Project Inclusion | Projet sur l'inclusion

Educator modules on disability, accessibility, and inclusion

Module 2 Record

Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Module 2 Record: Promoting inclusion

Learning outcomes

1. Compare and contrast potential ways to support social inclusion and friendships that are relevant to students' class or school setting.
2. Identify the role that adults play in creating opportunities and fostering social inclusion and barrier-free participation of students, colleagues, parents and families, and community members, in all aspects of school life.
3. Know where to locate resources related to this module and choose resources to engage and implement in your class or school setting.

Key message 1: Barrier-free interactions are key to promoting social inclusion and full participation in all aspects of school life, including with students, families, colleagues, parents, and community members.

An inclusive culture

"An inclusive culture is based on the philosophy that the whole school shares in the responsibility for inclusion.

A real culture of inclusion cannot be brought about unless everyone embraces it."

(Community Living Ontario's Institute, n.d.)

Lived experience 1: Ingrid

Lived experience: Ingrid	Comments:
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Lived experience 2: Ingrid

Lived experience: Ingrid	Comments:
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Universal design for learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is intended to ensure that teaching is tailored to draw on the strengths and meet the needs of all students. The "universal" in UDL does not imply that there is one optimal solution for everyone; rather, it reflects awareness of the unique nature of each learner and the need to accommodate differences, creating learning experiences that suit individual learners and maximize their ability to progress.

[Learning for all: A guide to effective assessment and instructions for all students, kindergarten to grade 12](#)

What does it mean to be "barrier free"?

- An environment that, by design, is a space accessible to and usable by all persons.
- Barrier-free design promotes integration and independence through design that is safe, functional, and dignified for everyone.
- Barrier-free environments benefit everyone, including students with disabilities, peers, colleagues, families, and the wider school community.
- Actively contributing to barrier-free interactions is an ongoing effort.

Examples of guiding frameworks: Trauma-informed practices

The basic principles of trauma-informed practices include:

- trauma awareness
- emphasis on safety and trustworthiness
- opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection
- strength building and skill building
- recognition of broader systemic inequities as experiences of trauma and violence (Canadian Public Health Association, 2019)

Promoting trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive school approaches positively impacts all students, regardless of trauma history, and children and youth with disabilities are particularly likely to benefit. (Szarkowski & Fogler, 2020)

Examples of guiding frameworks: Culturally responsive and anti-oppressive practices in schools

- An anti-oppressive framework involves the way we understand how systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and ableism can result in individual discriminatory actions and structural/systemic inequalities. (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2021)
- Being anti-oppressive includes becoming more conscious of the way we think, the unearned privileges we carry, the ways our social locations impact us and our interactions with others, and how our experiences inform our perceptions and ideologies.
- Anti-oppressive practices aim to recognize and dismantle interpersonal as well as systemic and institutional barriers.

Examples of guiding frameworks: Valuing neurodiversity

- Neurodiversity describes the idea that neurological differences like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia are natural human variations that offer many strengths and benefits.
- The neurodiversity movement values human differences, emphasizes the strengths associated with each unique neurological design, and demonstrates how groups and teams that include neurodiverse individuals are well-positioned to enhance problem solving in a complex world.

- Neurodiversity means focusing primarily on strengths, talents, abilities, and interests, rather than on deficits. (Godden, 2017; Lewis & Norwich, 2004; Rentenbach & Prislovsky, 2016; Rentenbach et al., 2017)

What barrier-free interactions look like in schools and classrooms

1. Attitudinal barriers
2. Architectural and structural barriers
3. Technological barriers
4. Information and communication barriers
5. Barriers related to sensory disabilities, sensory processing, or cognitive differences
6. Barriers related to family engagement
7. Organizational and systematic barriers

1. Attitudinal barriers

Take a few minutes to explore potential barriers found in school communities and review practical strategies and resources that may help promote barrier-free interactions. It may be helpful to reflect on your own school or classroom.

Barrier-area recommendations, attitudes, behaviours
How we move forward: Practicing 3 inclusive anti-racist mindsets for reopening schools
The TeachAble project
ETFO body image project

2. Architectural and structural barriers

Where possible, consider:
- Are doors, passageways, and ramps accessible to all possible users?
- Are accessible toilets, grab rails, and handrails available?
- Are options available for all students within recreational areas?
- Door handles—could door handle levers be used instead of knobs?
- Arrange desks and furniture so that students with physical disabilities can move around freely.
- Talk to students with disabilities about their preferences in terms of class configuration. Remember that as students mature and develop, so too will their awareness of their needs and preferences for participation. Check in regularly.

AODA requirements for educational institutions

3. Technological barriers

- When a student requires adaptive or assistive technology, make sure the teacher and other adults in the school understand how to use it. Integrate technology as part of everyday teaching practice.
- Ensure that accessibility features (e.g., screen readers, voice recognition tools) are enabled on any digital equipment.
- Ensure that captions are included on all video content (e.g., recorded webinars, YouTube videos).
- Ensure that platforms used with families are mobile-friendly and usable across operating systems.
- Use content that can be downloaded to be used in an offline mode when the internet is not available.

4. Information and communication barriers

- Provide information in accessible, alternative formats including braille, large print, accessible digital files, and audio or text transcripts of visual or audio information.
- Make sure information delivered by phone is also made available in alternative ways such as by email or text.
- Use captioning and described content when using film or other audiovisual resources for persons with visual or hearing impairments.

Information and communications standards module
Resource services for deaf and hard of hearing

5. Barriers related to sensory disabilities, sensory processing, or cognitive differences

- Use visually and auditorily accessible design.
- Turn off any noisy machinery, such as projectors, while they are not in use.
- Muffle the sound of chairs on tiled flooring using coverings (e.g., tennis balls); cover lights to soften fluorescent lights to help create a quieter learning environment.
- Use carpeting and tiled ceilings, which can minimize intrusive ambient noise.
- Include a visual announcement system that presents information in English/French print and ASL/LSQ, which can compensate for a multitude of safety issues.

Classroom accessibility for students who are deaf and hard of hearing
Deaf and hard of hearing exceptionality
Blind and low vision
Accessibility at the CNIB
Classroom accommodations for sensory processing issues
How sensory processing issues affect kids in school
Creating a calming environment
Sensory strategies for teens and adults

6. Barriers related to family engagement

- Work to understand social and historical contexts of families and communities.
- Use strengths-based, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and anti-oppressive approaches when engaging with families.
- Consider that many family and school community members may have disabilities and find ways to increase access and participation.
- Ensure that school events are financially accessible and culturally responsive.

Inclusive school culture
Bringing marginalized parents and caregivers into their children's schooling
Engaging Indigenous families and community with Ontario's schools
Encouraging parent involvement in schools
Parent engagement helps students fulfill their potential
Multi-lingual tip sheets for parents
Programs and resources for newcomer student success

7. Organizational and systematic barriers

● Get to know your school's Accessibility Plan.
● If you are involved in designing or developing new or revised facilities, services, policies, processes, courses, or curricula, ensure that these are designed inclusively from a barrier-free lens.
● Create an inclusion checklist to use when organizing school events. Include questions that review barriers to accessibility and prompt reflection on who may not be able to participate fully.

How to create an accessibility plan and policy
Section 5: Organizational barriers
Understanding Ontario's education equity action plan: Fact sheet for parents
OFIFC Response to the development of an accessibility standard for education,
Plan an accessible meeting

Reflection/Discussion

What examples in this section

● Resonated with you and your school or classroom?
● Raised your curiosity about…?
● Made you consider:
- other related resources to use or share with colleagues?
- how barrier-free interactions set the stage for social inclusion in your classroom or school?

Write your comments below:

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Key message 2: Social inclusion is an important part of development for all students, especially students with disabilities. Social inclusion lays the foundation for friendships.

Video lived experience: Gunjan

Lived experience: Gunjan	Comments:
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What is social inclusion?

Social inclusion, according to research studies, requires three conditions:

1. Proximity

Individuals need to be in regular proximity to each other. Without opportunities to be together, students with and without disabilities cannot begin to appreciate their similarities or shared interests.

2. Valued recognition and respect

Individuals need a sense of being recognized and respected. Relationships are built on reciprocity of interactions and perceiving one's self as connected leads to being emotionally positively affected.

3. Involvement and Engagement

Social inclusion is not possible without involvement and engagement in developmentally and socially appropriate experiences.

Defining social inclusion in the school context

- Schools are an ideal normative context for the three key conditions of social inclusion to coexist (Proximity; Valued Recognition and Respect; Involvement and Engagement).
- Students with and without disabilities spend years in school systems, and during this time, opportunities to learn, play, and socialize in classrooms, playgrounds, and gyms, and through sports, clubs, and volunteering are endless.
- Authentic social inclusion is not possible without these opportunities to do things together. The acts of "doing" create the shared experiences that resonate on an emotional level. Individuals have the sense of "I belong and I am accepted." (Hollingsworth & Buysse, 2009; Siperstein et al., 2017; Vyrastekova, 2021)

Lived experience: Cynthia

Lived experience: Cynthia	Comments:
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Common "ingredients" of friendship

1. Reciprocity
2. Mutual liking and enjoyment
3. Proximity
4. Voluntary
5. Shared interest
6. Similarities

7.   Intimacy

Defining friendship

- No one definition of friendship exists. One way to think of friendships is as relationships made from a combination of ingredients. While the relative proportion or presence of ingredients varies across friendships, past literature identifies common ingredients to be reciprocity, mutual liking, mutual enjoyment, proximity, voluntary nature, shared interests, similarity, and intimacy. (Day & Harry, 1999)
- Friendships are an enabling education tool. Children and youth, through their friendship activities, can extend one another's learning, thinking, and interests by drawing on other's experiences and funds of knowledge. (Hedges et al, 2011)
- Friendships are also known to act as a buffer against negative experiences such as bullying or to increase connections that can be leveraged during periods of stress or uncertainty. (Arc, 2017)

How social inclusion sets the stage for friendships

Social inclusion in the classroom is associated with:

- Higher acceptance between peers
- Greater self-confidence and self-worth
- More reciprocal friendships between students with and without disabilities (Little et al., 2020)

Socially inclusive environments foster more reciprocal friendships through creating affordances:

- Affordances = "opportunities for action"
- Can be encountered or created through students' interactions with the environment, the role of teachers, layout of classrooms, structure of daily routines, nature of activities, and more. (Pols, 2012)

Impacts of social exclusion

Students with disabilities are

- more likely to be rejected by their classmates and report having fewer stable friendships
- more likely to be targets of negative attitudes, biases, and prejudices

- more likely to identify as lonely and fare worse academically if they feel socially excluded (Heyder et al., 2019; Juvonen, 2019; Nowocki & Brown, 2013)

Social inclusion: A developmental need

- Peer acceptance and developing friendships is a developmental necessity of all students and they are willing to invest time and energy to meet this developmental need.
- A sense of belonging and acceptance fuels feelings of personal safety from judgement and ridicule, and when students with disabilities feel safe they have more energy to put toward attention and focus needed for class learning. (Arc, 2017; CASEL, 2021)

Social inclusion: An educational aspiration

Weaving students with and without disabilities into the social fabric of the school community is a fundamental activity that has a life-long impact toward supporting health and wellness.

Building a school culture of social inclusion does not need to be confined to class activities. Non-academic activities (e.g., lunch, clubs, spectator sports, dances, trips) offer rich opportunities where education and quality interactions can meld.

The worthiness of building a social inclusion school culture becomes an important educational practice. (Arc, 2017; CASEL, 2021; Juvonen et al., 2019; Shogren et al., 2015; Siperstein et al, 2017; Vyrastekova, 2021)

Write your comments below:

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Key message 3: Adults play an essential role in facilitating opportunities to promote social inclusion and friendships in the school community.

Lived experience: Kelly

Lived experience: Kelly	Comments:
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Strategies, tips, and resources to promote social inclusion and friendships

Plan 1: Promoting friendship mindsets and a culture of social inclusion

Strategies

- Assume that students with and without disabilities can make lasting and meaningful friendships. (Juvonen et al., 2019; Nowicki & Brown, 2013)
- Have a school culture that supports social inclusion as a means to friendship development:
- Commit to defining and conveying values, beliefs, and expectations of behaviour that represent social inclusion. (Arc, 2017)
- Write a code of conduct with the class and review regularly.
- Include points such as these: accept diversity, learn from each other, ask each other to play/work together.

- Create a lesson plan about where codes of conduct have been used. Review and update on a regular basis. (Chennat, 2020)

Reflection

1. What has resonated with you about these examples?
2. What is one way your classroom or school is demonstrating this social inclusion area?
3. Is this an area of learning you would like to follow up on? What is your first step toward that?

Write your comments below:

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Plan 2: Setting up physical and social aspects of school and classroom environments

Strategies

● Provide opportunities for students to work in small groups to accomplish a shared goal through interactive activities and shared jobs. (Juvonen et al, 2019)
● Switch up the classroom seating plan to give all students opportunities to work with new people. Allow groups to stay together over the course of a few months so there is time for students to get to know one another. (Nowicki & Brown, 2013)
● Ensure the environment allows peers to sit together—do not block with chairs reserved for adult support staff. (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2014)
● Consider and monitor your and other adults' roles and intensity of support for a student with a disability.

- Students want space and time to develop friendships unobserved.

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Write your comments below:

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Lived experience: Kelly and Cynthia

Lived experience: Kelly and Cynthia	Comments:
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Plan 3: Supporting social inclusion and friendships through facilitation, prompting, and modelling

Strategies

- Knowledge about social inclusion and friendship development is a skill to be learned and using familiar teaching strategies will assist students to feel successful. (More practical strategies about building related skills are coming up next.)

- Teach social skills to students with and without disabilities by integrating social skills instruction into ongoing curriculum activities. Encourage the asking of questions and give explanations.
- Be present early to support conversation and play partners. Gradually fade assistance over time.
- Be a role model: Show visible positive interactions with children with disabilities in front of peers.
- Talk aloud about common interests you discover between children and youth with and without disabilities. Listen for what hobbies/extra-curricular activities are being talked about and find ways to highlight similarities.
- Help students invite each other to play, to initiate discussion, or to just hang out.(Boutot, 2007; Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2014; Hutchinson & Specht, 2020; Woodgate et al., 2020)

Friendship skills

- listening
- using friendly body language
- showing others you care about them
- compromising
- inviting others (to play, activity, share an idea)
- sharing
- solving problems together

Qualities of a good friend

- Co-create and/or post a visual in the classroom listing qualities of a good friend.
- Review before breaking up into group work.
- Suggest students in each group work on one skill of their choosing.
- Examples of good qualities: good listener, trustworthy, honest, nice, kind, understanding, helpful.

Initiating a conversation

Additional considerations and specific strategies: The adult's role in supporting social inclusion and friendships through facilitation, prompting, and modelling.

- Leave conversation starters around the environment.
- Give a compliment, introduce yourself, offer help, mention something in common.
- Role model getting the attention of another person.
- Say "Hello," say a person's name politely.

Conversation skills

- Focus on the Five Ws.
- Begin a sentence with who, what, when, where, or why.
- To stay on topic or ask follow-up questions, use the Five Ws.
- Where did that happen? What happened next?

Resolving conflicts

- **Review how conflict may appear:**
- arguments about workload during group work, disagreements, resources not being shared
- **Where to start? Potential ways to resolve conflicts:**
- Calm down (provide/role model examples)
- Understand the problem/issue
- Apologize: Personalize a script
- Can include phrases like "I am sorry for..." I won't do that again by..."
- **To identify solutions, encourage students to routinely use statements such as:**
  "It bugs me when you…," "I wish you would…," and "I like when you… ."
- **Check in**
- Encourage peers to also ask one another how they are doing.

Reflection

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Write your comments below:

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Plan 4: Curriculum planning and activities

Practice example 1

During group assignments, set parallel academic and social goals for students by demonstrating:
 - "What" to do with the class content
 - "How" to supportively interact together

What can parallel academic and social goals look like?

- Kindergarten students participating in a dramatic retelling of a story. Each child takes turns looking at a peer's dress up or storytelling choices and gives a compliment.

- High school students are assigned group work. The teacher reviews group expectations prior to starting. The last step of the instructions includes reflecting as a group about what worked well and why.

Practice example 2

When noticing a student who appears lonely, try meeting one-to-one to create a "friendship goal."

During meeting:
- Ask who the student wants to meet.
- Ask what activities the student wants to try with others.

After meeting:
- Ask other students you feel would get along well to pair together.
- Ask for family support as needed.

Practice example 3

With children who communicate using devices or sign language, set a goal where the student becomes a "specialist teacher."

- Reserve weekly times for the student to educate others on new ways to communicate.

Reflection

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Write your comments below:

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Plan 5: Curriculum planning and activities

Practice Example

● Listen to what students are talking about (e.g., hobbies, extra-curricular activities).
● Then talk out loud so students can hear the similarities you discover.
● Highlight the strengths of each student:

- Provide encouragement when noticing students helping each other solve problems
- Offer activities that are not graded.
- Build technology literacy skills when appropriate for older students.

Reflection

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Write your comments below:

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Plan 6: Scheduling flow and routines

Strategy examples and tips

- Maintain class routines whenever possible so all students see and hear one another having the same expectations and opportunities.
- Find ways for all students to be part of schoolwide, non-academic activities (e.g., lunch, recess, clubs, spectator sports, fundraisers).
- Add structure to social times (e.g., recess, lunch) by creating groups/teams that include any isolated students.
- As possible, based on scheduling and staffing: If the student has to leave the classroom for any routine medical/therapy appointments, try to schedule exit and re-entry times around natural routines/transitions so that they are less noticeable to peers. (Arc, 2017; Boutot, 2007; Hutchinson & Specht, 2020; Juvonen, et al., 2019)

Reflection

1. What has resonated with you about these examples?
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Write your comments below:

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Plan 7: Building disability awareness

Strategy examples and tips

- Provide relevant broad information on disabilities (formal and informal) to counter misinformation and biases about capabilities or reduce peer anxiety.
- Students can better assess how to move past a helping, caretaker, or protector role and get down to the business of friendship development when there is knowledge available to inform their thinking. (Edwards et al., 2019; Nowicki & Brown, 2013; Woodgate et al., 2020)
- Help students understand one another. Be proactive in demystifying what disability is and what it is not. If a peer asks about another student's disability, recommend the student ask the student with disability if they would like to talk about it if able. If an individual is not able to speak for themselves it's important to connect with the parent/caregiver to have appropriate answers that reflect a careful, collaborative response. (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2014)

Reflection

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Write your comments below:

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Plan 8: Building a personal support system

Strategy examples and tips

- Working as a solo teacher in a classroom can be isolating:
- Consider ways to collaborate across the school team to learn from one another's best practices to support social inclusion.
- Students with disabilities will have many touch points in a day with other adults.
- What is unknown can be fearful or intimidating but with knowledge comes power.
- Leverage partnerships with families, boards, and community-based disability networks and associations to find new and innovative knowledge on best practices for creating a culture of social inclusion and maximizing opportunities for friendship development.
- Look for Communities of Practice in your district, in online forums, or through professional learning activities. Connecting with others creates a synergy to develop successful practices. (CASEL, 2021; Shogren et al., 2015)

Reflection

1. What has resonated with you about these examples?
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Lived experience: Steven

Lived experience: Steven	Comments:
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Lived experience: Clovis

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Reflection/Discussion

- Think of an experience you have had that brought one or more of the conditions illustrated in this module to life, for example, nurturing a budding friendship. What enabled that to happen? What difference did it make?
- What is a small action you can take that will make a big difference to students with disabilities who want to build relationships with other students in their class?

Write your comments below:

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Thank you for engaging in this learning. We would like to know about your experience with the module. Please take 5 minutes to do a short survey. surveymonkey.com

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Module 2 Links and Resources

Links

Links are listed in the order in which they appear in the key message. Where appropriate, we have included links to other resources mentioned in the module.

KM 1	[Learning for all: A guide to effective assessment and instruction for all students, kindergarten to grade 12](#) **Attitudinal barriers** [Barrier-area recommendations, attitudes, behaviours](#) [How we move forward: Practicing 3 inclusive anti-racist mindsets for reopening schools](#) [The TeachAble project](#) [ETFO body image project](#) **Architectural barriers** [AODA requirements for educational institutions](#) [What is the design of public spaces standard](#) [Ontario building code online](#) [Section 7: Physical and architectural barriers](#) [Accessibility rules for public sector organizations](#) [CNIB education services](#) **Technological barriers** [Assistive technologies for students with LDs: Information, tools, and resources for teachers](#) [AERO](#) [How to make information accessible](#) [Effective use of educational software](#) [iPad facts for supporting students with autism and other exceptionalities](#) [Section 4: Digital learning and technology](#) **Information and communication barriers** [What is the information and communications standards](#) [How the information and communication standard applies to](#)

educational content
What are communication supports
How to make information accessible
Information and communications standards module
Resource services for deaf and hard of hearing

Sensory disabilities, processing, cognitive differences
Classroom accessibility for students who are deaf and hard of hearing
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OFIFC Response to the development of an accessibility standard for education
Plan an accessible meeting

Resources

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