



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

By researching and sharing our findings with educators, relevant organizations and agencies across Canada and around the world, collectively we aim to empower teachers and others with the knowledge they need to be effective with all students, including those with exceptional needs.

Jacqueline Specht,
Centre Director

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A. Active Involvement of Members with Centre Work, 2020

Note: A complete list of members of the Centre appears in **Appendix A**.

The Centre's mission is "to empower teachers and others with the knowledge they need to be effective with all students, including those with exceptional needs". This is accomplished through research, and knowledge mobilization activities. Many of the members of the Centre were actively involved in both initiatives in 2020. This section outlines that involvement. First, each year the Centre publishes an online journal titled **Exceptionality Education International** (EEI). Centre members, Drs. **Specht** and **Young** are editors, and two others, **Drs. de Lugt** and **Penney**, are associate editors.

The SSHRC-funded **Beginning Teachers Study** entered its fifth year in 2020. Several members are actively involved in the research and knowledge mobilization activities involved in this longitudinal research study: **Drs. Specht** (PI), co-investigators **Drs. Gallagher, McGhie-Richmond, Metsala, Thompson, and Whitley**. These Centre members also supervised student MA and PhD theses based on the data collected from this study. Centre Director **Dr. Specht** organized a symposium presentation for CSSE 2020 with 10 members: **Drs. de Lugt, Gallagher, Maich, McGhie-Richmond, Metsala, Sider, Thompson, Thorne, Whitley, and Young**, plus four graduate student research assistants: Charles, Delorey, Ismailos, and Lau. The 2020 conference was cancelled; however, the symposium has been re-scheduled for 2021.

The **Covid-19 pandemic** demanded a quick response to gather and share insights. **Dr. Whitley** led a team comprised of Centre members **Specht, MacCormack, Matheson, Maich and Sider** to research and report on diversity at a distance and the lessons learned from families supporting students with special education needs during remote learning.

Three members of the Centre, **Drs. Sider** (PI), **Maich and Specht** partnered with the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) to develop **interactive case studies** for professional development. Seven Centre members are involved with the **critical incidents** project to interact with principals and colleagues from provinces across Canada: **Drs. Sider** (PI), **McGhie-Richmond, Specht, Maich, MacCormack, Bennett, Rousseau, and Somma**.

Centre members **McGhie-Richmond** and **Specht** are also working with international researchers. They have partnered with Dr. Susanne Miesera from the Technical University of Munich (TUM) to compare how Canadian and German beginning teachers view experiences that contribute to the development of inclusive practice. **Dr. Specht** was to be a visiting scholar at TUM in the fall of 2020, however this has been delayed due to the outbreak of Covid-19. In addition, **Drs. Specht, Sider, and Maich** have partnered with a team of Canadian and Ghanaian academics and stakeholders to determine indicators of successful inclusive education in Ghana. They have travelled to Ghana to interact with local leaders.

In June 2020 the Centre held its Annual Meeting virtually, with 17 members and 7 graduate student research assistants attending. At that meeting, members discussed knowledge mobilization and strategies for 2020 to 2022. The members also agreed to apply for a SSHRC Partnership Grant and are preparing a proposal for February 2021. These members have actively participated by co-creating and sharing research knowledge with other Centre members, provincial educators, school leaders and policy legislators to create a truly Pan-Canadian perspective on inclusive education.

B. Value of Involvement for Members

Note: Additional examples of co-authored publications and presentations appear in **Appendix B**. Faculty members' names are **bolded**; graduate students' names are underlined.

Faculty Research Collaborations: Many of the members of the Centre are renowned for their expertise in a specialized area of inclusion and inclusive education. These strengths provide a multi-perspective approach to addressing policy and practice. Below is one particular example, released in November 2020, that provided insights into supporting students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whitley, J., MacCormack, J., Matheson, I., Specht, J., Sider, S., & Maich, K. (2020). Diversity via distance: Lessons learned from families supporting students with special education needs during remote learning. *Education Canada, 60(4)*, <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/diversity-via-distance/>

Faculty/Graduate Student Research Collaborations - Presentations. A proposal was accepted by the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE) to conduct a symposium at the 2020 conference in London, Canada. The presentation involved 11 Centre members and 5 graduate students who were actively involved in the Beginning Teachers Study. Unfortunately, the conference was cancelled due to Covid-19. The proposal has been re-submitted for the 2021 CSSE conference in Edmonton.

Specht, J., Charles, E., de Lugt, J., Delorey, J., Gallagher, T., Howell, G., Ismailos, L., Lau, Z., Maich, K., McGhie-Richmond, D., Metsala, J., Sider, S., Thompson, S., Thorne, C., Whitley, J., Young, G. (2020, May30-June 3). *Inclusive education and beginning teachers: Implications for research and practice* [Symposium]. Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Conference, London, Canada. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Publications. Members of the Centre collaborate together, and also with graduate students in publishing or co-publishing papers on inclusive education, using data collected as part of the research grants obtained. For example, the article cited below has been accepted for publication. The lead author is Jessica Delorey, a graduate student at Western University who conducted research for her M.A. in Education using data from the Beginning Teachers Study. Co-authors include the principal investigator, two co-investigators and five other graduate students who assisted with data collection and analysis.

Delorey, J., Specht, J., Fairbrother, M., Ismailos, L., Villella, M., Charles, E., Vanderloon, M., Gallagher, T., Howell, G., & Whitley, J. (in press). Experiences that shape pre-service teachers' inclusive practice beliefs. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.

C. Academic Impact

Textbooks. In 2020, the 6th edition of *Inclusion of learners with exceptionalities in Canadian Schools* was published by Centre members **Drs. Hutchinson**, and **Specht**. This publication serves as the premier textbook for inclusive education courses taught at faculties of education across Canada. Dr. Hutchinson is professor emerita at Queen's University.

Journals. In addition to the Delorey et al. paper accepted in 2020 for publication in the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, the Centre publishes an online journal titled *Exceptionality Education International* (EEI). Centre members, Drs. **Specht** and **Young** are editors, and two others, **Drs. de Lugt** and **Penney** are associate editors. *Exceptionality Education International* provides a forum for research and dialogue on topics relevant to the education of people with exceptionalities and how barriers to the full participation of all people in education can be reduced and removed. Journal articles are available through open access after one year. For the current year as of October 20, 2020, there were almost 23,000 downloads from the internet. See **Appendix C** for an infographic map. More information about EEI may be viewed [HERE](#).

Comparative and International Research. **Drs. McGhie-Richmond** and **Specht** have partnered with Dr. Susanne Miesera from the Technical University of Munich (TUM) to compare how Canadian and German beginning teachers view experiences that contribute to the development of inclusive practice. Note: Dr. Miesera was scheduled to come to Canada to conduct a comparative study in March of 2020, and Dr. Specht was to be a visiting scholar in the fall of 2020 at TUM, however these trips were cancelled due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

In addition, **Drs. Specht, Sider**, and **Maich** have partnered with a team of Canadian and Ghanaian academics and stakeholders to determine indicators of successful inclusive education in Ghana, along with resources that can be used to promote inclusive education for Ghanaian students. This research is funded by a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant (2019-2022), *Fostering equitable education systems for those with disabilities in Ghana*.

International Recognition of Research Collaborations. In the special issue of *Sustainability*, titled "Inclusive Education and Sustainability", Cretu and Morandau (2020) acknowledged the contributions of several members of the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education. One of these is **Dr. Loreman**, President of Concordia University of Edmonton. Cretu and Morandau (2020) point out the need for increased collaboration among researchers and highlight several examples of these (Figure 6 on page 15 of the article) including the network among Centre members **Loreman, Specht, Bennett** and **Gallagher**. The authors conclude that Canadian researchers are "clustering" with those in other countries (Figure 7, p.16). To view this article, visit [Sustainability](#).

Knowledge Mobilization

Educators. Newsletters were distributed twice in 2020 via a link on the Centre web site to approximately 1,550 new teachers on each occasion, and to contacts at 30 community and government agencies, acknowledged on the Centre's web site under the "Partners" tab. The Spring and Fall 2020 issues of the [Beginning Teachers Study newsletters](#) include commentary concerning beginning teachers and inclusive education during the Covid-19 pandemic, plus a curated list of online resources and publications to help educators respond to the educational implications. These are available on the Centre's web site.

A discussion guide has been prepared to accompany an upcoming video series on Building Inclusive Schools. This project was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education to the Réseau de Savoir sur l'Équité/Equity Knowledge Network (RSEKN). Centre members and graduate students who contributed to the guide are **Drs. Bennett, Gallagher, and Specht**, with graduate students [Faulconbridge](#) and [Owusu](#).

Leaders. In 2020, the journal *Exceptionality Education International* published a series of seven articles written by speakers at the "Intersectionalities in Leadership" conference which was funded by a SSHRC Connection Grant to **Dr. Sider**. Speakers included several members of the Research Centre: **Drs. Bennett, Katz, Maich, McGhie-Richmond, Specht, Jhone Morvan (graduate student and member of the Ontario Ministry of Education), and **Déirdre Smith** (community member of the Centre from the Ontario College of Teachers). Visit [\(Volume 30, issue 2\)](#).**

General Audiences.

Members of the Centre are consulted frequently by the media on issues concerning inclusive education. See **Appendix B** for a list of those occurring in 2020.

The Centre also posts regularly to its Twitter account, @InclusiveEd. Currently, here are 265 agencies or individuals following the Centre, and the Centre is following 112 agencies or individuals.

Graduate Student Research Awards

The Inclusive Education Research Award is funded by Foundation Western and administered by the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education. Each year, up to three awards of \$750 each are granted to graduate students in education to recognize exemplary research that addresses an issue concerning the inclusion of students who represent a diversity of backgrounds or learning needs. A committee of Centre members reviews the applications and selects the recipients. In 2020, awards went to:

Mohammed Estaiteyeh. *Biology Teachers' Understandings and Implementation of Differentiated Instruction (DI) in High Schools in Ontario*.

[Petra Owusu](#). *Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Statewide Autism Resources and Training (START) Peer-to-Peer Program*.

Kate Patterson. *Using Home Language as a Resource: Working Collaboratively with Ontario Educators to Support English language Learners in the Classroom*.

D. Funding -Secured:

Mfoafo-M'Carthy M., Principal Investigator; **Specht, J.** Grischow, J., **Sider, S.**, Mprahn, W., **Maich, K.**, Ashun, M., & Imoro, S. co-investigators (2019-2022). *Fostering equitable education systems for those with disabilities in Ghana*. SSHRC Partnership Development Grant. \$199,818

- A team of Canadian and Ghanaian academics and stakeholders will determine indicators of successful inclusive education in Ghana.

Sider, S., Principal Investigator; **Maich, K.**, & **Specht, J.**, co-applicants (2018-2020). *Technology-enhanced, interactive case studies for principals' professional development to support students with special education needs*. SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant. \$24,975

- Partnership with the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) to develop interactive online case studies to support principals' learning on inclusive education. Available at www.leadtoinclude.org

Sider, S., Principal Investigator; **McGhie-Richmond, D.**, **Specht, J.**, **Maich, K.**, & **MacCormack, J.**, co-investigators; **Bennett, S.**, Cobb, C., Morvan, J., **Rousseau, N.**, & **Somma, M.**, collaborators (2019-2024). *Canadian school principals' support of students with special education needs: An examination of critical incidents as a form of professional learning*. SSHRC Insight Grant. \$215,569

- To explore the experiences of principals as they support students with special education needs in inclusive schools in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Specht, J. Principal Investigator, with **23 faculty members of the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education as Co-investigators** (2015 –2020). *The development of inclusive educational practices for beginning teachers* (Beginning Teachers Study). Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). (Note: This study has been extended into 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.) \$488,800

- We follow beginning teachers throughout their program and beyond into their first years of teaching to determine how new teachers develop their practice to teach in our increasingly diverse classrooms.

Seeking:

Sider, S., Principal Investigator; **Specht, J.**, & **Maich, K.**, Co-applicants from the Centre. *Supporting Inclusive Education in Haiti: Developing a Canada-Haiti Partnership for Research and Teacher Education on Disability and Inclusion*. SSHRC Partnership Development Grant. \$200,000.

Specht, J., Principal Investigator. SSHRC Partnership Grant, Stage 1.

Appendix A
Members of the Centre

Faculty and Staff at Western University, ON

Jacqueline Specht	Professor and Director of the Centre
Elizabeth Nowicki	Associate Professor
Grace Howell	Centre Co-ordinator

Graduate Student Research Assistants at Western University, ON (unless otherwise noted)

Evan Charles	Ph.D. candidate
Jessica Delorey	Ph.D. candidate
Michael Fairbrother	Ph.D. awarded September 2020 (University of Ottawa)
Linda Ismailos	Ph.D. awarded August 2020 (Brock University)
Tsz Wing Zita Lau	Ph.D. candidate
Petra Owusu	Ph.D. candidate
Melissa Villella	Ph.D. candidate (University of Ottawa)
Fizza Haider	M. A. candidate (University of Victoria, BC)

Research Centre Associates at Post-Secondary Institutions across Canada

Angèle AuCoin	Associate Professor, University of Moncton, NB
M. Lynn Aylward	Professor, Acadia University, NS
Sheila Bennett	Professor, Brock University, ON
Jen de Lugt	Assistant Professor, University of Regina, SK
Tara Flanagan	Associate Professor, McGill University, QC
Tiffany Gallagher	Professor, Brock University, ON
Nancy Hutchinson	Professor Emerita, Queen's University, ON
Jennifer Katz	Associate Professor, University of British Columbia, BC
Mireille LeBlanc	Professor, University of Moncton, NB
Tim Loreman	President and Vice-chancellor, Concordia University of Edmonton, AB
Jeffrey MacCormack	Assistant Professor, University of Lethbridge, AB
Kimberly Maich	Professor, Memorial University, NL
Ian Matheson	Assistant Professor, Queen's University, ON
Donna McGhie-Richmond	Associate Professor, University of Victoria, BC
Jamie Metsala	Professor, Mount St. Vincent University, NS
Gillian Parekh	Assistant Professor, York University, ON
Sharon Penney	Associate Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland, NL
Nadia Rousseau	Professor, University of Québec at Trois Rivières
Steve Sider	Associate Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University, ON
Linda Siegel	Professor, University of British Columbia, BC
Monique Somma	Assistant Professor, Brock University, ON
Scott Thompson	Professor, University of Regina, SK
Roberta Thomson	Course Instructor, McGill University, and LaSalle College, QC

Carolyn Thorne	Assistant Professor, University of Prince Edward Island
Vianne Timmons	President and Vice-Chancellor, Memorial University, NL
Jessica Whitley	Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, ON
Gabrielle Young	Associate Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland, NL

In 2020, informal discussions occurred between the Centre Director and several members of Western's Faculty of Education concerning active membership in the Centre in 2021.

Appendix B Activities, Products, and Impacts of Collaborations

Selected Journal Articles

- AuCoin, A., Porter, G. L., & Baker-Korotkov, K.** (2020). New Brunswick's journey to inclusive education. *Prospects: Comparative Journal of Curriculum, Learning, and Assessment*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09508-8>
- Bennett, S., Gallagher, T., Somma, M., White, R.** (accepted, 2020). Transitioning towards inclusion: A triangulated view of the role of Educational Assistants. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs*.
- Ismailos, L., & Gallagher, T.L.** (2020). Collaborative assessment facilitates inclusion for students at-risk. *Inclusive Education Canada Commentary*. <https://inclusiveducation.ca/2020/03/05/collaborative-assessment-facilitates-inclusion-for-students-at-risk/>
- Maich, K., Sider, S., Morvan, J., Specht, J., Smith, D.** (2020). Making the unknown or invisible accessible: The collaborative development of inclusion-focused open access case studies for principals and other school leaders. *Exceptionality Education International Special Issue, 30(2)*, 68-79.
<https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/eei/article/view/11082>
- Sider, S., Maich, K., Morvan, J., Vilella, M., Ling, P., & Repp, C.** (Submitted). Inclusive school leadership: Examining the experiences of school principals in supporting students with special education needs. *International Journal of School Leadership*.
- Sider, S. & Vilella, M.** (2020). Violence in schools: What can we learn from critical incidents? *Canadian Association of Principals Journal*. <https://cdnprincipals.com/violence-in-schools-what-can-we-learn-from-critical-incidents/>
- Somma, M., & Bennett, S.** (2020). Inclusive education and pedagogical change: Experiences from the front lines. *International Journal of Educational Methodology, 6(2)*, 285-295.
<https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.6.2.285>
- Thompson, S. A., & Specht, J.** (in review). Piecing together provincial, territorial and national states of inclusive education policies and practices in Canada including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*.
- Whitley, J., MacCormack, J., Matheson, I., Specht, J., Sider, S., & Maich, K.** (2020). Diversity via distance: Lessons learned from families supporting students with special education needs during remote learning. *Education Canada, 60(4)*. <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/diversity-via-distance/>

Books and Book Chapters

- Bennett, S., Gallagher T., Somma, M., White, R., & Woldczyk, K** (in press, 2020). Transitioning from segregation to inclusion: An effective and sustainable model to promote inclusion through internal staffing adjustments and role redefinition. In J. Goldan, J. Lambrecht, & T. Loreman (Eds.),

Resourcing inclusive education: International perspectives on inclusive education (Volume 15). Emerald Publishing.

Hutchinson, N., & Specht, J. (2020). *Inclusion of learners with exceptionalities in Canadian schools* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Villella, M. (Submitted). Commentary analysis of the case study entitled “Supporting Albert.” In **S. Sider & K. Maich** (Eds.), *Leadership for inclusive schools: Real cases from real leaders to engage principals in professional learning for supporting students with special education needs*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Young, G., Philpott, D., **Penney, S., Maich, K., & Butler, E.** (in press, 2020). Quality early childhood education mitigates against special educational needs in children. In J. Goldan, J. Lambrecht, & **T. Loreman** (Eds.), *Resourcing inclusive education: International perspectives on inclusive education* (Volume 15). Emerald Publishing.

Selected Presentations

Bennett, S., Specht, J., Somma, M., & White, R. (2020, August). *Parents’ perspectives on inclusive practices for students with intellectual disabilities: Failures and successes* [Conference session]. Inclusive and Supportive Education Conference (ISEC), London, UK. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Sider, S., Winger, H., **Maich, K., Specht, J.,** Treadgold, C., Fraser, C., & Scott, M. (2020, May 30-June 3). *Choose your own leadership adventure: Examining a collaborative research project to support principals’ learning for leading inclusive schools* [Conference session]. Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration, London, ON, Canada. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Somma, M., Harwood, D., & **Bennett, S.** (2020, May 3-June 3). *Re-Imagining inclusion in Montessori: Educator views and identified needs* [Conference session]. Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), London Canada. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Somma, M., Harwood, D., **Bennett, S., & Lamb, S.** (2020, November). *Montessori educators’ experiences within participatory action research for Inclusion*. Accepted for 64th Ontario Council for Exceptional Children Conference. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Specht, J., Miesera, S., & **McGhie-Richmond, D.** (2020, August). *Experiences that contribute to the beliefs and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers regarding inclusive teaching- Results of an international comparison* [Conference session]. European Conference on Educational Research, Glasgow, UK. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Specht, J., Delorey, J., Ismailos, L., Fairbrother, M., Charles, E., & Villella, M. (2020, August). *Experiences that shape beginning teachers’ inclusive practice beliefs: a group concept mapping study* [Conference session]. Inclusive and Supportive Education Conference (ISEC), London, UK. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Treadgold, C., **Specht, J., Sider, S.,** Fraser, C., **Maich, K., & Winger, H.** (2020, August). *Collaboration for Inclusion: The development of interactive case studies*. Inclusive and Supportive Education Conference (ISEC), London, UK. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Media Activity

Bennett, S. (2020, April 5). *Home schooling during pandemic a daunting challenge for families of kids with disabilities* [Radio interview]. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Radio Archive; <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/checkup/pandemic-home-schooling-families-children-special-needs-1.5522119>

- **Dr. Bennett** was interviewed by CBC Radio concerning challenges of teaching children with disabilities at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Van Brenk, D. (2020, April 7). Special-ed students, families being tested. *Western News*. <https://news.westernu.ca/2020/04/classroom-absence-stresses-special-ed-students-family/>

- **Dr. Specht** was interviewed by Deborah van Brenk for an article that appeared in *Western News*.

CBC Radio-Canada. (2020, April). Eight ways to keep your kids learning ... and entertained. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VAgKscaaYs>

- **Dr. Maich** provided a comment during this CBC News report.

MacCormack, J. (2020, June 1). *Stuttering Professor: A Case for Scrappy Teachers*. TEDxUlethbridge. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctZfhLow4Po>

- **Dr. MacCormack** presented a 27-minute video on the inclusion and well-being of students – and professors – who stutter. This TED talk has had **1,840 views** as of December 2020.

Sider, S. & Eizadirad, A. (August 10, 2020). Schools after coronavirus. VoicEd Radio. https://voiced.ca/podcast_episode_post/schools-after-coronavirus-ft-steve-sider-and-ardevan-eizadirad-wlu/

- **Dr. Sider** and a colleague expand on their article in **“The Conversation”** concerning Covid-19 which has shed light on how our most vulnerable communities are marginalized, silenced and oppressed systemically due to lack of access to opportunities.

Specht, J. (2020, August 26). *Breaking Free - Institutions Then and Now* [Webinar, session 2]. Downs Syndrome Association, National Capital Region. <https://allevents.in/online/breaking-free-institutions-then-and-now-session-2/200020047831902>

- **Dr. Jacqueline Specht** was one of five panelists on this webinar which included parents, educators, and youth, discussing what we can do collectively to safeguard our vision for inclusive education in Ontario during these unpredictable times.

Specht, J. (2020, September). Covid-19 and return to school for students with disabilities: Where is the equity? Blog for *London Community Foundation*. <https://www.bethechangelondon.ca/conversations/disability-and-return-to-school-wheres-the-equity>

- **Dr. Jacqueline Specht** notes that Covid-19 has brought to the fore many issues of equity in schools; she discusses the education of students with disabilities and some inequitable policies put forward by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

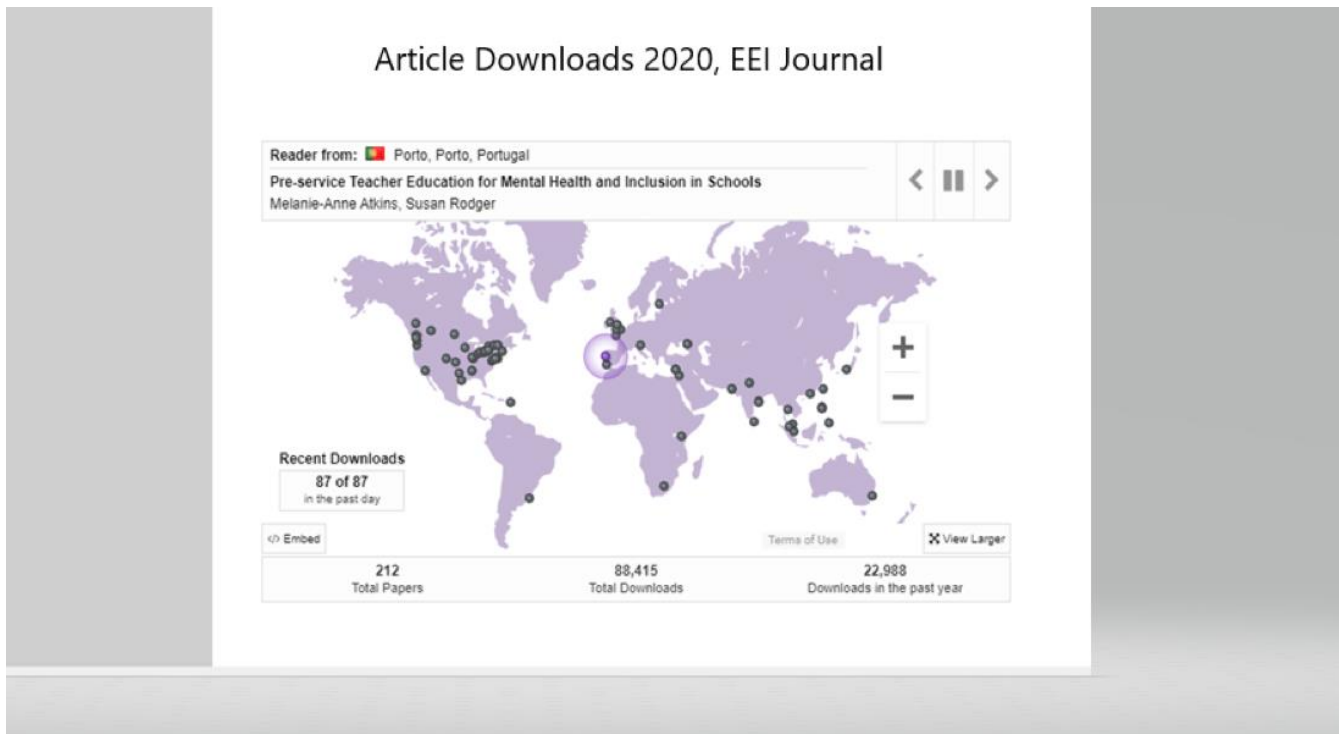
Young, G. (2020, October 28). *Perspectives on the unique challenges of inclusion in the Covid-19 era.* [Webinar series: Perspectives on inclusive education in Canada]. Inclusive Education Canada. [IEC Associations Fall 2020 Webinar – Inclusive Education](#)

- **Dr. Young** was one of three panelists, providing recommendations for online learning.

Bennett, S. (2020, November 25). *Will Ontario Schools ever be Inclusive?* [Webinar series: Perspectives on inclusive education in Canada]. Inclusive Education Canada. <https://inclusiveeducation.ca/2020/11/27/iec-november-2020-webinar-will-ontario-schools-ever-be-inclusive/>

- **Dr. Bennett** was one of three panelists discussing this issue from several perspectives including policy, leadership, teacher training, practice, and collaboration with parents and families.

Appendix C
Download Activity, *Exceptionality Education International*, to October 20, 2020



Note: Total downloads in the past year (22,988) appear in the lower right-hand corner of the world map.