

# Beginning Teacher Study: The Development of Inclusive Practice



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## The Impact of the Beginning Teacher Study

The Beginning Teacher Study is a national investigation, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). We are a community of scholars from multiple disciplines related to education (e.g., equity and diversity, human rights, advocacy, disability studies and special education) alongside community partners across Canada who work in the area of inclusive education.

Our goal is to develop competent and confident teachers for today's increasingly diverse classrooms. We are gathering the perspectives of beginning teachers and analyzing the factors that shape their development over time and in the context of their initial teaching experiences. Our research will impact teacher education in initial teacher education programs and professional learning for practicing teachers across Canada.



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## Research Update

We are entering the final year of our 5-year research program. We have been following teacher candidates since the first year of their initial teacher education programs in September 2015. We have invited participants each year to complete the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) and Beliefs about Learning and Teaching and Questionnaire (BLTQ) and to participate in an interview to find out what experiences have influenced their inclusive practice, their beliefs that all students can be educated in the inclusive classroom, and their confidence to teach in these classrooms. Our recruitment is complete; but we will follow the participants for one more year. In 2018, we had 278 people participate in answering the surveys and 29 people were interviewed. Thank you to all of those who have participated in the research to date. We could not do it without the time commitment from our participants.



## Findings to Date

Questions were asked to better understand what experiences preservice teachers have had that influence their instructional practice, beliefs about learners, and confidence in teaching as they relate to inclusive education. Increased understanding about the value of these experiences is paramount in ensuring that pre-service teacher programs are graduating teachers who believe that all students belong and can be educated in the inclusive classroom. A hierarchical cluster analysis revealed 6 themes related to the interview data: [Practicum Experiences](#); [Mentoring Relationships](#); [Education Program](#); [Professional Development](#); [Past Jobs](#); and [Personal Life Experience](#). We will continue to investigate these themes as preservice teachers move into the role of classroom teachers.

Research team members are also conducting unique analyses of the data. For example, one of our investigators, Scott Thompson from the University of Regina followed an Arts-Based Education Research (ABER) stratagem. The transcriptions were read in their entirety several times, data were coded; categories created, and themes emerged. Songs were written based upon these themes. Lyrics were fashioned from participants' actual responses. It is anticipated that these songs will lay the foundation to foster a deep emotionality of the experiences of teachers in their beginning inclusive practices, beliefs, and confidence.

The research results have been presented at:

**American Educational Research Association** – March 2019, Toronto, Canada

**Canadian Society for Studies in Education** – May 2018, Regina, Canada

**International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities** – August 2019, Glasgow, UK

**European Congress on Educational Research** – September 2019, Hamburg, Germany

**International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability & Developmental Disabilities** – January 2019, Maui, US

**Ontario Council for Exceptional Children** – December 2018; December 2019, Toronto, Canada

**Symposium Inclusion Munich** – September 2018, Munich, Germany

## Research Profile – Inclusive School Learning



We are delighted to profile research on the vital role of principals in inclusive education through a study by Steve Sider (Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo), a member of our Beginning Teacher Study research team:

About 20 years ago, I sat back in my principal's office chair after calling the parent of a child who I had "caught" doing something good. What he did was simple: He picked up some garbage and put it in a garbage can. He had been to my office multiple times previously due to some significant behavioural concerns. I thanked him for picking up the garbage and then proceeded to call his mom with the good news. Her responses startled me: "In the 10 years he has been in school, I have never received a positive phone call from anyone at his schools." She had received lots of phone calls home, but always to talk about the "problems" he exhibited at school. As I pondered this somewhat innocuous conversation in the middle of a busy school day, I realized that we, as principals, need to deeply think about how we foster inclusive schools in which every student belongs. My research over the past five years has focused on this question: ***How can school principals nurture inclusive schools for students with special education needs?***

My 2015-2016 pilot study in Ontario led to a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Insight Development Grant to explore this question in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador between 2016-2018. Along with colleagues, Kimberly Maich (Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's) Jacqueline Specht (Western University, London) we collected qualitative and quantitative data from 285 principals representing 27 different school systems. Some of our key findings will be published in academic journals this year and are also accessible in a recent article in *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/every-child-matters-what-principals-need-to-effectively-lead-inclusive-schools-114249>.

These findings include the importance of providing professional learning opportunities for principals in areas such as communication and problem-solving instead of just technical aspects of special education such as ensuring proper care of student records. We also identified the importance of the principal in setting the tone for inclusive education in both their "talk and walk." Principals need to regularly refer to why they believe in inclusion and also demonstrate this commitment through their interactions with, and support of, students, teachers, support staff, and parents/caregivers. Lastly, we also identified the challenges that principals experience, often in relative isolation, when fostering inclusive schools.

This research has led to a new SSHRC Insight Grant in which we are expanding our study to explore transformative experiences that principals have in their interactions with students with special education needs. We also have received SSHRC funding to begin developing interactive case studies, in partnership with the Ontario Principals' Council, to support the professional learning of principals. Finally, an emerging area of investigation is how we can learn from Indigenous knowledge keepers about inclusion and school leadership. To this end, we are hosting a conference at the University of British Columbia on June 1, 2019 with 100 educational and academic leaders from across Canada <https://www.inclusiveeducationresearch.ca/events/intersectionalities.html>.

For more information on this research, please contact (ssider@wlu) or visit my research page <https://www.wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-education/faculty-profiles/steve-sider/index.html>.

As well, this VoicEd podcast provides a 45-minute exploration of the topic. <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/dr-steve-sider-leadership-for-inclusive-education/id1447178053?i=1000434968675>.

## International Connections

At the invitation of the Technical University of Munich (TUM), School of Education in Munich, Germany, Jacqueline Specht (Western University) and Donna McGhie-Richmond (University of Victoria) participated in a Symposium (Oct 2018) and series of workshops organized by Susanne Miesera (TUM). The events focused on Inclusion in School and Teacher Training: A Canada-Germany Collaboration.

During the October 8 symposium, Specht and McGhie-Richmond presented on how inclusion forms a foundation for teacher education programs at Canadian universities and what that looks like. The aims and preliminary results of the SSHRC-Funded Beginning Teacher Study were also presented. Two workshops on each of October 9 and 10 provided opportunities to engage research-focussed faculty in the topic of Effective Inclusive Schools and instructor-focussed faculty in the topic of Teacher Education for Inclusion at the pre-service and in-service levels. Both workshops afforded more informal exploration of inclusion in teacher education programs in Canada and in Germany, through prior review of research articles, presentations, and engaging in small and large group discussion.



With participants of the symposium, including Susanne Miesera, organizer, from the Technical University of Munich, second from right.

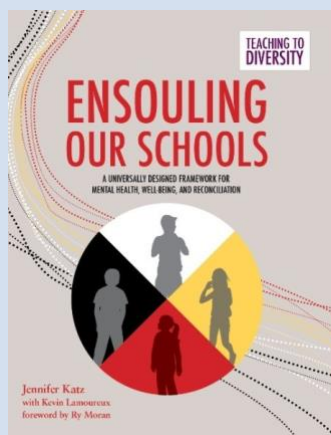
## Student Award Winner

Congratulations to Beginning Teacher Study Research Assistant, McKenzie Vanderloon. She is one of the recipients of the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education Research Award for 2019. Her thesis is titled *A longitudinal perspective on the development of teacher efficacy for the use of inclusive practices among Canadian teachers*.

# Knowledge Mobilization: Resources, Publications

Recent inclusion related publications and presentations:

The Dr. Vianne Timmons Inaugural Sherman Lecture & Launch of the Accord on Teacher Education can be accessed at <http://csse-scee.ca/acde/events/>.



Canadian Association of Educational Psychology (CAEP) President, Jennifer Katz (University of British Columbia) has published a book titled [Ensouling Our Schools: A Universally Designed Framework for Mental Health, Well-Being, and Reconciliation](#).



[A recent publication](#) authored by CAEP researchers & the Ontario College of Teachers titled, Preparing Our Future Teachers, which can be accessed at <https://www.edcan.ca/magazine/fall-2018/>.

The Learning Scientists – *Not too Fast: Things to Consider Before Implementing New Strategies in Your Teaching* <http://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2018/4/26-1>. The article focuses on a secondary source, a talk given by Mark Healy called, [“Nothing Works everywhere: Evidence-based Approaches to Learning and Teaching”](#) published on the [Teaching Innovation and Learning Enhancement network](#) – a network out of Dundee, Scotland.

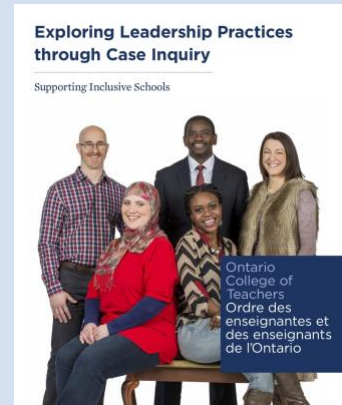


# Knowledge Mobilization: Resources, Publications continued

Exploring Leadership Practices through Case Inquiry is a case-based resource that was collaboratively developed by Wilfrid Laurier University, Brock University, Western University, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Ontario College of Teachers (the College). It is designed to facilitate professional inquiry into inclusive education leadership practices through exploring experiences of school principals.

English: [https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Exploring%20Leadership%20Practices%20through%20Case%20Inquiry/ExplLdrshpPrctcsCseInqry\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Exploring%20Leadership%20Practices%20through%20Case%20Inquiry/ExplLdrshpPrctcsCseInqry_en_web.pdf)

French: [https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Exploring%20Leadership%20Practices%20through%20Case%20Inquiry/ExplLdrshpPrctcsCseInqry\\_fr\\_web.pdf](https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Exploring%20Leadership%20Practices%20through%20Case%20Inquiry/ExplLdrshpPrctcsCseInqry_fr_web.pdf)



Dan Habib (Project Director and Filmmaker, Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire) interview with Cheryl Jorgenson is available. To access the interview, scroll down the page here <http://www.swiftschools.org/unscripted> or for transcript see [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g40\\_q1cju\\_guRVjAAqWnXHKY1NVRrwHo/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g40_q1cju_guRVjAAqWnXHKY1NVRrwHo/view).

A podcast on Inclusive Education with Donna McGhie-Richmond – part of UVic’s Faculty of Education *Learning Transforms* Series is available at <http://bit.ly/2TR3vKv>.

Monique Somma (Brock University) published a phenomenological case study exploring the pedagogical change experiences of 5 special education teachers transitioning to inclusive classes. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603116.2018.1464070?journalCode=tied20>.

Donna McGhie-Richmond was interviewed for the article “Supporting Diverse Learners through Inclusive Education” in the Summer/Fall 2018 edition of *Learn Magazine BC* published by the Teacher Regulation Branch of BC, Ministry of Education. [https://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/documents/Learn/2018/LearnMagazine\\_Summer\\_2018.pdf](https://www.bcteacherregulation.ca/documents/Learn/2018/LearnMagazine_Summer_2018.pdf).



## Knowledge Mobilization: Resources, Publications continued

**American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2019:** “Leveraging Education Research in a “Post-Truth” Era: Multimodal Narratives to Democratize Evidence.”

The Beginning Teacher Study research team was well represented at the conference: Our successful AERA Symposium was titled, *Intersectionalities in Leadership and Inclusive Education Research: Comparative Perspectives from Canada* (Steve Sider, Wilfrid Laurier; Jacqueline Specht, Western University; Donna McGhie-Richmond, University of Victoria; Jeffrey MacCormack, University of Lethbridge; Kimberly Maich, Memorial University; Jhonel Morvan, PhD student, Brock University; Melissa Vilella, PhD student, University of Ottawa).

The symposium papers responded to the central question: *How does recent research on inclusive education in Canada inform comparative and international understanding of school leadership in a post-truth era?* Four papers were presented based on research findings that address inequalities and educational opportunities for marginalized youth in Canada. The papers provided interdisciplinary, collaborative, and mixed-methods approaches to respond to the overarching question. The papers included diverse topics (i.e. disability, racialized youth, school leadership) and jurisdictions (English and French speaking).

### Special Issue: Exceptionality Education International

**Special Issue, 2018: *Teacher Beliefs and Practices*** was published in December as Volume 28, issue 3. Anne Jordan of the University of Toronto (OISE) served as guest editor. Topics in this issue range from in-depth analysis of how experienced secondary school teachers tailored their curriculum for literacy at the Grades 9 and 10 level, to broad descriptions of beliefs and practices that indicate good inclusive teaching, and better student outcomes.

***Exceptionality Education International*** provides a forum for research and dialogue on topics relevant to the education of people who have been traditionally marginalized in education as the result of ability, culture, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

**Editors:** Jacqueline Specht, Western University, and Gabrielle Young of Memorial University of Newfoundland. **Associate Editors:** Jenn de Ligt of the University of Regina, and Sharon Penney of Memorial University of Newfoundland. This online journal is published by Scholarship@Western and is available at <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/eei/>



## Research Team

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### 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](mailto:jspecht@uwo.ca).