

Beginning Teacher Study: The Development of Inclusive Practice



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Inclusive Education During the Pandemic

We all know from our interactions with teachers, students, parents, and colleagues that the cumulative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning is particularly challenging for everyone. Yet, we witness and celebrate the innovative ways that communities of educators are responding to the crisis with the sharing of approaches, mentoring, school leadership, and engagement.

Viewing this challenging time through a positive lens, we are understanding the interactive, multi-complex nature of the challenges and creating new pathways, approaches, and practices that will render teaching and learning (both in class and virtual) more accessible. Technology is no doubt essential in these times; but it is *authentic* inclusion that guides the pedagogical decisions we make as teachers.

Our research focuses on Beginning Teachers. In this issue you will find an update on our research as well as an invitation to participate in the research. By sharing your perspective you will contribute to all of our learning. We also highlight and applaud graduate students who have successfully undertaken and completed their research. We bookend this issue with a number of curated resources you are sure to find interesting and useful.



Beginning Teacher Study

The Beginning Teachers Study is a collaboration of scholars from multiple disciplines (e.g., equity and diversity, human rights, advocacy, disability studies and special education) across Canada. We are focusing on the important issue of understanding beginning teachers' instructional practice for the purpose of enhancing teacher competence and confidence to address the range of student learning needs in today's diverse and inclusive classrooms. The study is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



We are focused on the self-efficacy, beliefs and instructional practices of beginning teachers, identifying the factors that shape their development over time and in the context of their initial teaching experiences. We are following beginning teachers throughout their educational program and beyond into their first years of teaching to determine how new teachers develop their practice to teach in our increasingly diverse classrooms.

Research Update

We have completed the 5-year research program and have been given an extension to continue with the final data collection and further analysis and writing. Here's an overview:

Data were collected initially from approximately 2,620 teacher education students (1,376 in 2015 and 1,244 in 2016) at teacher education institutions across Canada using paper and pencil survey methods. Data included demographic information, completion of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale and the Beliefs About Teaching and Learning Questionnaire (BLTQ). The same information was collected by way of online surveys from 279 of the 1,555 teacher education students who volunteered to do so upon completion of their program. These online surveys were completed and submitted again from 257 participants in their first year of teaching, from 179 participants as they entered in their second year of teaching, and 108 participants in their third year of teaching.

Between 2017 and 2020, four rounds of follow-up interviews were conducted as follows: 51 participants in Round 1 (on completion of their teacher preparation program), 47 beginning teachers in Round 2, 23 in Round 3 and 21 in Round 4. A total of 142 interviews were conducted. We have used the data in student theses, conference presentations, and published papers. We will continue to utilize the data over the next few years in presentations and publications.

The COVID-19 Pandemic affected our personal lives and our work. We were scheduled to present our research at numerous conferences which were cancelled. We continue to publish our work and have a number of articles accepted and others in the review process. We will continue to contribute to the field through both academic publications and community engagement.

Research Request

One of the issues of COVID-19, is that our schools are far from business as usual and our ability to reach early career teachers to participate in the final stages of our research is challenging.

We would love to hear from teachers in their first 5 years of teaching across Canada who would be interested in participating in this study.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort written statements that participants have provided to us in the interviews related to experiences that have influenced their teaching practice in inclusive classrooms. You will be provided with approximately 100 statements to sort into categories that make sense to you and to then rate them for importance. The entire process will take about 60 minutes and is undertaken using an online program.

You will receive a \$25 gift certificate for Starbucks as a thank you for participating in this study. If interested, please contact Dr. Jacqueline Specht at jspecht@uwo.ca for further information. We encourage you to seriously consider this opportunity and look forward to hearing from you.

International Connections

The COVID-19 pandemic limits local and international travel, but not the continued research partnership and exchange of ideas between researchers around the world researching and working toward more inclusive education. Dr. Jacqueline Specht and Dr. Donna McGhie-Richmond maintain close partnerships with Dr. Susanne Miesera at the Technical University of Munich School of Education in Hamburg, Germany. We have undertaken an international comparison of the beliefs and self-efficacy of prospective teachers regarding inclusive teaching. The results were shared at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER 2019) in Hamburg, Germany and a publication is in the works.



TEACHER CONFIDENCE



CLASSROOM DIVERSITY / INCLUSION



TEACHER COLLABORATION

Graduate Student News

Graduate students play a vital role on our research team. In this issue we celebrate and profile three graduate students whose work contributes to our collective understanding of inclusive education practices and theories. The future of Inclusive Education research is in good hands!

McKenzie Vanderloon



As part of my PhD Dissertation, I used the Beginning Teachers Study data to examine how teacher efficacy for inclusive practices changes over time and the experiences that impact its development. In particular, I examined efficacy levels across three time points, from the time participants were in their first year of their faculty of education program through to the first year of in-service teaching. I used a mixed-method design which gathered quantitative data from the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices

(TEIP) questionnaire and qualitative data from telephone interviews. The TEIP measures three components of efficacy for inclusive practice: *Collaboration*, *Inclusive Instruction*, and *Managing Behaviour*. Results showed that teachers became significantly more confident for *managing behaviour* and using *inclusive instruction* from their first year of their faculty of education program into their second year, and that efficacy did not significantly decrease when they entered the teaching profession. Teacher efficacy for *collaboration* did not change significantly at any time point. A thematic analysis of interviews showed practicum, associate teachers, and coursework to be the most frequently discussed experiences impacting efficacy levels. These findings reveal new insight into the various supports teacher candidates and in-service teachers require to increase their efficacy for using inclusive practices.

Michael Fairbrother



I am fortunate to be in my fifth year of research and collaboration with the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education and the Beginning Teachers Study. My current research and scholarly activity connect to inclusion across varying levels. My recently defended doctoral research explores and unpacks the contextual complexities influencing teachers' early reading instruction and perspectives towards early reading professional learning. This research derives from the premise that children who fail to learn to read well face unfair and lifelong societal disadvantage; that even though there are large bodies of research

indicating how to provide effective professional learning, and therefore ways to teach struggling readers effectively, there remains an unacceptably persisting rate of failure for too many students. Findings in this particular research have theoretical, empirical and practical implications for preservice teacher education and inservice professional learning. Publications in the works relate to teacher learning and change, qualitative complexity theory methodology, early reading and literacy/ies. I look forward to continued collaboration with the Centre as we analyze, write and share ways to create inclusive environments for students who inequitably and too frequently face barriers to participation in school and society.

Graduate Student News continued



Linda Ismailos

Linda Ismailos completed her Ph.D. earning the Distinguished Graduate Student Award in the Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Studies program at Brock University. Her dissertation was entitled, “Perceptions of Change in Self-Efficacy to Pursue Postsecondary Education for Students with Exceptionalities Participating in a Postsecondary Transition Program”. This mixed-methods study explored the effect of a post-secondary transition program on the development of self-efficacy for post-secondary studies and

the likelihood to apply to post-secondary studies among students with exceptionalities. The study also examined how their perceptions of change in self-efficacy compared to their non-exceptional peers in a post-secondary transition program. Participants included Grade 11 and 12 students with and without exceptionalities who were at risk of non-completion of their secondary school diploma from 2 participating boards of education at a college in Ontario, Canada. Findings demonstrated that students both with and without exceptionalities benefitted from the program through a number of elements that resulted in increased self-efficacy to succeed in post-secondary education, and an increased likelihood to apply to a postsecondary program in the future. Findings, however, indicated that the two groups of students did not share the same perceptions of how the program might have contributed to their increased self-efficacy. Following program completion, students with exceptionalities were more likely to describe their personal mastery experiences in a post-secondary academic program and their process of metacognitive skill development, whereas their peers without exceptionalities were more likely to describe a positive experience on a college campus as the primary contributing factor for their increased academic self-efficacy. The study further discusses the elements that contributed to the change experienced by the students with exceptionalities and offers a visual framework for the elements involved in the development of academic self-efficacy for students with exceptionalities. Interpretations and suggestions as to how these insights could inform future policy and practice are discussed.

Helpful Resources and Publications

“In the Spring of 2020, Canadian schools were closed to limit the spread and impact of COVID-19 across Canada and beyond.... Those learning at home included about one million students, from Kindergarten through Grade 12, requiring special education services.... A range of programs, supports, and placements are typically offered in schools across Canada to meet the needs of these students... So, what became of these approaches and supports when the learning context shifted from school to home, and what implications did this have for students and families?” What did we learn? Read more from this timely article:

[Diversity via Distance: Lessons learned from families supporting students with special education needs during remote learning.](#)

Helpful Resources and Publications continued

Inclusive Education Canada holds that “all people with and intellectual disability should be fully included with their peers in regular education, with appropriate supports from early childhood through to post-secondary and adult life-long learning.”

[Resources from Inclusive Education Canada](#)



And see:

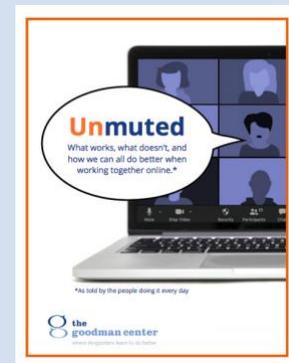
[The Journey to Inclusive Schooling: A Guide by Gordon L. Porter & David Towell](#)

Our Beginning Teacher Study colleague Dr. Angèle Aucoin, along with Gordon Porter and Kimberley Baker-Korotkov have recently written an article on [New Brunswick’s Journey to Inclusive Education](#).

The paper explores how New Brunswick meets global standards for inclusive education. The article analyzes New Brunswick’s path to inclusive schools, concluding that, despite visible progress, real change is a difficult process that requires long periods of sustained effort and collaboration from a variety of partners.

[Unmuted Report: What works, what doesn’t and how we could all be doing better when working together online](#)

Of particular interest is section 2 on accessibility where the authors claim that “our virtual welcome mats need some work”.



The **Learning Scientists’** recent [Digest #148](#) is focused on Engaging Students in Online Learning

In particular, we draw readers attention to the 5th paper [Ten Simple Rules for Supporting a Temporary Online Pivot in Higher Education](#)

The paper explores a question many educators are tackling:

How do we provide teaching and assessment to students in a manner that is accessible, fair, equitable, and provides the best learning whilst acknowledging the temporary nature of the pivot and while knowing that no “one size fits all” solution exists?

Helpful Resources and Publications continued

Understood.org has curated a useful list:
[Coronavirus- Latest Updates and Tips.](#)



Scrolling through this page you will find a list created for educators on topics such as: 5 reasons students aren't engaging in distance learning, How I reached students who disappeared during distance learning, UDL best practices for distance learning, and more. Of special interest to beginning teachers see the article: [Notes from a First-Time Distance Learning Teacher](#).

Teaching and learning during the pandemic was also the subject of Canadian media attention recently.



From **CBC News**:

[“Teachers say return to school this fall has left them with overwhelming stress and a never-ending workload.”](#)

Another CBC story says, [“Schools scramble to make up for learning losses that have already occurred in the pandemic.”](#)

From the **Globe and Mail**:

[“Teachers concerned about their health, quality of education as they deal with challenges of COVID-19 pandemic.”](#)

From American media:

See this focus on first-year teachers: [“If I could handle this, I can handle anything”: First-year teachers reflect on the pandemic.](#)

You can consult the full report that informed the article here: [Education in the Face of Unprecedented Challenges](#). The report explores how educators are responding to the new realities of school – both drawing on research and developing entirely original strategies.

Research Team

Principal Investigator

Dr. Jacqueline Specht, Western University,
jspecht@uwo.ca

Co-Investigators

University

Investigator

Acadia

Dr. Lynn Aylward

Brock

Dr. Sheila Bennett

Dr. Tiffany Gallagher

Concordia (Alberta)

Dr. Tim Loreman

British Columbia

Dr. Jennifer Katz

McGill

Ms. Roberta Thomson

Dr. Tara Flanagan

Memorial

Dr. Sharon Penney

Dr. Gabrielle Young

Dr. Kimberly Maich

Moncton

Dr. Angela AuCoin

Dr. Mireille LeBlanc

Mount Saint Vincent

Dr. Jamie Metsala

Ottawa

Dr. Jessica Whitley

Queen's

Dr. Nancy Hutchinson

Regina

Dr. Wanda Lyons

Dr. Jenn de Lugt

Dr. Scott Thompson

Thompson Rivers

Dr. Kim Calder Stegemann

Victoria

Dr. Anne Marshall

Dr. Donna McGhie-Richmond

Western

Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki

Wilfrid Laurier

Dr. Steven Sider



Contact Us

Connect with the Research Team member closest to you from the list to the left,

or...

For general inquiries:

Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education

www.inclusiveeducationresearch.ca

Tel: 519-661-2111

1137 Western Road London, Ontario, Canada, N6G 1G7

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@inclusiveed

Beginning Teachers Study

Thank you again for your support in this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator, Dr. Jacqueline Specht at jspecht@uwo.ca.