilling prophecy (Klehm, 2014). If teachers are expecting students with disabilities to only be able to achieve a certain level, it likely will affect the education of those students.

Conversely, Loreman (2007) argues that when teachers want to involve all learners, they generally tend to devise activities that support this goal. Teachers should work with students to foster friendships and positive relationships between all children in the classroom because "mutual support and respect between students regardless of perceived levels of status or ability is key" (Loreman, 2007, p. 28). Lupart, Odishaw, and McDonald (2006) conclude that positive attitudes about inclusion are also central to the school's inclusive climate, which ultimately benefits all learners. Given this, it is important for teachers to hold positive attitude towards children with disabilities and inclusive education. It is also important that teachers arm students with the tools to carry out inclusive education systems.

Teacher-student interactions have the potential to affect students on many levels, including achievement, motivation, and adjustment to school (den Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2005; Pianta, 1999; van den Oord & Van Rossem, 2002 as cited by Smart, 2014). Considering the above concerns for negative teacher attitudes and expectations, Smart's (2014) findings could be applied to inclusive education. Smart found an interaction between teachers' interpersonal behaviour and motivation. Teachers who demonstrated poor interpersonal behaviours had an effect on student motivation. Smart also found a correlation between value for learning and teacher's leadership and friendly/helpful actions. Students also perceived an impatient teacher as one who is unwilling to listen to students. While patient teachers were viewed as empathetic, impatient teachers were viewed as unwilling to see their side of issues and unwilling to listen to students' viewpoints. Patience, easiness to anger, and helpfulness were themes that Smart found to affect student motivation and willingness to learn. Smart adds that teacher competences and attitudes affect student attitudes. It is important to understand teacher's feelings towards students with disabilities and inclusion in their classroom, as students appear to receive clear messages regarding their expected performance within the classroom (Klehm, 2014).

Summary

The goal of this review was to provide a summary of research outcomes related to inclusive education and the concerns surrounding these settings, the outcomes of inclusive settings for both students with and without disabilities, research related to social belonging and peer relationships, and the impact of teacher language and actions on the perspectives of students pertaining to inclusive setting.

Based on the review, inclusion has systematic and financial benefits. Inclusion negates the need for some specialized programs in our schools and reduces the financial burdens on society by providing meaningful education that helps build social skills and teach life skills. These systems not only help students with disabilities, but also provide much needed differentiation and supports to better challenge and engage typical, gifted, and talented learners by building a more responsive learning environment (Inclusive Schools Network, 2015). The concerns regarding inclusive systems include the concerns regarding limitation to resources, professional development/preparation, adequate staffing, physical space, the need for collaboration among professionals, training of educational assistants, teachers' notions that inclusive settings add to the demands of the job, detract from instructional time for all students, and add an increased risk of bullying and segregation for students with disabilities.

Despite the concerns, research has identified significant advantages of inclusive settings. Teachers generally hold positive attitudes towards inclusion and thus want to involve all learners. Educators are devising activities to support this goal and positive social and academic impacts for students being educated in inclusive settings. Students with disabilities gain equal access to social and academic experiences. They feel more self-confident, develop more friendships, and academically achieve higher than their counterparts in segregated settings. Students without disabilities are not affected academically by the presence of peers with disabilities and experience more tolerance and acceptance of differences.

The literature also suggests that social experiences are vital to student development, and all students require the need to make friends and be accepted. Teachers' language and attitudes are connected to those outcomes as they are often passed down to their students. It is thus

important to note the concerns that teachers have about inclusive education because teacher

competences and attitudes may affect student attitudes.

The above understandings are significantly related to this project in regards to giving

students who do not have disabilities the strategies and tools to facilitate socially inclusive

settings. Based on the literature review, it is clear inclusive education systems are beneficial to

all stakeholders. The literature also suggests that general education students need the resources to

actively participate in the social inclusion of their peers with disabilities, meaning non-disabled

students need to have the knowledge and tools to independently create these settings.

Previous research has focused on what students' perspectives of inclusive education are

and the consequences of these settings. As the literature suggests, it is important to provide

students without disabilities the strategies and skills for working collaboratively with student

with disabilities (Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012). Through this project, students without

disabilities will be given strategies to help create the social acceptance required to facilitate true

inclusion. This will provide the opportunity to support all students to be socially successful in the

school community.

CHAPTER 3

Social Inclusion Curricular Guide

As schools become increasingly diverse and complex, educators can improve the learning experiences of all students by giving students the tools to support social inclusion of their peers who have disabilities. This curricular guide contains lessons to equip students to take on that role. Today's students know no other education settings other than inclusive settings. Research says that these settings are beneficial, although creating authentic inclusive settings is challenging. Much of the work creating authentic inclusive settings is done by the educators within a school (especially academically), children need to be given the resources to prepare them to support the social inclusion of all their peers. The purpose of this project is to give educators a resource to provide students with tools and strategies to support social inclusion of students with disabilities.

In this chapter, I will describe the curricular guide along with a summary of conclusions and findings through this culminating experience, recommendations and further implications, and potential for future policy and practice.

Conclusion and Findings

Creating a curricular guide to support social inclusion was the final product of my culminating experience. Through the process of examining research related to inclusion, inclusive settings, and social inclusion, a few conclusions may be drawn.

First, inclusion has many overarching benefits, which include benefits to the entire education system. Inclusion is rooted in social justice, and is achieved with equal access to social and academic opportunities. Inclusive systems are said to be an important investment for the future as they decrease the financial burdens on society of supporting those students later in life.

Providing meaningful, inclusive education to all learners help build social skills and teach meaningful life experiences. The positive social benefits inclusive settings for students both with and without disabilities include empathy, understanding, increased levels of friendship, and leadership. Inclusive schools also provide meaningful academic supports that create a supportive environment for all students. These supports ensure participation and the ability to enable success.

Secondly, today's public school classrooms contain students who have been immersed in inclusive settings. These students only know this practice. As the British Columbia Ministry of Education mandates inclusion, this practice is something we need to prepare students for. Students need tools and strategies to be able to be active participants in their inclusive school communities.

Most importantly, supporting inclusion means supporting children to include others. It includes creating an environment of caring, kindness, and mutual support and respect. To foster such a school culture, staff must share those values and be willing to construct an inclusive setting. School cultures that have students who expect diversity, see and recognize differences, and understand the value of contributing to a community has enabled those students to begin to close the social gap between themselves and children with disabilities.

Recommendations and Future Implications

Supporting social inclusion of all children is important. This curricular guide provides an opportunity for teachers to support social inclusion in the classroom. Many of these lesson have elements of students completing research, independent reading, and then using the new information in own words. Taking that complexity into account, it is recommended to use these lessons with students in grade 4 and older. Beyond formally implementing these lessons,

teachers can encourage others to socially accept other students by creating a culture of caring, empathy, understanding, and inclusiveness.

Social Inclusion Curricular Guide

The curricular guide contains 4 lessons: 1) Understanding others (differences and similarities), 2) Disability awareness, 3) Tips for including others, and 4) Adapting games/activities. Within the package, these lessons contain a rationale, a list of materials required, and the process to complete these lessons.

The first lesson of this curricular guide helps students understand that everyone, despite ability or disability, is just a child who wants to be accepted and have lasting friendships. The objective of this lesson is for students to understand that everyone has traits that make them unique and different while also having similarities or common experiences that connect them.

In this lesson students draw portraits of themselves and write traits, characteristics, or facts about themselves around their drawing. Students then use a Venn diagram to compare what makes them unique and what is in common between them. It is expected that ideas other than what they have written down will come up in conversation. It is this conversation that gives this lesson value. Ideally, students compare with more than one classmate, especially classmates from outside of their social circle. It is important that students with special needs, even significant ones, are included in this lesson as it is immensely valuable for their classmates to exprience the activity with them. These students with special needs may need help from their aide, communication tools, or any other adaptations for them to be successful.

It is also in this lesson that the expectation for students to use person first language is established. This means rather than saying "autistic student" or "he is autistic" use "student with autism". Setting the expectation for students to use person first language is important because it

teaches them to see the person first, and their disability as just one of their traits or characteristics. This idea is modeled for students by showing a model of a example of the drawing by a student with a disability (not a current student, but a past one or an imaginary student), stating that their disability is just one of the many traits that makes up that person.

The second lesson in this package is a mini-series of lessons adapted from Disability Awareness Activity Packet by Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus. This lesson builds on students' awareness that students who have disabilities are just kids who want the same treatment as others by giving them knowledge about some different disabilities. Research shows that if students who do not have disabilities understand disabilities that their classmates have then they are likely to be more accepting of them. Hurst, Corning, and Ferrante (2012) found students without disabilities who participated in a disability-simulation program experienced an increase in their levels of acceptance of students with disabilities. These findings point to the need for students to understand their peer's disabilities and lived experiences, as this is an important ingredient for social acceptance. The objective of this lesson is to build empathy and understanding to encourage acceptance.

In this lesson students are explicitly told that they have a role in inclusive settings. Their role is to be friends with their classmates as that is something adults are not able to do. In order to do so students must know about different disabilities and what people who have those disabilities may experience. Using the Disability Awareness Activity Packet, students research and create a presentation for their classmates based on a disability of their choice. Students may also demonstrate or lead their chosen simulation activity to their peers. Students are encouraged to ask questions. If they are unable to answer then it is a good ideas to record and present answers at a different date.

The third lesson gives students strategies and resources to include their classmates who have disabilities. Katz, Porath, Bendu and Epp (2012) looked that the experiences of students in the middle years who have grown up in diverse inclusive classrooms. The authors confirmed that there is a need for disability awareness and the importance of friendship and belonging. These students expressed the need for strategies that enable them to successfully include students with disabilities. The purpose of this lesson is to provide students with tips for interacting with students with disabilities in ways that supports their social inclusion.

This activity starts off by watching a video containing tips to help "Katie" with disability awareness. Students will see the expected format for sharing later one. Then students will read different resources about social acceptance and inclusion. These resources vary from internet sites, story books, posters, and pamphlets. They will then create posters, or share their findings in a method of their choice, by encouraging others to be socially accepting. The intention is to provide students with some concrete strategies and resources to work with the students in their schools.

The final lesson in this curricular guide has students applying their new knowledge by adapting games and activities for others who have disabilities. Once modeled using a fake student from a picture, students are given an Activity Planning sheet that guides them through process of planning an activity for a student who has a disability. Students may choose to model this activity off of a disability of a student in their school or they may use their knowledge of a different disability to plan.

Students start off thinking about what they already know about their chosen student's disability. They then think about the strengths and challenges for their classmate and list any help strategies or tips. Students then think about materials, location, set up, and how to play together.

Going through this process help students think about differentiating the activity based on ways

they can social include their classmate. This activity is designed for students to apply their

knowledge from the previous activities into something purposeful for them. Giving students the

opportunity to think about simple ways to change games that allow for all their classmates to be

included.

Potential for Future Policy and Practice

It appears that growing up expecting diversity, seeing and understanding differences, and

understanding the value of participating in a community has enabled students to close the social

gap between themselves and children with disabilities. Inclusive education settings have allowed

students of all abilities to take on various roles in their communities.

Future practice may include curricular connections. Modern schools teach more than just

academic subjects- they teach social emotional health, resilience, responsibility and citizenship.

Allowing teachers to connect social acceptance lessons to curricular goals may encourage more

teachers to make time for lesson of this nature.

Friendship clubs or programs at schools may also be able to use these tools to promote

social inclusion. Children with disabilities have a desire to be valued by their peers and

experience belonging, though they may experience barriers to participation. Being a friend is an

important occupational role for all children, so it is important to break down those barriers and

give them strategies to be a good friend. Programs that seek to increase the levels of social

inclusion for students with disabilities, such as Circle of Friends or Club G aim to widen the

social network of students with disabilities by linking them to a social network of general

education students. This social experience has many positive social impacts. The self esteem of

students with disabilities increase as they learned to better communicate and become a greater

part of the school community and the general education student gained self-confidence and learned to accept differences in people. Social training provides a path for children's integration into school life and thus ending a sense of isolation. General education students become more accepting of others and acted with a higher degree of compassion; they see themselves as taking a meaningful role in the lives of their classmates with disabilities.

CHAPTER 4

Reflection

I began thinking about supporting social inclusion for students during my final practicum where I taught a student with autism in a school setting for the first time. I had worked with students with disabilities within therapy settings prior to this experience, but that was really my first experience in an inclusive setting. This student's peers acknowledged that he was part of their class and were accepting of his differences. I asked my mentor teacher how she approached this with the students and her reply stated that they had learned those skills from being classmates with him since kindergarten. It was then that I realized that although these wonderful students accepted and acknowledged him, they did not have the skills to include him in social play.

Flash forward to my current position as a Learning Support Teacher in an elementary school. Everyday I see wonderful, accepting students acknowledge their classmates with disabilities. I see them notice their differences and accept that they may need different tools for learning. I see the students with disabilities I work with say hi to other kids in the hall but I rarely see social inclusion beyond a happy hello back. Through the process of this project, I realize that non-disabled students need explicit teaching in regards to social inclusion. Most children by nature (and potentially nurture through living in inclusive settings) are accepting of disability but they need skills and strategies to support the inclusion of their classmates who have disabilities. Non-disabled peers have the unique power to take on the role of socially including students who have disabilities. Educators can then take the role of giving those students the tools to take on that role. This project hopes to accomplish this in an interesting way that students would be willing to engage with.

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APPENDIX

Social Inclusion of Students with Disabilities Curricular Guide

Introduction

This curricular guide is a resource to support typical peers with social inclusion strategies for their classmates who have disabilities. It provides lessons with practical ideas for students to contribute to their inclusive school community. This curricular guide contains a series of lessons that help students understand differences, increase their knowledge about disabilities, gain empathy by simulating what students with disabilities may experience, provide tips for including all classmates, and provide some strategies for adapting games and/or activities.

The lessons are aimed for grade 4-7 aged students but can easily be adapted for other grades. The lessons are as follows:
- Lesson 1- understanding others (differences and similarities)
- Lesson 2- disability awareness
- Lesson 3- tips for including others
- Lesson 4- adapting games/activities

<u>Lesson 1</u>- Understanding Others

Rationale

This lesson encourages students to see similarities and differences between all classmates. As students begin to understand everyone has traits in common and traits that uniquely belong to themselves, they will begin to understand that children, even children with disabilities, are just children who want to be treated as equals.

Materials

Venn Diagram, pencils, pencil crayons, plain paper

Process

- Partner students and give each student a plain piece of paper.
- Have students draw themselves.
- Around their pictures, students will write words that describe them- it can be physical characteristics, likes or dislikes, special skills or talents, or any other traits (owns a dog, has an older brother, etc.).
- Once drawings are complete, pairs are to fill out the Venn Diagram to compare what makes them unique and special and what they have in common.
- Extension- Group students in manageable groups, about 7-10. Rotate speed dating style and compare likes and interests with a larger sample of students.
- Discuss that each pair had things in common and some things that make each person uniquely different, but no matter what everyone is classmates and friends.
- Ask how students with disabilities may feel about their differences. How may they feel about their similarities?
- Through out the remainder of the lessons have students to use person first language. For example, rather than saying "autistic student" or "he is autistic" use "student with autism". Explain that we use person first language because we should always see the person first. Students with autism are students, just like you, but they have a disability. Further highlight this point by showing a model of a example of the drawing by a student with a disability (not a current student, but a past one or an

imaginary student), stating that their disability is just one of the many traits that makes up that person.

Adaptations

All students, even students with significant disabilities should participate in this lesson. They may need EA assistance, visual aids, or a scribe to communicate their traits, interests, and characteristics.

Lesson adapted from:
http://www.brighthubeducation.com/lesson-plans-grades-1-2/12936-building-awareness-of-disabilities/
January 21, 2017

<u>Lesson 2</u>- Disability Awareness

Rationale

Research shows that if non-disabled peers understand disabilities that their classmates have then they are likely to be more accepting of them. In this mini-series of lessons students will participate in simulations of various disabilities then engage in discussions. The purpose of these lessons are to build empathy and understanding to encourage acceptance.

Materials

Disability Awareness Activity Packet by Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus, access to computers/powerpoint

Process

- Without naming names, have students talk about what they already known about disabilities. Make generalized list on chart paper.
- Attached to the Disability Awareness Activity Packet by Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus, are a list of videos about disability. Watch an age appropriate video to activate student knowledge. Add to chart paper list.
- Explain that as peers, students have a unique job- to be friends to kids their own age. It's not something that adults can do for them. Because of that special job it is important to know about different disabilities and how they might make others feel in order to understand and include kids with those disabilities.
- Explain that kids may have different types of disabilities and that in groups they will explore a few of these different types of disabilities.
- Place students in groups of about 5.
- Have students choose from, autism, communication disorders, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and vision impairments.
- Using the Disability Awareness Activity Packet by Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus, have students create a presentation for their peers (powerpoint, student led lesson etc) or demonstrate/run their chosen simulation. The objective of this presentation is to teach their peers about their disability.

- Have students present their simulation activity to their classmates.
- Encourage students to ask questions: record questions and present answers at a later date.

Activity adapted from:
http://www.dvusd.org/cms/lib011/AZ01901092/Centricity/Domain/1318/Disability%20Awareness%20Packet%202.pdf

<u>Lesson 3</u>- Including Everyone

Rationale
Students need strategies and resources to include their classmates who have disabilities. This lesson provides students with tips for interacting with students with disabilities. Students will read different resources about social acceptance and inclusion. They will then create posters sharing their knowledge and encouraging others to be socially accepting (or may choose to share in another form).

Materials
Computer access, projector, poster paper, pencils and pencil crayons for poster making, resources listed below

Process
- Watch the Youtube video "Katie's Disability Awareness Video"
- Explain that as kids they have a job that no teacher could ever do: be friends with other kids their age. It is important that they are able to include all kids, despite ability or disability.
- Tell students that just like in the video, they are going to be creating a list of tips or advice of how to friends with someone with a disability.
- Play Musical Reading Chairs
    - Have students sit in chairs in a large circle
    - Each student will start with a resource (duplicates are okay)
    - Play instrumental music, ocean sounds, etc. while students read (or ring a bell when it is time to switch)
    - After a few minutes turn off the music and have students get up and go to another chair
    - Repeat as many times as necessary
- After reviewing resources, in groups, have students create a poster sharing ways to be a friend to someone with a disability.

Resources

Katie's Disability Awareness Video:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0fs9650Vz8

Resources for Musical Reading Chairs:
- http://www.canucksautism.ca/Assets/Canucks+Austism+Network+Digital+Assets/WCBF/What+is+Autism+resource.pdf
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U_qgJ8oZzV85tSD-gM4C_opfwePKZchtzA5zWltcZhU/edit?usp=sharing
- Friends 2 friends poster
- The following is a book list from https://www.teachervision.com/learning-disabilities-month/childrens-books-about-disabilities?page=2

Title: Andy Finds a Turtle   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1988
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-02-6
Disability: Physical Disabilities
Story Profile: Andy enjoys physical therapy most of the time, but sometimes he doesn't. One day he's told he acts like a turtle with his legs and arms drawn in tight - but Andy doesn't know what a turtle is, so he goes in search of one. In this search he protects his baby sister from a strange invader and discovers something important about himself.

Title: Andy Opens Wide   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1990
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-06-9
Disability: Cerebral Palsy
Story Profile: Andy, a young boy with cerebral palsy, is frustrated by his inability to open his mouth wide enough for his mother to feed him easily.

Title: Anna Joins In   **Author:** Katrin Arnold
Publisher: Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37202
ISBN #: ISBN-0-687-01530-8
Disability: Cystic Fibrosis
Story Profile: Anna is a young girl who has a difficult pattern to her days because she has cystic fibrosis.

Title: A Smile from Andy   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1989
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-04-2
Disability: Cerebral Palsy
Story Profile: Andy, who has cerebral palsy, is very shy. One day he meets a girl who helps him discover something that he can do to reach out to others in his own special way.

Title: Buddy's Shadow   **Author:** Shirley Becker
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1991
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-08-05
Disability: Down syndrome
Story Profile: Buddy, a five-year-old boy with Down syndrome, purchases a puppy.

Title: Can't You Be Still?   **Author:** Sarah Yates
Publisher: Gima B. Publishing Inc., Box #713-740 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 0Y1; 1992
ISBN #: ISBN-0-9696477-0-0
Disability: Cerebral Palsy
Story Profile: Ann, who has cerebral palsy, attends school for the first time.

Title: Charlsie's Chuckle   **Author:** Clara Widess Berkus
Publisher: Woodbine House, 5615 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852; 1992
ISBN #: ISBN-0-933149-50-6
Disability: Down syndrome
Story Profile: Charlsie, a seven-year-old boy with Down syndrome, has an infectious laugh and enjoys bicycling around his neighborhood. On one such excursion he inadvertently wanders into a disputatious city council meeting and brings humor and harmony to the argumentative adults.

Title: Cookie   **Author:** Linda Kneeland
Publisher: Jason and Nordic, Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1989
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-50
Disability: Down Syndrome
Story Profile: Molly, a four-year-old girl with Down syndrome, has difficulty talking. Her frustration with communication difficulties is relieved when someone comes to teach her sign language.

Title: Fair and Square   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1992
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-10-7 hardback; ISBN-0-944727-09-3 paperback
Disability: Physical Disabilities
Story Profile: Kevin is confined to a wheelchair and has limited motor skills. A therapist introduces him to a computer game he can play and win, and shows him how to adapt other games for his use.

Title: How About a Hug   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1987
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-01-8
Disability: Down Syndrome
Story Profile: A young girl with Down syndrome includes the details of a typical day in her life. While her daily activities require a degree of concentration and don't go perfectly smoothly, she is surrounded by helpful, supportive, and affectionate friends, family, and teachers, all of whom she agrees to hug when they offer.

Title: I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Child's Book about Understanding and Celebrating Each Other   **Author:** Cindy Gainer
Publisher: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 400 First Avenue North, Suite 616, Minneapolis, MN 55401-1724; 1998
ISBN #: ISBN-1-57542-039-2
Disability: General Disabilities
Story Profile: Children interact with people who are different from themselves; share, take turns, work and play together; discover and develop traits and skills that make them unique; and explore the many ways in which they are like and unlike others.

Title: Joey and Sam   **Author:** Illana Katz and Edward Ritvo
Publisher: Real Life Story Books; 1993
ISBN #: ISBN-1-882388-00-3
Disability: Autism
Story Profile: Sam is five and has autism, and Joey is his six-year-old brother. They describe an ordinary day at home and at school, showing some of the ways they are different and alike.

Title: Little Tree: A Story for Children with Serious Medical Problems   **Author:** Joyce C. Mills, Ph.D.
Publisher: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 19 Union Sq. West, New York, NY 10003; 1992
ISBN #: ISBN-0-94534-52-5 hardback; ISBN-0-945354-51-7 paperback
Disability: Chronic Illness
Story Profile: A small tree that loses some branches in a storm is used to illustrate the questions and feelings children may experience during and after medical problems.

Title: Naomi Knows It's Springtime   **Author:** Virginia L. Kroll
Publisher: Boyds Mills Press Inc., 910 Church St., Honesdale, PA 18431; 1987
ISBN #: ISBN-1-56397-006-0
Disability: Blindness
Story Profile: Naomi tells us of the signs of spring through the mind of the blind.

Title: Patrick and Ima Lou   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1994
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-03-4
Disability: Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida
Story Profile: Three-year-old Patrick has cerebral palsy. He is having a hard time managing his new walker, but with the help of a new friend, Ima Lou, who is six and has spina bifida, they both discover something very important about each other.

Title: Sarah's Surprise   **Author:** Nan Holcomb
Publisher: Jason and Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1990
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-07-7
Disability: Articulation Impairments
Story Profile: Six-year-old Sarah, who is unable to talk, has used a picture board to communicate. She is now ready for an augmentative communication device. With the help of her speech therapist she gives everyone a surprise at her mother's birthday party.

Title: See You Tomorrow, Charles **Author:** Miriam Cohen
Publisher: Greenwillow
ISBN #: ISBN-0-688-01804-1
Disability: Blindness
Story Profile: Charles is a first grader who is adjusting to school as a blind student.

Title: Shelley: The Hyperactive Turtle **Author:** Deborah M. Moss
Publisher: Woodbine House, 5615 Fisher's Lane, Rockville, MD 20852; 1988
ISBN #: ISBN-0-933149-31-X
Disability: Hyperactivity
Story Profile: Shelley is a young hyperactive turtle who faces difficulties due to his inability to sit still and his frequent behavior problems, which lead to problems at school and on the bus, at home, and with friends, eventually leading to a poor self-image and depression. After a visit to a neurologist, he no longer thinks of himself as a bad turtle and his condition gradually improves.

Title: The Bob (Butterbean) Love Story   **Author:** Terry Page and Bob Love
Publisher: Boo Books, Inc., PO Box 201128, Chicago, Illinois 60620-1128; 1995
ISBN #: ISBN-1-887864-40-7
Disability: Speech Impairments
Story Profile: Bob's autobiography tells his story: a famous basketball player with a speech impediment.

Title: The Night Search **Author:** Kate Chamberlin
Publisher: Richard S. McPhee, Jason & Nordic, Pubs., PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1997
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-31-X
Disability: Blindness
Story Profile: Heather, who is blind, resists using her white cane until her puppy wanders off.

Title: There's a Blue Square on My Brother's School Bus   **Author:** Sally Craymer
Publisher: The Wishing Room, Inc., PO Box 58, Studley, VA 23162
ISBN #: ISBN-0-931563-12-7
Disability: Disabilities
Story Profile: This book discusses various types of disabilities. An emphasis is placed on what children with disabilities are able to do and ways in which they can participate in mainstream student life.

Title: Thumbs Up, Rico! **Author:** Maria Testa
Publisher: Albert Whitman & Co., 6340 Oakton Street, Morton Grove, IL 60053-2723; 1990
ISBN #: ISBN- 0-8075-7906-8
Disability: Down Syndrome
Story Profile: Rico is a boy with Down syndrome who loves basketball. The story describes his relationship with a neighborhood boy named Caesar, his older sister Nina, and his art class.

Title: We Can Do It!   **Author:** Laura Dwight
Publisher: Checkerboard Press, Inc., 30 Vesey St., New York, NY 10007; 1992
ISBN #: ISBN-1-56288-301-1
Disability: Disabilities
Story Profile: The daily activities of five children who each have either cerebral palsy, blindness, spina bifida, or Down syndrome. Color photographs show the children engaging in their favorite pastimes at home and at school, with family members and with peers.

Title: We'll Paint the Octopus Red   **Author:** Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen
Publisher: Woodbine House, Inc., 6510 Bells Mill Road, Bethesda, MD 20817; 1998
ISBN #: ISBN-1-890627-06-2
Disability: Down Syndrome
Story Profile: Ima is a little girl who has a new baby brother with Down syndrome.

Title: When I Grow Up
Author: Candri Hodges
Publisher: Jason & Nordic Publishers, PO Box 441, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; 1995
ISBN #: ISBN-0-944727-26-3
Disability: Deafness
Story Profile: Jimmy is a deaf youth who takes a field trip and encounters various careers of deaf individuals.

<u>Lesson 4</u>- Adapting Games and Activities

Rationale
To support the social inclusion of students with disabilities, their peers will be given strategies and tools in order to support their social inclusion. This lesson is designed to give students practice and tools to adapt games or activities to their classmate's needs. They will use their previous knowledge about disability and their case student to adapt a game to allow for equal access.

Materials
Adapted lesson plan worksheet, any equipment required for the desired activity.

Process
- Show a picture of a child with a disability playing with peers. As a class, using the adapted lesson plan template, make a profile for this student. Generate a list of what that child would be able to do and things that may be difficult for that child. Create an activity that classmates could do with that child to make them feel valued and included.
- Tell students that they will be creating a game or activity for an imaginary peer with a special need. For example, if their imaginary peer likes building they may choose to create an activity using Lego, if their classmate likes running outside they may choose to create a tag activity.
- Provide students with an adapted lesson plan template to aid in creating this activity (see page 57).
- Share ideas when complete.

<u>Resources:</u>

http://adayinourshoes.com/resources-to-teach-kids-about-disabilities-awareness-and-inclusion/

Name:

Activity Planning

Activity:_____

Disability:
What I know about this disability
(ex- vision impairment means my friend can not see very well)

Strengths of classmate	Challenges for classmate
(ex- is good at building Lego)	(ex- does not like noisy places)

Helpful Tips for playing with my classmate
(ex- use pictures to explain what is happening next)

Materials needed:_____

_____

Where my activity will take place: _____

_____

Set up: (ex- place a small amount of Lego on table, get chairs set up)

Playing: (Step by step, what are you doing together?)