

Intersectionalities in leadership for supporting students with special education needs in Canadian schools

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UBC

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Recordings of the presentations area available at: <https://voiced.ca/the-heart-and-spirit-of-inclusion/>

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Thank you once again to everyone for having taken the time to travel to the conference, and (more importantly) for having made significant contributions by sharing your experience, viewpoints, and talents. It was truly a pleasure to have met and collaborated with you.

Conference Goal

The overall goal of this event was to bring scholars, Indigenous educators, school system administrators, and representatives of government ministries and professional educational associations together to consider how school principals could support the inclusion of students with special education needs (SEN). The conference brought together educational leaders – all of you - from across Canada to consider the intersections of school leadership, Indigeneity, and inclusion.

Collated Highlights

[These are *not* presented in any hierarchy, but simply express trends in table discussions.]

What should the next 5 years in inclusive education school leadership research look like:

- Work intensification and wellness of principals
- Socio-emotional learning for principals
- To what extent do principals understand inclusive education in practice?
- Instructional rounds as a form of professional learning for principals (coaching, critical friends)
- Further exploring principal efficacy and collective leadership efficacy
- The role of hiring bodies to make sure school districts hire staff and administrators with inclusion in mind – and modelling as a key attribute
- How does the shortage of teachers – and reluctance to enter the principalship – influence inclusive school leadership in the future?

Three interlinked questions were stressed as a proposed focus for research:

- What is the cost of NOT having inclusive schools?
- Would this research create the impetus to move inclusion forward?
- What is the cost of NOT practicing inclusion and NOT providing students with exceptionalities with the supports they require to succeed?

Key table group discussions:

- Our work with students with SEN doesn't end with relationships; it's about relationships AND educating, awareness, deconstructing. Teaching the skills that goes along with relationships is important.
- In deconstructing / confronting otherness, the problem is 'me' and where I draw the line between me and otherness.
- Humanize the other; build a *relationship* with others.
- Education and awareness – make curriculum second, not first.
- Acknowledge, understand and explore privilege (advantage?) as it allows us to explore what we have that might be of benefit to other people.
- Self-reflection on our own privilege, beliefs, practices, and interactions with others.
- To make change, to move inclusive education forward, we need to be backed by strong leaders who believe in inclusion.
- What we do and how we respond has significant influence on all of our students and their thoughts; we are influencing the next generation and how they learn to live in a diverse community.
- Building collaborative communities with our school teams is key.
- Inclusion needs to be the only option.
- Teaching teachers can be done by emphasizing that this is what we do for EVERYBODY, based on the needs of the students through UDL and other approaches. Needs will vary between schools, students, and communities.
- Case studies should allow administrators to consider the bigger picture rather than just ONE aspect of a student. The student can, and SHOULD be considered holistically.
- Every child is a new opportunity or “gift” to teach about inclusion. We may not get it right, but it is important to consider this gift/opportunity and continue teaching to work towards inclusion because inclusion is for ALL students.
- How might a shift of roles within schools reduce principal isolation?

Thank you very much again, to all who have attended and in many other ways lent their time and hard work to make this conference a reality!