

**SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO INCLUSION:  
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT INCLUSION**

by

Jennifer L. Lacourse

A Paper

Presented to the School of Education and Leadership

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

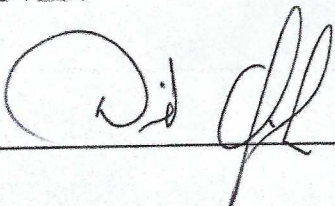
For the Degree of Master of Education

EEA650 Leadership Capstone Project

September 14, 2022

**Systemic Barriers to Inclusion: Leadership practices that support inclusion**

APPROVED:



David Quick, Faculty Supervisor



Heather Henderson, Canadian

Director, Master of Education in Leadership Program

### **Dedication**

This process has been like running a marathon. I have needed training, support, and cheerleaders along the way. None of this would have been possible without my amazing support network and the amazing instructors we had along the way.

I would first like to thank my husband, Adrian, and my children, Chandler, Leigham, and Theodore. It has been an interesting 2 years as I have taken a more secondary role in our extracurricular activities. My husband has not missed a step and he has stepped into team managers, scorekeepers, and assistant coaches for a multitude of sports. My boys have demonstrated understanding and pride in the fact that I have worked hard to complete this goal. If not for them this journey would have been much harder. These people were my inspiration to learn more about leadership and helped me to start this race.

Secondly, I would like to thank my cohort and my instructors. Through the content of these classes I have learned so much and the expanding perspectives have been helpful in teaching me to be reflective on what I know and what I think I know. Red Deer Cohort 5 is full of amazing humans who will be exemplary leaders when their time comes. These people were my trainers, the ones that helped me understand what I would need to do to cross that finish line.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone else who has cheered me on, encouraged me when it felt like it was too much, who picked me up when I was discouraged or uncertain and let me lean on them when life felt too much. These were the cheerleaders along the race path, they cheered loud and unabashedly, they did not care if I was first or last, they just wanted to see me see my dreams come true.

This marathon is over now, and I am so glad I put my hat into the race.

### **Abstract**

The education system continues to struggle to implement inclusive practices for neurodiverse students. Despite a shift in education from segregation to inclusion, many barriers still preclude inclusion from becoming a true practice of education. In Alberta, Canada, not only are neurodiverse students calling for equity in the classroom, but students from various cultural backgrounds are entering schools, creating diverse and complex classrooms. Teachers attempt to provide individual learning opportunities for all students but as class complexity increases this becomes impractical (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2021). Through the identification of systemic barriers that continue to hamper inclusive educational development, school leaders can find solutions. Regarding special education classes Jenson (2018) believed "special education continues to promote attitudes of disability being tragic and undesirable, consequently further excluding and oppressing these students" (p. 54). Teacher perceptions and attitudes focus on medical label of the child and not the individual nature of the child. The use of standardized curricula and assessments continue to be detrimental to inclusive education, particularly at the high school level (Jurado-de-los-Santos et al., 2021). Teacher and principal leadership, perspectives, and willingness to change practices are important for realizing inclusive education (Theoharis et al., 2016). An extensive literature review outlines promising practices for school leaders to undertake to beat the systemic barriers until a revolution happens within the whole education system.

*Keywords:* Inclusive education, systemic barriers, school culture, collaborative teaching, universal design for learning, gradual release of responsibility, leadership

**Table of Contents**

Dedication.....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	7
Background.....	7
Statement of the Issue/Problem .....	10
Purpose of the Study .....	14
Research Questions.....	14
Significance of the Study .....	15
Scope of Study .....	16
Summary.....	16
Outline of the Remainder of the Paper .....	17
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	19
Definition of Terms .....	20
Systemic Barriers to Inclusion.....	22
Labels.....	23
Standardized Curriculum and Assessments .....	25
Teacher Perceptions .....	28
Strategies to Support Inclusion.....	30
Strength-Based Programming.....	30
Universal Design for Learning.....	32
Gradual Release of Responsibility.....	33
Collaborative Teaching.....	33
Leading Towards Inclusion .....	35

Changing the Culture .....	36
Taking a Team Approach.....	37
Presuming Competence .....	38
Summary.....	39
Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions.....	41
Summary of Findings.....	41
Implications .....	42
Recommendations.....	44
Building a Culture of Inclusion.....	45
Collaborative Teaching.....	46
Strength-Based Programming.....	47
Presuming Competence .....	47
Universal Design for Learning and Gradual Release of Responsibility.....	48
Conclusions.....	49
References.....	51

## **Systemic Barriers to Inclusion: Leadership practices that support inclusion**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study**

When it comes to inclusion, there has never been a perfect solution and often many systemic barriers are left in place making the reality of truly inclusive schools unattainable. These barriers can be the labels used to categorize people, which are just as harmful as they are helpful, standardized tests, standardized curricula, and the concept of average... As Rose (2016) stated, “Averagarianism forces our thinking into incredibly limiting patterns—patterns that we are largely unaware of, because the opinions we arrive at seem self-evident and rational” (pp. 72–73). Carter and Abawi (2018) defined inclusion as “successfully meeting student learning needs regardless of culture, language, cognition, gender, gifts and talents, ability or background” (p. 50). Alberta Education (2010) further claimed that “inclusion must be conceptualized within the paradigm of respect and appreciation for a child’s dignity, abilities, uniqueness and contributions, and the desire to enable every child to maximize her/his full potential, whatever that may be” (p. 11). Strully and Strully (2003) defined “inclusion is a way of living—a way of thinking, believing, planning and acting” (p. 1). The fact that inclusion is not a common way of thinking for everyone exposes barriers that are systemic and based on deep rooted practices.

### **Background**

Inclusion has been a topic of conversation in the educational field for a long time; the Alberta Teachers’ Association (2014) reported that inclusion has been a focus since policy change in the 1960s. In this revelation, the question arises, why is inclusion still a topic of conversation for those students who are neurodiverse, who do not learn the same way that a typical student may learn? What are the barriers to inclusion? What do school leaders need to

know and do to make inclusion a reality for all students? As society has evolved, the neurodiverse population has been calling for equity and acceptance into society.

The reduction of physical barriers in the environment is an example of inclusion that society has accepted. Wheelchair access on sidewalks not only supports people with wheelchairs, but also those with mobility issues, mothers with strollers, little kids on bikes, and the elderly. In fact, this inclusive architectural design helps all people, and it does not hinder anyone's ability to fully participate in their environment. Jenson (2018) argued that "throughout history, societal barriers towards individuals with impairments have supported the marginalisation and discrimination of the disabled community" (p. 52). Considering those societal barriers that exclude the neurodiverse student from full participation in high school, it is clear that we need to examine and find more appropriate solutions to the inclusion journey.

As stated above, the study inclusion practices in schools have been the focus of experts for over 50 years. Within the provincial context of Alberta, the practice of inclusion has undergone multiple evolutions. According to the Alberta Teachers' Association's (2014) blue-ribbon report on inclusive education, schools have seen seven iterations of programming for neurodiverse student:

- (1) exclusion in the country's early history, (2) institutionalization in the 1800s,
- (3) segregation from 1900-1950, (4) categorization in the 1950s and 1960s, (5) integration in the 1970s, (6) mainstreaming in the 1980s, and (7) inclusion in the 1990s and beyond. (p. 11)

Even though progress has been made, the report indicated that many of the recommendations of the past reports had not been implemented or had not been effectively implemented across the province. Inclusion has not seen the gains in practice that advocates of inclusion would have



hoped for and the challenges of true inclusion that Alberta is facing stem from the desire for equity and excellence. The report stated:

In many ways, the history of progressive inclusion in Alberta is a history of the tension between equity and excellence, between the choices posed by the Worth Commission (a "person centered society" or a "second -phase industrial society"), between "humanistic ideals, epitomized by individual self-actualization ... and continued industrial development, focused on an abundance of goods and services. (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014, p. 14)

This dichotomy can still exist in Alberta's education system with standardized tests, congregated programs, and a lack of curriculum for neurodiverse students.

An example of this happened when a student with a neurodiversity at the high school level was discouraged from taking a science class in which they were interested. The inclusive education educator that worked with this student and had seen their learning profile and assessed it to be a good fit. The classroom teacher was concerned that the material would move too fast, and the student would become frustrated. In discussions it was determined that the student would not participate in the class but could do the class as an independent study based on the curriculum teacher's perception. This was a barrier for this student. The student was not able to take the class with his peers because it was believed that the curriculum would be too fast paced for the student. This conclusion about this student made by the curriculum teacher, based solely on his label that came from his medical diagnosis. Both the teachers' perception and standardized curriculum became a barrier for this student to participate in classes at school.

**Statement of the Issue/Problem**

As students move from elementary to middle and high school inclusion practices change, and more barriers are evident. According to Alberta Learning (2003), “Placement should be first considered at neighbourhood schools as appropriate but done in accordance with parents and the student when appropriate” (p. 10). This policy allows school divisions to have congregated schools or programs where the programs become a catch-all for the neurodiverse population as they move through K-12 education. Jorgensen et al. (2003) asserted that “among the reasons most commonly given for this discrepancy are the perceived difficulty or irrelevance of curriculum content and the belief that the need to learn functional skills precludes inclusion” (p. 22) MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) stipulated that the

disablist assumptions that ‘special needs students’ (homogenised as a group distinct from ‘normal students’) are problematic, require extra resources and time, have limited/ fixed ability and may disrupt other students’ learning through challenging behaviour and additional demands on teacher’s time. (p. 106)

The solution then becomes placement in segregated programs to help alleviate problems in the general education classroom. Admittance to these programs, as Alberta Education (2010) described, involves “the use of identifiers—be it codes, categories or even exclusionary language reinforce difference and segregate students with special needs” (p. 14). A school district may have specialized classrooms within a school, or a specialized school that serves the district. Each district has qualifiers to enter these programs that typically revolve around Educational Psychological Assessments that determine the cognitive abilities or medical diagnosis of the student.

It is this breakdown of societal barriers that allows us to best determine how to support neurodiverse learners in their journey to fully experience high school. Neurodiverse students are unique learners just like their neurotypical peers, yet the expectation is that all learners conform to the system, but the system makes no changes for the learners. Teachers however; are trained to teach to the diverse needs of all students and with the proper support, can break down the systemic barriers that preclude inclusion from actualization.

Gilham and Williamson (2014) believed “Alberta Education seems to be presenting itself as having made significant steps towards an inclusionary school system when it has not yet reformed what it had once claimed was the major obstacle to inclusion: special education” (p. 1). There are systemic barriers like inadequate support, deficient training for teachers, not having a clear definition of what inclusion is at the school level, and a focus on the deficits that come with a coding for a child based on their diagnosis (Gilham & Williamson 2014). In addition to these hurdles, each school district in Alberta seems to have different expectations for their support of neurodiverse students. Within one school district the neurotypical child faces no barriers to fulfilling their option choices. This allows the neurotypical student to have a high school education made up of classes they wish to partake in. In contrast, a neurodiverse student not only has to have multiple failures to get the supports they require to be successful, they also must continually prove themselves as capable to be in the same class with their neurotypical peers. They may do this by having their special education teacher advocate for them by providing a learner profile and goal sheets and meeting with the options teacher before the student would be allowed to take that course. These are the added barriers that make the system inequitable for the neurodiverse student.

Teachers' own beliefs in their students and in their own ability can also impact inclusive practices within a high school. When teachers feel unsupported, or that they are expected to produce new curriculum content, they will often ask if the expectation is to teach two different classes within the same class. At the high school level, most teachers are not generalists; there is an expectation that teachers are an expert in their curriculum area. This expertise is needed as the curriculum is robust and moves at a much quicker pace. When it comes to inclusion at the high school level, many teachers are unprepared to also be experts at modifying or working with neurodiverse students. Dweck (2016) believed there are two mindsets: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. She stated, "Stereotypes tell teachers which groups bright and which groups are not. So, teachers with the fixed mindset know which students to give up on before they've even met them" (Dweck, 2016, p. 200). Knowing a neurodiverse student is entering a class is important; it provides time for the teacher to prepare and to make necessary accommodations or modifications. The caveat is that the teacher must presume competence, Causton-Theoharis (2009) stated that "the presumption of competence recognizes that no one can definitively know another person's thinking unless the other person can (accurately) reveal it" (p. 56). If a teacher has a fixed mindset and believes the stereotypes, those stereotypes become the barrier to the students' success with that teacher. In contrast, when a teacher has a growth mindset and presumes competence in the student, they can find multiple ways for a student to be successful.

Furthermore, the standardized tests and current curriculum within Alberta is another systemic barrier. The curriculum and the standardized tests based on the curriculum do not account for the diverse learning of students and the strengths of students who are different from average. Davern et al. (2003) stated:

As school personnel struggle to align their teaching with standards and new assessments, some families, teachers, and advocates may find that their struggle for meaningful inclusion for a student seems to become more difficult. A climate of “high standards”—and a heightened focus on testing—cannot be used to justify exclusion of a student.

Alberta Education (2010) supported this belief: “Teachers are overwhelmed by the diverse set of expectations placed on them, and in many cases don’t have enough time to do their jobs effectively” (p. 5). The goal is meaningful inclusion, where neurodiverse students participate in the general classroom with appropriate support to have success (Alberta Education, 2010). There are many curricular demands and the call for mastery of complex curricula as well as problem solving skills and higher order thinking that further complicates inclusive practices (Bulgren et al., 2006). These as well as the demands placed on teachers to put in research-based practices, increased demands on curricula and standardized assessments pose a threat to building inclusive school environments.

Finally, the leadership of a school or district can have significant impact on inclusion within the culture. When it comes to inclusion, principals and school leaders must address their own preconceived notions of inclusion. These beliefs could come from personal biases and their own experiences within the classroom utilizing inclusive practices. Szeto (2021) indicated “principals need to broaden their leadership practices to effectively respond to the pressure of bureaucratic accountability, while the threats and changes to equal participation and social justice can be addressed in diverse school settings” (p. 473). Principals are required to balance the needs of all students and adhere to political governance, yet as Szeto explained, “practising

democratic leadership in schools requires a degree of risk-taking by principals – perhaps even to the greatest degree” (2021, p. 487). Horrocks et al. (2008) found

the most significant factor in predicting both a positive attitude toward inclusion of children with disabilities and higher recommendations of placements for children with autism was the principal's belief that children with autism could be included in a regular education classroom. (p. 1462)

If school leadership believes in alternate placements for neurodiverse students' full inclusion will encounter another barrier

### **Purpose of the Study**

Identification of the systemic barriers that neurodiverse students face in high school will allow leaders to determine how to find effective solutions to evolve standard education into inclusive education. Solutions are available through evidence-based practices, and finding those that are appropriate to start the inclusion journey will help school leaders determine their course of action. Taking into consideration the problem, probable solutions and suggestions for starting and planning out this undertaking will be provided in this paper.

### **Research Questions**

Consider inclusion to be a human right, and an equitable practice encourages one to focus on what improvements can be made to the education system moving from a bottom-up approach. Too often in education it is a top-down system, especially when the government announces a new change, school boards strive to implement the change, and teachers must comply with the change. Inclusion can be class directed, but for inclusion to be effective, it needs to start at the school level. So much of inclusion requires individualized planning to meet the needs of the specific student, yet not all students who need support are identified through codes (Jung et al.,

2019). Therefore, universal practices that all students can access will have a greater reach for any student who may need support. There is a common adage, “If you know one individual with autism you know one individual with autism” (Autism Speaks, n.d para. 2). Everyone is unique, and labels only work to try to group people together, but no single description is going to apply to every person; labels need to be used to educate and not produce barriers. If inclusive practices are unique to each student and every student is different, this research plan will consider the following questions:

1. What are the systemic barriers to inclusion at the high school level?
2. What are some strategies to support inclusion at the high school level?
3. How can school leaders support teachers through inclusive practices that support neurodiverse learners?

### **Significance of the Study**

Evidence-based inclusive practices that support students across all areas of curricula provide teachers with different strategies within their classrooms. Brelinsky (2018) stated that a “teacher’s lack of confidence when including neurodiverse students revolved around lack of support or time to plan effectively for the students” (p. 10). As curriculum becomes more rigorous, the belief that a neurodiverse student will be unable to reach the curricular goals creates further barriers. By providing professional development, time and strategies for support of neurodiverse students the general education teacher can develop self-efficacy around inclusive practices. Seeing inclusion as an evolution that is constantly evolving confirms that inclusion is a process and improvements can be made for the educational experience for all students (Moore, 2018).

A school leader can bring about change for students and teachers. The leader of a school or district will help shift the focus towards effective inclusive practices, permitting teachers to implement those strategies that will support them in their inclusive journey. The support of inclusion and building a culture of inclusion helps define what inclusive practices will look like within the school. This research will help provide leaders, teacher leaders and school leaders, with tools that can build equitable practices in a high school. Utilizing these practices allows firsthand knowledge to begin conversations with teachers around practices that support a variety of students. Implementing practices that support all learners creates an equitable culture where neurodiverse students experience a barrier-free high school.

### **Scope of Study**

By studying the research, we can determine which evidence-based strategies will support neurodiverse students at the high school level to overcome the systemic barriers to inclusion. The evidence-based strategies will help teachers build upon their own inclusive practices, as the Alberta Teachers' Association (2014) reported: "Most teachers indicated that their hesitance regarding inclusion most often stemmed from feeling that they lacked the requisite professional knowledge, experience and support, rather than from a lack of support for inclusion itself" (p. 66).

### **Summary**

Through identification of the systemic barriers that continue to impact inclusion within high schools one can begin to find alternate solutions to support the vision of just and equitable educational opportunities for all learners. The Alberta Teachers' Association (2014) explained that



classrooms are complex communities, and some students have exceptional needs. These included students who require behaviour support, English-language learners, students who are gifted and talented, students who live in poverty, students who are new to Canada, students from refugee backgrounds and students who are suffering from trauma. (p. 58)

Classrooms are changing and educators need support to help all learners. Finding evidence-based practices to support inclusion and implementing those practices will bring classrooms into our current social climate. Leaders of schools direct their teachers and students; through inclusion focused leadership all students will begin to see themselves as important members of their school community.

### **Outline of the Remainder of the Paper**

Through the rest of this paper the barriers to inclusion at the high school level are defined and explained. The research has shown that many of the barrier's stem from the medical model and a focus on the neurodiverse students' deficits as opposed to their strengths (Alberta Education, 2010; Contenta, 1993; Jenson, 2018). DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) stated, "The fact that persistent historical and structural marginalization not only exists but is pervasive in education underscores the fact that eliminating inequities is an ongoing struggle rather than a singular battle fought and won over the course of a school year" (p. 865). Alberta Education (2010) further claimed that "people are frustrated by the current system of coding that results in programming based on the code rather than on the child's individual needs" (p. 18). The Alberta Teachers' Association (2021) echoed this frustration "there is a genuine desire to help all children to reach their potential, the classroom is not currently resourced sufficiently to allow this to happen" (p. 19) Calabrese-Barton and Tan (2020) argued that "students positioned as

guests in their classrooms, are expected to follow majoritarian routines with the threat of social or disciplinary sanctions for non-compliance” (p. 434). In this, students who do not fit in with the majority are often segregated and encounter further barriers to full participation within their high school classes.

Finally, the evidence-based strategies will formulate a guide for leaders who want to increase the inclusivity of their own schools. Finding practical strategies to help teachers and students in developing a culture of inclusion to break down the systemic barriers of the high school experience.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Through the rest of this paper, the systemic barriers that are currently in place will be described, the inclusive practices that can help overcome those barriers will be highlighted and a plan for leadership to move forward with inclusion will be proposed.

There are many systemic barriers to inclusion within schools. The belief in average and standardization of curriculum and assessments is one such barrier. The current curriculum within Alberta is outdated and relies on teaching to the average student, with a standardized assessment to be given at the end of the year to see if students are learning the curriculum (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014). Wilson (2021) recognized "that standard is loaded with assumptions about the socially acquired cultural knowledge and prior curriculum-based content knowledge that many students with diverse cultural backgrounds and interruptions to their schooling just don't have" (p. 15). Another systemic barrier is the use of labels and codes for students who are neurodiverse. These labels bring about preconceived notions about a student's ability to succeed within curriculum dense classes. Jenson (2018) stated:

Society sees disability as a misfortune, a hardship, something an individual must endure as their quality of life is mediocre with limited opportunities. The medical model also generates emotive reactions of sympathy, pity and reservation. It perpetuates social deviance, affecting societal attitudes and causing negative conceptions that enable marginalisation and discriminatory acts such as stereotyping and labelling. (p. 53)

Another impactful systemic barrier is the teacher's own beliefs which are critical for the success of realizing inclusion, particularly in secondary schools where teachers focus on a specific subject rather than all subjects (Rodden et al., 2018).

Evidence-based inclusive practices have been around since inclusion became a topic of discussion in the education system. These systems are the multitiered support system or response to intervention system (Eredics, 2018; Hitchcock et al., 2002; LaForce et al., 2016). Using skill grids to help determine where skills can naturally be taught and practised within the general education classroom and finding ways to teach the teacher the support so they can implement them within their universal practices (Jung et al., 2019). Universal design for learning (UDL) and other planning structures would also support inclusive practices. Yet these practices are only as effective as school leadership.

School leadership is a huge indicator of inclusive schools (Szeto, 2021). The vision of the school or district leaders will encourage staff to take on the challenge of changing schools or commit to maintaining the status quo of a parallel system of general education and special education (Gilham & Williamson, 2014). Kouzes and Posner (2010) believed that “your constituents expect you to know where you are going and to have a sense of direction. You have to be forward-looking” (p. 58). Furthermore, Kouzes and Posner (2017) concluded that leaders could not do it alone, they also had to enlist others to help them build their vision. Brown (2018) concluded that “the fear of being judged or misunderstood, of making a mistake, being wrong, and experiencing shame-is universal” (p. 115). Keeping this understanding in mind, leaders can help their colleagues to work through making mistakes and learn together how to better build inclusive schools.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Special Education Coding:* Alberta Education (2021) outlined that these were specific categories to assist teachers and administrators in school authorities to identify those Early Childhood Services and Grade 1–12 students who require additional supports in their educational

program. Schools must have the documentation to support the assignment of a special education code. This includes a diagnosis of a disability or disorder by a qualified professional.

*Disabilities:* “A physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person’s ability to engage in certain task or actions or participate in typical activities and interactions” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1)

*High School:* According to Alberta Education (n.d.), high school includes Grades 10 to 12, where students are 15 to 18 years old. They offer a variety of classes to support growth for the pursuit of university or employment opportunities.

*Inclusion:* “Creating environments where any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, valued, and fully participate. People who are different can come together with their unique experiences, preferences, and strengths without assimilating those salient identities they have” (Silverthorn, 2021, p. 7).

*Medical Model:* A “medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences. Under the medical model, these impairments or differences should be ‘fixed’ or changed by medical and other treatments. (Disability Nottinghamshire, n.d., para. 5 &6)

*Neurodiverse:* “An approach to learning and disability that argues diverse neurological conditions are result of normal variations in the human genome” (Disabled World, 2021, para. 2)

*Social Justice:* Dictionary.com (n.d.) defined social justice as “fair treatment of all people in a society, including respect for the rights of minorities and equitable distribution of resources among members of a community” (para. 1).

*Social Model:* Disability Nottinghamshire defined the social model of disability as being “caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person’s impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people” (para. 1).

### **Systemic Barriers to Inclusion**

Our current education system was developed over a hundred years ago, based on the development of Taylorism. Rose (2016) stated, “In a standardized system, individuality does not matter, and that was exactly what Taylor intended” (p. 45). The belief that education was to create factory workers who would do an assigned task repeatedly was the entire goal of education. As society has changed with modern technologies and the need for students to have different skills grows, our education system trails behind. Our education system sorts students into ability groups to help them find their socioeconomic place in the world. Those students who are gifted and those students who are less than average are sorted and streamed into classes that predict their path through high school into postsecondary education (Rose, 2016). We base this sorting on psychological assessments, or labels that explain why a student may be struggling in school. In addition, we also expect students to learn at the same rate and speed as the average student, but as Rose (2016) pointed out average is a myth. Finally, teacher knowledge and biases based on the notions they have around diverse learners is a huge indicator of success for a student within an inclusive classroom. As MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) claimed, “Inclusion is about transformation in education systems, from policy through to classroom practice” (p. 159). The importance of understanding these systemic barriers cannot be misjudged by school leaders. Having a clear understanding will allow school leaders the ability to find evidence-based practices to support inclusive cultures.

### *Labels*

The first systemic barriers to inclusion are the labels used to identify people. Brown (2021) stated, “With the same amount of power, language can also be used to strip people of their dignity and humanity. With awareness about how dehumanization works, comes the responsibility to call out dangerous language when we recognize it” (p. 235). These labels are used to describe race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or neurodiversity. The labels themselves lead into our unconscious biases, Popova (2020) claimed, “Biases often work in surreptitious ways—they sneak in through the backdoor of our conscience, our goodness, and our highest rational convictions” (p. 1). Neurodiversity is the belief that humanity is diverse and as such it is acceptable to have diverse ways of thinking and behaviours that differ from the typical population (Resnick, 2022). Biklen and Burke (2006) claimed, “Schools are the site where labeling most often occurs, then once labeled, students are routinely expected to prove that they can benefit from inclusive, academic instruction in order to be maintained in the regular class” (p. 167). These labels, though implemented to be helpful, have societal implications and often become a barrier to inclusion as they are derived from a medical diagnosis based on psychological and physical impairments (Massoumeh & Leila, 2012). The Alberta Teachers’ Association (2014) stated that “the system of coding students can be traced back to the medical model of recording student deficits” (p. 38). Carter and Abawi (2018) further stipulated that “every child had a right to learn, and every child is capable of learning and should be given the opportunity to actively participate in all facets of school life” (p. 55). Throughout a child’s education from elementary to high school their descriptors can bring in more barriers. MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) argued, “Presuming incompetence allows teachers to dismiss the learning of some students, to overlook their contribution and to see only failure” (p. 164). As

society moves away from the medical model of deficits, the societal model that inclusion is based on many of these systemic barriers will need to be evaluated. Jenson (2018) explained that “whilst the social model promotes that an individual has an impairment, but it is societal barriers that create the disability” (p. 52). It is this dissonance between the medical model descriptors of a child and their own actual ability that becomes more problematic as they encounter more barriers at higher levels within the education system.

In addition to the belief in average, neurodiverse students face further barriers based on the medical model that is currently employed by schools to set up support for these students. Jenson (2018) reported, “Throughout history, societal barriers towards individual with impairments have supported the marginalisation and discrimination of the disabled community” (p. 52). Gilham and Williamson (2014) believed “that the medical model of the disability supports the parallel system, thus it often works as an obstacle to an inclusive education system” (p. 554). And still, Alberta Teachers Association (2014) reported “many school jurisdictions have retained the old model of coding and funding for distributing inclusive education funds internally” even though that funding model is outdated and no longer used (p. 38). Sokal and Katz (2015) claimed, “As such, student funding formulas, teacher in-service education and educational approaches in schools often reflect a school philosophy other than inclusion” (p. 48). In using this type of funding, the focus is on the students' deficits and not what the student needs for success.

While we use labels in our society to define people and get a general understanding of students within our classroom, this is not an accurate measure of who they are or of what they are capable. Often labels are singular in nature and do not consider the pluralistic nature of humans (Manji, 2019). MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) noted, “Questions and deterministic



assumptions about (dis)ability and ‘special needs’ serve as formidable impediment to certain students’ success” (p. 158). Manji (2019) declared that “when we let labels stand in for people, we end up manipulating people. Our shared humanity, along with our distinctive individuality, loses out” (p. 21). These labels ignore the pluralism of people, and these labels are a “result of 200 years of viewing disability through a medical model that catalogs impairment rather than considers disability as a social construct that is shaped by policy, theory and ethics” (Jung et al., 2019). Manji (2019) stipulated, “We don’t fit into manufactured molds....We are the plurals ... a plural isn’t exactly to label yourself. It’s to leapfrog over labels because everyone’s a puzzle whose pieces shift with time and experience” (pp. 135–136). People are multifaceted and do not fit into singular moulds. Many studies have shown that average is a myth, and that people are more jagged; it is by looking at this “jaggedness” that we can really begin to improve our inclusive practices (Rose, 2016).

### ***Standardized Curriculum and Assessments***

The second systemic barrier to consider is the use of a standardized curriculum and standardized final assessments to guide student learning. Jurado-de-los-Santos et al. (2021) reported,

Implementation of educational inclusion is geared towards the removal of barriers. These limit accessibility, presence, participation, and achievement of learning opportunities. In this sense, it will be relevant to analyse how the implementation of the curriculum design is addressed, specifically through the type of methodological strategies used in the classroom and how the assessment system is applied. (p. 1)

The Alberta Teachers' Association (2014) claimed that "Alberta is a history of the tension between equity and excellence" (p. 14). They also stipulated, "Teachers are expected to modify, differentiate and allow multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge throughout a student's schooling, but then the government requires that all students demonstrate their learning in the exact same way" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014, p. 41). Furthermore, Rose (2016) explained that "according to the Taylorist vision of education, treating each student as an average student and aiming to provide each one with the same standardized education, regardless of their background, abilities or interests" (p. 51). Gilham and Williamson (2014) stipulated that "accountability measures (standardized tests), choice (charter and private schools), and publication of test results (for the public and by the government for school boards) are general policies and practices that can block an inclusive education system" (pp. 559–560). Through the use of accommodations and modifications, teachers move towards offering inclusive solutions, but the problem continues as the root of the problem is systemic.

As students move forward into higher levels of schooling, the curriculum and the standardized assessments become more in depth. Bulgren et al. (2006) asserted that "pressures to cover large amounts of information and to ensure student master of increasingly complex middle-school and high-school curricula" (p. 41) have been noted as barriers to inclusive education. Further, they noted, "standards-based efforts put more emphasis on accountability to apply uniform standards rather than individualized goals and instruction" (Bulgren et al., 2006, p. 41). Jurado-de-los-Santos et al. (2021) expanded that "curriculum design must be inclusive; it must support each student, being flexible, open, and providing equal opportunities for all" (p. 2). Hitchcock et al. (2002) explained the problem with "the assumption that there is a 'core' group of learners that is mostly homogeneous outside of which other learners fall, is itself flawed" (p.

2) The retrofitting of the curriculum to meet the needs of students who are not within this “core” group is costly in both time and money. The barriers diverse learners face, is in fact, rooted in the inflexible curriculum. This curriculum barrier also points out that using a “special” curriculum is in fact problematic as it keeps diverse learners separate from the general curriculum learnings and that rarely do these students “catch up” to be reintegrated into the general education classroom (Hitchcock et al., 2002). Kohn (1993) stated, “The current curriculum lends itself nicely to standardize testing and sorting of students” (p. 217). Theoharis et al. (2016) concurred that “in this era of high-stakes accountability, students are labeled, sorted, and differentially treated according to their academic achievement as reflected on standardized tests” (p. 1).

The curriculum is standardized, yet, as Rao and Meo (2016) pointed out, “students process information in different ways and work at different paces. They have varied family backgrounds and bring different knowledge bases and experiences to class” (p. 1). Alberta Education (2011) stated, “Making learning relevant for all students (Curriculum: moving towards the vision of an educated Albertan, meeting the needs of learners in the 21st century)” (p. 13) is a goal. Wilson (2021) believed that by “recognizing and drawing on the value of their existing knowledge, we would also create spaces to build up the confidence of our culturally diverse students, and help them push through the ‘below standard’ messaging of standardised assessment” (p. 18). Pushing for a more relevant and flexible curriculum that moved from standardized assessments would be beneficial for all learners (Wilson, 2021). Since we know the curriculum is standardized, leaders in education are faced with finding ways to provide access to the curriculum to all students.

### *Teacher Perceptions*

The third systemic barrier to inclusion is teachers' perceptions of their ability to fully support diverse learners. Robinson (2004) implied that "some concerns facing inclusion programs surround the teacher's perceptions of the special education student's ability to succeed academically in the general education classroom and their ability to instruct them" (p. 85). Jung et al. (2019) explained,

Poor outcomes are fueled in part by the damage done when disability labeling lowers expectations. Students identified as having disabilities encounter bias from their teachers.... More negative evaluation of behaviour and negative predictions about where they are likely to earn an undergraduate degree. (p. 17)

Rodden et al. (2018) concluded that "research suggests that teachers' implicit model of inclusive education represents a barrier to inclusion for students with ASD [autism spectrum disorder] in mainstream secondary schools" (p. 236). There is also a belief that teachers are not always clear on their roles or feel supported in implementing inclusive practices. These negative perceptions impact teacher's efficacy with delivering different educational practices and working in cooperative teams to support diverse learners (Robinson, 2004). The Alberta Teachers' Association (2014) reported, "Many teachers indicated that their hesitance regarding inclusion most often stemmed from feeling that they lacked the required professional knowledge, experience and support" (p. 66). This support comes in the way of time, money, professional development and coaching. Bulgren et al. (2006) acknowledged that "more time, support or professional development to put these into practice in their classroom" (p. 60) was needed to develop teacher capacity in providing support to diverse learners. Boyle and Hernandez (2016) found "the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms requires

teachers to adopt new instructional methods, and some teachers are unwilling to make those necessary changes to their instruction” (p. 206). Clear guidelines need to be established for the support of diverse learners. Jung et al. (2019) stipulated that “in evolving schools, it’s common for mistaken assumptions to arise regarding the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team and these assumptions can lead to gaps” (p. 63). These missing pieces make it hard to further implement inclusion when the purpose is not clearly established.

It is not only teachers’ perceptions on inclusion but principals’ perceptions as well that impact how inclusive a school will be. DeMatthews et al. (2021) decreed, “Principals play an important role creating inclusive schools” (p. 10). Roberts et al. (2018) further agreed that “leadership practices include making staffing decisions, and facilitating staff development, addressing structural issues pertaining to scheduling and physical space, guiding curriculum decisions and leading the overall vision of teaching and learning” (p. 3). In this school administrators play a key role in developing and improving inclusive practices within the school. Those features that are needed for successful development of inclusive practices rely heavily on the principal’s willingness to structure the school using evidence-based inclusive practices. DeMatthews et al. (2021) pointed out:

A socially just and inclusive school is one that does not only emphasize academic achievement or prioritizes academic achievement as an all for nothing trade-off over other important aspects of the school community, such as authentic family engagement, recognition of multiple student identities, the social and emotional development of students, and an inclusive and welcoming environment that values all people. (p. 12)

Inclusion is not strictly about academic needs and benchmarks, inclusion focuses more on the whole person and developing the whole person to be a fully contributing member to society.

### **Strategies to Support Inclusion**

The knowledge of the systemic barriers that all schools face allows schools to target them in creative ways. In bridging the barriers to be more welcoming, much like wheelchair ramps and closed captioning on television, schools can become more inclusive (Moore, 2016; Rao & Meo, 2016; Rose, 2016). Research has brought in different methods to support inclusive schools even while systemic barriers remain in place. Through this research a few cornerstone ideas repeatedly came up. These were strength-based programming, UDL, gradual release of responsibility, and collaborative teaching.

#### ***Strength-Based Programming***

As a result, the labels used to define a student, autistic, cognitive delay, English language learner, often evoke an idea of what students cannot do in comparison to our standardized curricula outcomes. However, by switching our thinking and using labels to identify needed supports as opposed to deficits, we can begin strength-based programming. MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) said, “[Fixed ability] assumes that individuals are endowed with a genetically pre-determined ‘fixed’ amount of ability, which can be measured in terms of Intelligence Quotients (IQ) and ranked according to a ‘normal’ distribution” (p. 162). This is the old way of doing things—focusing on individuals’ deficiencies. However, Jenson (2018) asserted that inclusion does not focus on the individual deficit that encourages ‘fitting in’, but rather supports a range of learning and physical differences. Participation in school life is not

restricted to limited access to curriculum or by physical barriers but instead inclusion aims to remove any disabling factor in an educational context. (pp. 54–55)

The societal view of inclusion differs from the medical model that is used in special education in that the disability is because of societal norms, not because there is something wrong with the person. The medical model looks at deficits and does not allow us to see the strengths of the individual that is a pillar of inclusive education (Jenson, 2018). We need to progress from a society that notes disabilities as something that needs to be cured or as something that cannot be cured to a society that perceives disability as difference something to value and be learned from (Jenson, 2018).

Specifically in this mindset shift, school leaders can promote a strength-based programming within their individual support plans and working with students who are neurodivergent. This calls for schools to look to personalize learning for all students. LaForce et al. (2016) defined personalized learning as taking “the classroom away from a “one-size-fits-all” strategy to allow for truly individualized instruction” (p. 7). Weiner and Murawski (2005) agreed that “we must value our students’ strengths, encourage their affinities, and be tolerant of the diversity and differences of each students’ mind” (p. 289). Through focusing on strengths, we can encourage growth and not hamper student advancement of their own goals. In order to do this, we must implement strength assessments of students, that will help develop individualization of goals based on strengths. Afterwards, educators can network with people to provide praise, support, and recognition, encouraging positive outcomes with deliberate applications and seek out novel experiences to learn new things (Lopez & Louis, 2009). In shifting our focus, we will need new processes for planning lesson plans to support students and educators as they work to overcome systemic barriers.

### *Universal Design for Learning*

One such strategy is UDL. Hunt and Andreasen (2011) defined UDL as “a process that maximizes the need for individual accommodations, and eventually benefits every learner by considering different ways that students’ minds are activated” (p. 168). There are three steps to UDL in which teachers can overcome barriers. These steps are representation, action, expression, and engagement. Representation is about modifying educational resources into a variety of modalities. The way in which learners demonstrate their learnings is the action and expression. How students are engaged and participate in learning is the engagement piece. (Baldiris Navarro et al., 2016). In agreement, Rao and Meo (2016) stipulated that “by considering what the barriers are, teachers can build supports from the outset rather than modifying lessons after the fact to address the needs of learners” (p. 3). Not only can educators use UDL to help them with their planning to meet the needs of the students and how pupils can be assessed in multiple ways Rao and Meo also argued that “after unwrapping the standard, stating a clear goal, and determining how students will be assessed, there are numerous ways in which teachers can apply UDL to the instructional strategies they will use during a lesson” (2016, p. 9). Coyne et al. (2012) proclaimed, “UDL aims to decrease potential barriers to learning while increasing opportunities to learn. It rests on a belief that designing for diverse learners result in better learning outcomes for all individuals” (p. 163). Mole (2012) clarified that “the principles of universal design support the creation of products, services and environments that are usable by the widest range of users without modification or retrofitting” (p. 71). Using UDL to support planning for all students means educators do not have to go backwards and redo lessons for students who are struggling with the concepts.



### ***Gradual Release of Responsibility***

In addition to UDL, another strategy teachers can utilize is the gradual release of responsibility. Gradual release of responsibility is defined as an instructional framework, in which the teacher models, does the work together, allows collaborative learning and finally into independent learning (Jung et al., pp. 96–97). This is an “I do, we do, you do together, you do alone” process for teaching concepts. Each step has specific guidelines to help the educators structure their lesson to optimize multiple learning opportunities in a classroom.

The lesson would start with specific instruction on the learning outcomes. The focus would include what the students would learn through the lesson as well as why they are learning this specific concept. The teacher would then model how students might engage with the concept and how to apply the concept with skills. Afterwards, the guided instruction is a questioning period where any misconceptions are cleared up and students can ask questions to develop stronger ties to the concept. The third step is collaborative learning in which students would work in pairs or small groups to utilize their academic language and understanding of the concept. The ultimate step is for students to demonstrate their learning on their own (Jung et al., 2019).

Gradual release of responsibility works nicely with UDL as it enables teachers to find the access point and model further concepts and students then work at their speed to understand those concepts. Both strategies can be implemented within a collaborative teaching model which supports inclusive strategies.

### ***Collaborative Teaching***

A fourth strategy to support inclusive education as it works to overcome the systemic barriers would be to implement a collaborative model amongst educators in the school. Browder

et al. (2006) said, “Collaboration to promote access to general curriculum will include consideration of both what the standard means and how the content is typically taught so that adaptations for learners with significant disabilities have high quality content” (p. 313). Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2016) determined that “both general and special education teachers must adopt new roles and participate in common professional development” (p. 31). Hedegaard Hansen et al. (2020) stated,

To develop inclusive schools, there is a need for several different specialist approaches, forms of knowledge, skills and competence, which is more than qualified teachers are generally able to provide. Teachers cannot be expected to possess as much knowledge, as much varied competence and such a variety of different experiences as are needed to develop inclusive learning environments.  
(p. 48)

Moore (2020) explained that we need to rethink how we deliver supports to students with disabilities by stacking the supports together to offer to all students and all students to choose what they need for support.

Jung et al. (2019) stated, “Collaboration is key to the success of inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching models allow more students to experience more success because they have access to more expertise” (p. 101). There are seven different strategies to implementing co-teaching. These include one teach one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, one teaches one observe, supplemental teaching, alternative teaching (Eredics, 2018; Jung et al., 2019). This does not mean that two teachers simply instruct a group of students. Jung et al. (2019) insisted “that high quality co-teaching models have a much higher impact on student learning., in true co-teaching there is co-planning, co-instruction, co-assessment and co-reflection” (p. 89). Outside of co-

teaching, collaborating with other specialist as Hedegaard Hansen et al. (2020) explained, “indirect form of collaboration spans a broad area of good advice and tips, mediation of new and specialized knowledge, collective brainstorming, support and guidance, and questions and dialogue, which supports reflection and analysis in relation to existing practice” (p. 49). This requires that educators be allowed to collaborate with colleagues both in the school and outside of the school, breaking down the separate systems of support that currently exist.

### **Leading Towards Inclusion**

In a society where we still have two parallel education groups, general education and special education which are established at a policy level, school leaders are faced with needing to transform a school culture in the face of systemic barriers (Gilham & Williamson, 2014). Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2016) believed that “to create more inclusive schools, school leaders are the most critical factor” (p. 31). Inclusive education is a call for one education system; Carter and Abawi (2018) said that “school leadership for inclusion involves making hard decisions. It is a complex and multifaceted act requiring consciously targeted effort, advocacy and particular ways of leading” (p. 49) Gilham and Williamson (2014) asserted, “In this reformed system, special education would no longer retain its status as a parallel and competing educational system to ‘regular’ education” (p. 554). This would be a large overhaul of culture within a school. To get started leaders should look to those experts of change.

In order to lead to the change to an inclusive school, leaders must start with why (Sinek, 2009). Having a full-fledged idea of why the change needs to occur and basing that change in research will support leaders moving forward. Once the vision has been created, moving past the status quo is the next step. Fullan (2020) believed that instead of trying to protect the status quo, “the second and more fundamental use is how to change the existing culture so that is has the

capacity to manage and incorporate change on a continuous basis that serves the goals of the organization, including deliberately incorporating new goals and their implementation” (p. ix). In moving forward with change there are a few strategies leaders can implement to help move to a more inclusive school.

### *Changing the Culture*

Kouzes and Posner (2017) have five practices for good leaders: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. These practices will be needed to change a culture of a school from special education to inclusive education. Keeping the vision in mind, Carter and Abawi (2018) claimed that “positional school leaders must have a philosophy and mindset that seeks to build distributed leadership, capacity across their school, empowering others to lead” (p. 51). Jung et al. (2019) asserted,

Principals establish the culture of the school and clearly communicate the values and vision of the school as an inclusive learning place. To be effective school leaders spend time in classrooms, too, observing but also offering guidance on instruction, assessment, accommodations, and modifications. (p. 75)

It is not just about explaining the vision, leaders must help others see the vision and perceive how they can help actualize that vision. Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2016) believed “inclusion is built on the premise that all students should be valued for their unique abilities and included as essential members of a school community. Inclusion is not a place; it is a way of thinking” (p. 25). It is important for leaders embarking on reforming inclusion practices within their school or district, that have a clear vision and are willing to model how inclusion can be implemented in the school. Inclusive education, as Carter and Abawi (2018) stated, “added value

to the learning of all students by creating a culture of inclusion, empowering groups of people to interact and cooperate meaningfully as one school community” (p. 62).

As Sinek (2009) stated, “People who come to work with a clear sense of WHY are less prone to giving up after a few failures because they understand the higher cause” (p. 101).

Inclusion is a big topic and one that will not be solved in a year; Fullan (2020) warned leaders to “acknowledge the implementation dip” (p. 49) and have a plan to work through. Change is messy and often it will not go as planned, creating a new and better model of education begins with taking action to adjust the language used in schools, the services provided, and the expectations set for students with disabilities and those at risk (Jung et al., 2019). Moving from a deficit model to a strength model where you focus on mastery means everyone must believe in the competence by meeting the needs of each student (Jenson, 2018; Jung et al., 2019).

### ***Taking a Team Approach***

One of the main practices of Kouzes and Posner’s (2017) leadership challenge is encourage the heart. In this they ask that leaders encourage their team to work together to solve problems or make changes. Jung et al. (2019) proposed, “By redefining the roles of the adults, we can streamline and strengthen efforts to ensure that we go far beyond physically including students with disabilities tin the general education classroom” (p. 79). Browder et al. (2006) claimed, “Collaboration with general education is essential to creating access to the general curriculum in planning for students in the IEP [individual education plan] team” (p. 312). In creating this team approach, a school leader would have to dedicate time for planning at regular intervals, sharing of information, and clearly defining the roles of all people on the team. The team will consist of special education teachers, general education teachers and the

paraprofessional, and each of these would require clearly stated responsibilities. Using the strength of all the faculty capitalizes on the expertise of the collective team (Jung et al., 2019).

Secondly, school leaders should ensure professional development and equal class composition for all teachers. Ensuring that proper professional development is provided to all staff is an expectation of Alberta Learning (2004) “training for staff that will enhance the school board’s ability to identify and program for students with special education needs” (p. 6). Jung et al. (2019) claimed, “Ensuring equitable composition across classrooms is the first step toward achieving the goal of creating conditions that increase and support the effectiveness of educators” (p. 50). Creating teams and working with teams to ensures proper support of inclusive strategies and how these changes are implemented and evaluated.

### ***Presuming Competence***

Finally, the concept of presuming competence is another practice that leaders can support to further inclusive practices within schools. MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) explained, “Presuming incompetence, rather than capability, allows teachers to dismiss the learning of some students, to overlook their contributions and to see only failure” (p. 164). Moore (2021) said that “this barrier is the easiest and hardest one to overcome. It’s the easiest because it requires zero resources. You don’t need people or funding to overcome this barrier. But it’s also one of the hardest ones because you can’t force anyone what to think” (1:38). Presuming competence would help overcome the barriers of labels that are put on students, which are a component of ableism. Bogart and Dunn (2019) explained that “ableism is ideas, practices, institutions and social relations that presume ablebodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalised ... and largely invisible ‘others’” (p. 651). As MacArthur and Rutherford (2016) continued, “Presuming competence, allowing teachers ... to see the other person as a peer, it

requires a democratic outlook, a commitment to justice. The presumption of competence allows education to begin” (p. 164). Biklen and Burke (2006) stated, “Presuming competence implies that educators must assume students can and will change and, that through engagement with the world, will demonstrate complexities of thought and action that could not necessarily be anticipated” (p. 168). Switching our processes to look for strengths follows what Biklen and Burke (2006) reported:

Strong commitment to inclusive education that expects student agency, where the participation of the student in the heart of the classroom is a given, not an experiment, and not conditional, and where participation amounts to more than mere physical presence. (p. 172)

This allows for inclusive practices to build and expand.

### **Summary**

In looking at the systemic barriers, we have identified three that are core to changing inclusion within schools. Runswick-Cole (2011) described how “in ‘inclusive schools’ disabled children are sorted and categorized, and their movements are restricted to certain parts of the school buildings” (p. 116). The first is the categorization and labelling of students. These are problematic for moving forward with inclusion as they produce preconceived notions that teachers then believe about students. School leaders can focus on strength-based approach, in which they presume competence of all learners in the school. The medical diagnosis can then help identify those strengths of each student. School leaders can use this as their launching point to change the culture of a school. It is a relentless pursuit but believing in the strengths of a community allows for tremendous changes to happen (Brewer, 2019).

Secondly, the barrier of the standardized curriculum and standardized assessments can be mitigated with using UDL and using gradual release of responsibility in lesson plans. On a government level, we know that, as Sokal and Katz (2015) reported that “co-ordination of several systems will be required to disassemble the interdependent structure that has supported segregated services and to replace it with systems that serve children and youth in inclusive educational setting” (p. 48). Yet at the school level there are strategies and planning processes that leaders can share with staff to best support all teachers. Using these two strategies enables teachers to take a standardized curriculum and modify it proactively instead of trying to change it once all the students are engaged in the lessons.

A large part of making changes with inclusion is moving from two separate systems, general and special, to a team approach for inclusion. The team approach allows schools to capitalize on the expertise of their staff (Jung et al., 2019) Collaborative teaching builds capacity with staff who are hesitant about making mistakes with inclusion and provides personalized professional development by having teachers work together and share their own resources and strengths (Eredics, 2018). This will help with our third barrier of teacher perceptions. Building teacher efficacy, switching mindsets and presuming competence in students and staff promotes inclusive practices (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Moore, 2021). These are evidence-based strategies that can shift a school from trying to do inclusion to having an inclusive culture.



### **Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions**

#### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this capstone study is to analyze the systemic barriers to inclusion and what strategies are available to school leaders when implementing changes within schools, change that is explicitly related to building a more inclusive school.

Chapter 1 demonstrated that schools are still striving to become inclusive to all students, especially those students who are within marginalized groups. Those groups include students with disabilities, English language learners, students from low socioeconomic homes, and students with trauma backgrounds. Further, the barriers to inclusion are many but most stem from the systemic barriers that are in place from our systems of averages (Rose, 2016). These barriers will continue to be in place until changes can be made to the system and our own unconscious biases (Popova, 2020). Teacher and principal perceptions will greatly influence how inclusion moves forward within any system that continues to operate with special education as separate from general education. Yet these barriers cannot be fixed within a single classroom and make systemic change, but it can start there, and teachers and leaders can help with sharing and spreading inclusive education as a grassroots movement to bring about systemic changes.

Chapter 2 discussed the systemic barriers that are in place and some strategies that school leaders can use to help mitigate these systemic barriers. Many people have been researching inclusion for years; school leaders are not without tools that can support them in making these changes. Inclusive education does not just help one marginalized group but will help all marginalized groups. These strategies are UDL, gradual release of responsibility, collaborative teaching, and strength-based programming that presumes competence of all. These strategies will help and lead to changing the culture.

Since inclusion has been a topic of conversation for many years, there is a belief that we are already practising inclusion, yet there are still segregated programs, students are still pulled out of classrooms and must prove that they are “ready” to learn before they can be allowed into different curricula areas. Culture must change, and inclusion must be fully defined and understood by all. Culture is the first step that leaders will need to take to build inclusive culture and bring about systemic change.

### **Implications**

Through this paper, it has been determined that schools in Alberta are still working at building inclusive schools for all learners. The reason for this continued journey to inclusion revolve around the systemic barriers that compromise inclusive practices. These barriers include the labels based on the medical model, our standardized curriculum and assessments, and teacher perceptions or biases around inclusion.

The research identified that the labels we use to describe others can be limiting. This capstone analyzed how the labels lead into our unconscious biases. Popova (2020) claimed that “biases often work in surreptitious ways—they sneak in through the backdoor of our conscience, our good-personhood, and our highest rational convictions” (p. 1). The continued use of these labels will continue to other people and compare them from the normative population to everyone else this is an almost hidden barrier that people do not recognize until they are confronted. As Rose (2016) pointed out, “We live in a world that encourages—no, demands—that we measure ourselves against a horde of averages and supplies us with no end of justification for doing so” (p. 75). Biklen and Burke (2006) claimed:

Schools are the site where labeling most often occurs, then once labeled, students are routinely expected to prove that they can benefit from inclusive, academic instruction in order to be maintained in the regular class. (p. 167)

This continued use of labels perpetuates the marginalization of others, of students with disabilities, English language learners, trauma impacted students and students who just do not fit within the stereotypical school model. By using labels to define deficits and bolster our unconscious biases of what those labels indicate students cannot do, we do not build upon strengths of our society.

Using a standardized curriculum and assessment impedes the learning of students who are divergent thinkers. Jurado-de-los-Santos et al. (2021) believed “implementation of educational inclusion is geared towards the removal of barriers. These limit accessibility, presence, participation, and achievement of learning opportunities” (p. 1). They expanded that “curriculum design must be inclusive; it must support each student, being flexible, open, and providing equal opportunities for all” (Jurado-de-los-Santos et al., 2021, p. 2). Our current curriculum and provincial achievement tests do not allow for this flexibility for each learner. Hitchcock et al. (2002) explained the problem with “the assumption that there is a “core” group of learners that is mostly homogeneous outside of which other learners fall, is itself flawed” (p. 2). Furthermore, Rose (2016) explained “according to the Taylorist vision of education, treating each student as an average student and aiming to provide each one with the same standardized education, regardless of their background, abilities or interests” (p. 51). Teaching to the standard does not acknowledge the students who are on either end of the learning spectrum. In this, as the Alberta Teachers’ Association (2014) stipulated, “teachers are expected to modify, differentiate and allow multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge throughout a student’s schooling, but then

the government requires that all students demonstrate their learning in the exact same way” (p. 41). Teachers must continue to do more work modifying and creating accommodations for learners to adjust the curriculum to support the learners in each classroom. Our students are forced to continue to demonstrate their learning in the same standard way which compromises the authentic learning that students experience in class (Jung et al., 2019; Rose, 2016).

The third factor impacting inclusion are the biases and perceptions of teachers around the topic of inclusion. Rodden et al. (2018) concluded that “research suggests that teachers’ implicit model of inclusive education represents a barrier to inclusion for students with ASD [autism spectrum disorder] in mainstream secondary schools” (p. 236). Jung et al. (2019) explained, “Students identified as having disabilities encounter bias from their teachers.... More negative evaluation of behaviour and negative predictions about where they are likely to earn and undergraduate degree” (p. 17). Robinson (2004) implied “some concerns facing inclusion programs surround the teacher’s perceptions of the special education student’s ability to succeed academically in the general education classroom and their ability to instruct them” (p. 85). Teachers’ own biases impact their perception, and this impacts students’ learning and building inclusive schools.

### **Recommendations**

Though systemic barriers are huge issues that will take revolutionary changes, there are practices school leaders can implement to help mitigate these barriers. This capstone chose to focus on key changes school leaders could implement to help build inclusive schools despite these systemic barriers.

***Building a Culture of Inclusion***

Inclusion is an inspired vision that breaks down barriers faced by those students who fall outside the mould of an average student. Leaders would need to model the way, challenge the current process, encourage others, and build a team to bring about these changes (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Fullan (2020) in *Leading in a Culture of Change* encouraged leaders to build relationships with numerous factors involved, people want to grow, they get more done, they are emotionally committed to others, and they believe in the mission. Leaders will want to start with their vision and share it with others so they can grow that vision amongst their community. As a leader within a school, be it officially as a principal, or unofficially as a teacher, building the vision and sharing that vision is imperative for moving forward.

Change is messy and often it will not go as planned. Creating a new and better model of education begins with taking action to adjust the language used in schools, the services provided, and the expectations set for students with disabilities and those at risk (Jung et al., 2019). Fullan (2020) believed that instead of trying to protect the status quo, “the second and more fundamental use is how to change the existing culture so that it has the capacity to manage and incorporate change on a continuous basis that serves the goals of the organization, including deliberately incorporating new goals and their implementation” (P. ix). This change, as Gilham and Williamson (2014) asserted, “special education would no longer retain its status as a parallel and competing educational system to ‘regular’ education” (p. 554). This vision would see one inclusive education system, and this is where the big picture vision would lead the school towards inclusion.

### *Collaborative Teaching*

Collaborative teaching is second to building a culture of inclusion valuing everyone's strengths and skills. Collaboration not only with teachers, curriculum specialists and special education teachers, but master teachers and community service personal, is a cornerstone to inclusive education. Hedegaard Hansen et al. (2020) stated, "To develop inclusive schools, there is a need for several different specialist approaches, forms of knowledge, skills and competence, which is more than qualified teachers are generally able to provide" (p. 48). It is important to remember that all teachers are specialist in their own right, but they do not have all the answers to building inclusive schools; it is important to have a team approach, a sharing of knowledge, application, and skills. Hedegaard Hansen et al. (2020) also explained that "indirect form of collaboration spans a broad area of good advice and tips, mediation of new and specialized knowledge, collective brainstorming, support and guidance, and questions and dialogue, which supports reflection and analysis in relation to existing practice" (p. 49). This form of collaboration allows teachers to utilize a broader scope of skills to more kids.

One shift that would need to change would be the scheduling of curriculum specialist teachers and special education teachers. To build collaborative teams, as Jung et al. (2019), stated, "collaboration is key to the success of inclusive classrooms" (p. 101). Setting up a school schedule to allow for collaboration, not just in the classroom, but in planning, assessment, and reflection (Jung et al., 2019). Jung et al. also insisted, "Co-teaching models allow more students to experience more success because they have access to more expertise" (2019, p. 101). Through this collaboration, as Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis, (2016) determined that "both general and special education teachers must adopt new roles and participate in common professional

development” (p. 31). These new roles will develop through being able to work together in all facets of teaching from planning to reflection.

### ***Strength-Based Programming***

A third recommendation would be to use a strength-based approach to support students and to stop using the model of deficits that is currently used in education. Jenson (2018) identified,

Inclusion does not focus on the individual deficit that encourages ‘fitting in’, but rather supports a range of learning and physical differences. Participation in school life is not restricted to limited access to curriculum or by physical barriers but instead inclusion aims to remove any disabling factor in an educational context. (pp. 54–55).

In strength-based programming teachers would work together to determine where strengths lie with each student and then seeing where students would need more support. By moving away from the deficit programming, we can reach, and share supports with more students. Weiner and Murawski (2005) agreed that “we must value our students’ strengths, encourage their affinities, and be tolerant of the diversity and differences of each students’ mind” (p. 289). This allows us to build capacity believing in the competence of each student.

### ***Presuming Competence***

One way that we move to strength-based programming is by building on the belief of competence in each student, not immediately jumping to the conclusion that a student will be unsuccessful based on a label. Jung et al. (2019) asserted, “Some students who need intensive support do not meet the criteria for a disability label. And many students who have a disability label do not need intensive supports” (p. 22) Medical diagnosis are not great indicators of what needs a student will have or what they can do. Biklen and Burke (2006) stated, “Presuming

competence implies that educators must assume students can and will change and, that through engagement with the world, will demonstrate complexities of thought and action that could not necessarily be anticipated” (p. 168). It is the inherent belief that every student can learn, and every student has a right to learn. Bogart and Dunn (2019) believed that “persons with disabilities are marginalized and othered because of ableism” (p. 168). Changing how we approach our belief in students’ abilities allows us to ask further questions, like if they cannot do it now, what do they need to be successful? How do we support these students to reach their goals? In this we have, as LaForce et al. (2016) defined, “personalization of learning takes the classroom away from a ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy to allow for truly individualized instruction” (p. 7).

### ***Universal Design for Learning and Gradual Release of Responsibility***

Finally, providing and supporting professional development on the processes of UDL and gradual release of responsibility. This will allow teachers to be proactive rather than reactive. Rao and Meo (2016) specified “by considering what the barriers are, teachers can build supports from the outset rather than modifying lessons after the fact to address the needs of learners” (p. 3). UDL, which is used to break down barriers and as Mole (2012) defined, “the principles of universal design support the creation of products, services and environments that are usable by the widest range of users without modification or retrofitting” (p. 71). It becomes work up front, instead of trying to build supports after initial planning and preparation one would incorporate those supports as part of the planning.

Gradual release of responsibility is an instructional framework that allows teachers to work through concepts and maximizes students learning process (Jung et al., 2019). Having teachers start with one unit, or one concept in a unit to work with this process allows teachers to



determine how this process might work for them. Teachers then determine how they are modelling the concept, then how they want to structure question and clarifying activities. Finally, they allow students to work in groups and then independently to demonstrate the concept with which they are working. Encouraging teachers to implement and reflect on this practice while working in a collaborative environment enables teachers to build their efficacy with universal practices that support inclusion.

### **Conclusions**

This capstone focused on some of the issues of inclusion, specifically surrounding how school leaders could identify and mitigate systemic barriers to inclusion. The research showed that three large barriers to inclusion are labels we use to describe people, our standardized curriculum and assessments and teachers own biases and perceptions on the topic of inclusion. As a result of these barriers, the research showed that schools can still overcome these barriers by implementing evidence-based strategies that support educators and students. These strategies are collaborative teaching, strength-based programming, and UDL with gradual release of responsibility.

Inclusion is not just for our neurodiverse students, but for all students who do not fit within the standard; this builds and supports our diverse world, allowing students to overcome systemic barriers that are in place. Teachers and school leaders spend many years trying to retrofit these systems to support students, when a proactive system would better serve learners. Sokal and Katz (2015) asserted, “Achieving inclusive education involves changes in policy, curricula, systemic structures and instructional practices” (p. 45). Without this, teachers and school leaders must work around the barriers using various supports.

Schools are microcosms of society, and when students move within programs that are built for only some students, these do not reflect society to the greater extent. School leaders can choose to support inclusion, they can work to build inclusion as a grassroots movement school by school, district by district until those in power decide to really confront and change the systemic barriers that impede inclusion.

Neurodiverse students spend their entire education career working to fit into an education system that does not recognize them. As parent Erin Kilmeister (personal communication, May 2019) said, “My son has spent so much of his time trying to fit into school, and he deserves to be in school, to be taking things in which he is interested. Sometimes, society needs to bend for him, so that the best parts of him are not lost to conforming.”

Further research is still required on overcoming the systemic barriers at the high school level to support all students to achieve high levels of education. Much research referred to the use of these strategies within elementary and middle schools where teachers may often teach many subjects, but the singular focus of high school teachers working as inclusive educators still needs more study. Another area of research to consider would be how schools shift from the parallel system we currently operate into the inclusive system that is being called for. Those practical strategies, the how we get there, would be most beneficial for school leaders to begin restructuring.

### References

- Alberta Education. (n.d.). *Alberta's school system*. <https://www.alberta.ca/albertas-school-system.aspx>
- Alberta Education. (2010). *Setting the direction for special education: Phase 1 community consultation what we heard summary report*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/ebac1ce8-2224-4e73-b7b6-2bb9148332db/resource/2ad2da30-fff3-4ba3-bbf8-3b9db7aa8931/download/4286309-2009-wwh-setting-the-direction.pdf>
- Alberta Education (2011). *Our children, our future: Getting it right*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/969bb064-5913-4189-97d2-347a6a0ad1d0/resource/ab1faa9e-e20f-4667-afe1-aa876f67bbe2/download/6571367-2011-11-our-children-our-future.pdf>
- Alberta Education. (2021). *Special education coding criteria, 2021/22*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/ee2ccea8-97fe-41a1-aa11-ed9f21421364/resource/ceb40d84-c1fe-4f48-aa0c-16069fbd5c32/download/edc-special-education-coding-criteria-2021-2022.pdf>
- Alberta Learning. (2004). *Standards for special education*. <https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626522/standards-for-special-ed-2004.pdf>
- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2014). *Report of the blue ribbon panel on inclusive education in Alberta schools*. <https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/News-Room/2014/PD-170-1%20PD%20Blue%20Ribbon%20Panel%20Report%202014-web.pdf>

- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2021). *Inclusive education in Alberta classrooms and schools*.  
<https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/PD-170-1b-Inclusive-Ed-in-AB-Schools-Research-Report-web.pdf>
- Autism Speaks. (n.d.). *Ten inspiring quotes from people with Autism*.  
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/life-spectrum/10-inspiring-quotes-people-autism>.
- Baldiris Navarro, S., Zervas, P., Fabregat Gesa, R., & Sampson, D. G. (2016). Developing teachers' competences for designing inclusive learning experiences. *Educational Technology & Society, 19*(1), 17–27.
- Biklen, D., & Burke, J. (2006). Presuming competence. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 39*(2), 166–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680500540376>
- Bogart, K. R., & Dunn, D. S. (2019). Ableism special issue introduction. *Journal of Social Issues, 75*(3), 650–664. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12354>
- Boyle, M. J., & Hernandez, C. M. (2016). An investigation of the attitudes of Catholic school principals towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. *Journal of Catholic Education, 20*(1), 190–219. <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.2001092016>
- Brelinsky, S. (2018). *Educator attitudes, challenges, and best practices when including students with significant disabilities in the regular education setting* (Order No. 10934449) [Doctoral Dissertation, College of Saint Elizabeth]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Brewer, H. (2019). *Relentless*. Dave Burgess Consulting.
- Browder, D. M., Spooner, F., Wakeman, S., Trela, K., & Baker, J. N. (2006). Aligning instruction with academic content standards: Finding the link. *Research & Practice for*

- Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(4), 309–321.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/154079690603100404>
- Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead*. Random House.
- Brown, B. (2021). *Atlas of the heart: Mapping meaningful connection and the language of human experience*. Random House.
- Bulgren, J., Marquis, J. G., Deshler, D. D., Schumaker, J. B., & Lenz, B. K. (2006). The instructional context of inclusive secondary general education classes: Teachers' instructional roles and practices, curricular demands and research-based practices and standards. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal*, 4(1), 39–65.
- Calabrese-Barton, A., & Tan, E. (2020). Beyond equity as inclusion: A framework of “rightful presence” for guiding justice-oriented studies in teaching and learning. *Educational Researcher*, 49(6), 433–440. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20927363>
- Carter, S., & Abawi, L. (2018). Leadership, inclusion and quality education for all. *Australian Journal of Special Inclusive Education*, 42(1), 46–64. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jsi.2018.5>
- Causton-Theoharis, J. (2009). *The paraprofessional's handbook for effective support in inclusive classrooms*. Paul H. Brooks Publishing.
- Causton-Theoharis, J., & Theoharis, G. (2016, September). Creating inclusive schools for all students. *The School Administrator*, 24–31.
- Contenta, S. (1993). *Rituals of failure: What schools really teach*. Between the Lines.
- Coyne, P., Pisha, B., Dalton, B., Zeph, L. A., & Smith, N. C. (2012). Literacy by design: A universal design for learning approach for students with significant intellectual disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 33(3), 162–172.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932510381651>

Davern, L., Schnorr, R., Ford, A., & Staulters, M. (2003). Meaningful learning (and good IEPs) amidst the learning standards movement. *Impact*, 16(1), 11, 31.

DeMatthews, D., & Mawhinney, H. (2014). Social justice leadership and inclusion: Exploring challenges in an urban district struggling to address inequities. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 50(5), 844–881. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13514440>

DeMatthews, D., Serafini, A., & Watson T. N. (2021). Leading inclusive schools: Principal perceptions, practices, and challenges to meaningful change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 57(1), 3–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X20913897>

Dictionary.com. (n.d.). Social justice. In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/social-justice>

Disability Nottinghamshire (n.d). *Social model vs medical model of disability*. Retrieved September 11, 2022, from <https://www.disabilitynottinghamshire.org.uk/index.php/about/social-model-vs-medical-model-of-disability/#:~:text=The%20medical%20model%20of%20disability%20says%20people%20are%20disabled%20by,not%20cause%20pain%20or%20illness.>

Disabled World. (2021). *What is neurodiversity, neurodivergent, neurotypical*.

<https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/awareness/neurodiversity/>

Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset the new psychology of success*. Penguin Random House.

Eredics, N. (2018). *Inclusion in action: Practical strategies to modify your curriculum*. Paul H Brooks Publishing.

Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a culture of change*. Wiley Brand.

- Gilham, C., & Williamson, W. J. (2014). Inclusion's confusion in Alberta. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(6), 553–566. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2013.802025>
- Hedegaard Hansen, J., Carrington, S., Riis Jensen, C., Molbæk, M., & Secher Schmidt, M. C. (2020). The collaborative practice of inclusion and exclusion. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 6*(1), 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1730112>
- Hitchcock, C., Meyer, A., Rose, D., & Jackson, R. (2002). Providing new access to the general curriculum: Universal design for learning. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 35*(2), 8–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990203500201>
- Horrocks, J. L., White, G., & Roberts, L. (2008). Principals' attitudes regarding inclusion of children with autism in Pennsylvania public schools. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 38*(8), 1462–1473. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-007-0522-x>
- Hunt, J. H., & Andreasen, J. B. (2011). Making the most of universal design for learning. *Mathematics Teaching in Middle School, 17*(3), 166–172.
- Jenson, K. (2018). Discourses of disability and inclusive education. *He Kupu the Word, 5*(4), 52–59.
- Jorgensen, C. M., Fisher, D., Tashie, C., & Sgambati, M. (2003). What matters most: ensuring that high school students with disabilities are members of.... *Impact, 16*(1), 22–23.
- Jung L., Frey, N. Fisher, D., & Kroener, J. (2019). *Your students, my students, our students: Rethinking equitable and inclusive classrooms*. ASCD.
- Jurado-de-los-Santos, P., Colmenero-Ruiz, M. J., Valle-Flórez, R. E., Castellary-López, M., & Figueredo-Canosa, V. (2021). The teacher's perspective on inclusion in education: An analysis of curriculum design. *Sustainability, 13*, 4766. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13094766>

- Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise and other bribes*. Mariner Books Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2010). *The truth about leadership: The no-fads, heart of the matter, facts you need to know*. A Wiley Brand.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*. A Wiley Brand.
- LaForce, M., Noble, E., King, H., Century, J., Blackwell, C., Holt, S., Ibrahim, A., & Loo, S. (2016). The eight essential elements of inclusive STEM high schools. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 3(21), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-016-0054-z>
- Lopez, S. J., & Louis, M. C. (2009). The principles of strengths-based education. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1041>
- MacArthur, J., & Rutherford, G. (2016). Success for all? Re-envisioning New Zealand schools and classrooms as places where ‘rights’ replace ‘special.’ *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 51(2), 157–174. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-016-0066-8>
- Manji, I. (2019). *Don't label me: How to do diversity without inflaming the culture wars*. St. Martin's Griffin.
- Massoumeh, Z., & Leila, J. (2012). An investigation of medical model and special education methods. *Procedia*, 46, 5802–5804. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.518>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Disability. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disability>
- Mole, H. (2012). A US model for inclusion of disabled students in higher education settings: The social model of disability and universal design. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 14(3), 62–86. <https://doi.org/10.5456/WPLL.14.3.62>



Moore, S. (2016). *One without the other: Stories of unity through diversity and inclusion*.

Portage and Main Press.

Moore, S. [Five Moore Minutes]. (2018, October 1). *The evolution of inclusion* [Video].

YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQgXBhPh5Zo>

Moore, S. [Five Moore Minutes]. (2020, February 20). *Bringing support to the students just let*

*them eat cake* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WuygB4j55U>

Moore, S. [Five Moore Minutes]. (2021, February 1). *The importance of presuming competence*

[Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Mq8sQTEhG8>

Popova, M. (2020). The hidden brain: How ocean currents explain our unconscious social biases

[Review of the book *The hidden brain*, by S. Vedantam]. *The Marginalian*.

<https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/04/09/the-hidden-brain-shankar-vedantam/>

Rao, K., & Meo, G. (2016, December). Using universal design for learning to design standards-

based lessons. *SAGE Open*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016680688>

Resnick, A. (2022, February 7). What is neurodiversity. *Verywell Mind*.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-neurodiversity-5193463>

Roberts, C. A., Ruppard, A. L., & Olson, A. J. (2018). Perceptions matter: Administrators' vision

of instruction for students with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons*

*with Severe Disabilities*, 43(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796917743931>

Robinson L. K. (2004). *Factors determining the perceptions of high school teachers toward*

*inclusive education, effective instructional strategies and administrative support for*

*change*. Morgan State University.

Rodden, B., Prendeville, P., Burke, S., & Kinsella, W. (2018). Framing secondary teachers'

perspectives on the inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorder using critical

- discourse analysis. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 49(2), 235–253.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2018.1506018>
- Rose, T. (2016). *The end of average: Unlocking our potential by embracing what makes us different*. Harper Collins Publishers.
- Runswick-Cole, K. (2011). Time to end the bias towards inclusive education? *British Journal of Special Education*, 38(3), 112–119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.2011.00514.x>
- Silverthorn, M. (2021) *Authentic diversity*. Productivity Press.
- Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with why*. Portfolio Penguin.
- Sokal, L., & Katz, J. (2015). Oh, Canada: Bridges and barriers to inclusion in Canadian schools. *Support for Learning*, 30(1), 42–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12078>
- Strully, J., & Strully, C. (2003). Inclusion a road worth taking. *Impact*, 16(1), 1.
- Szeto, E. (2021). How do principals' practices reflect democratic leadership for inclusion in diverse school settings? A Hong Kong case study. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(3), 471–492.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220915922>
- Theoharis, G., Causton, J., & Tracy-Bronson, C. P. (2016). Inclusive reform as a response to high-stakes pressure? Leading toward inclusion in the age of accountability. *Teachers College Record*, 118(114), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811611801403>
- Weiner, I., & Murawski, W.W. (2005). Schools attuned: A model for collaborative intervention. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 40(5), 284–290.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512050400050501>
- Wilson, N. (2021). Inclusive assessment strategies for culturally diverse classrooms. *Agora*, 56(2), 15–18.

