

Creating Equity for All:
The Importance of Inclusive Practice and Planning in the Mainstream Classroom

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Thank you to all the mentors who walked with me along this journey.

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Abstract

This paper is set within the context of my growth and development as a teacher and student in the Masters of Education program. During my teaching career, I have been fortunate to teach a variety of special education programs, bringing a diverse and inclusive perspective into my curricular planning in my mainstream classroom teaching. Throughout my learning journey, I've seen the positive impacts of incorporating inclusion into both practice and planning on the learning experience for every learner. I have come to realize the importance of bringing inclusive practices beyond specialized programs and into everyday learning in the mainstream classroom where they benefit the learning of both neurodiverse and neurotypical students alike. In this paper, I argue that teachers have a significant responsibility to create a meaningful inclusive atmosphere that not only makes learning accessible and flexible for all learners, but also challenges our own comforts found in traditional Eurocentric practices and encourages a growth mindset. I claim this because (1) every student has the right to learn and connect with what they are learning, (2) a culture of care is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere where students and teachers feel safe to explore challenging topics like racism and privilege, and (3) making meaningful connections with difficult topics requires feelings of ownership through student-led intrinsic learning. The implications are that if we want all students to find success and connection in our classrooms, we must implement inclusive strategies as a standard practice in every classroom for any student through inclusive and diverse approaches to curricular design.

Keywords: inclusion, education, curriculum design, inclusive strategies

Chapter One: Introduction

I was someone who always found school easy and excelled in the traditional models of education. For me, public school was generally a pleasant experience, and I knew that I wanted to give back by one day becoming a teacher myself. To my surprise, my learning journey has led to a passion for inclusive education and being an advocate for those who don't fit in the cookie-cutter mold of traditional, Eurocentric ways of teaching. Becoming a teacher opened my eyes to the individual realities of each students' learning needs and the disservice I was doing my students by teaching the rigid way my high school teachers taught me.

My Journey as a Teacher and Student

Teaching has always been my calling, though I couldn't have predicted the road to where I ended up in education. Originally, wanting to teach elementary, I began my post-secondary career at Douglas College studying Psychology. When I transferred to Simon Fraser University for my final two years of my bachelor's degree (which turned into three years), I realized my love for English and, in order to teach at the secondary level, decided to double major in both Psychology and English. I entered SFU's teaching program directly after graduation and, like many student teachers, found the learning curve incredibly steep. There was a lot more to teaching than I expected.

Developing My Interest in Inclusion as a Teacher

I completed my teaching practicum at Guildford Park Secondary in Surrey under the expertise and guidance of Nicole Calla (school associate) and Jonathan Vervaeet (faculty associate). Jonathan asked if I was interested in special education, and though I had not given it a second thought prior, I said yes figuring it would look good on my

teaching resume. Along with teaching English 8, 10, and 12, I also took on some program planning in the resource room.

I was a Teacher Teaching on Call for most of my first year in both Surrey and Coquitlam School Districts. One of my most memorable and influential TTOC contracts was a multi-week contract at Surrey's FASTrack program for students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. It was eye-opening to teach eight different modified curriculums, while also teaching executive functioning skills and socio-emotional learning (while dodging the occasional flying desk).

In May 2016, I started my first contract teaching Skill Development at Gleneagle Secondary in Coquitlam. In a sharp and harrowing learning curve, I found myself responsible for writing IEPs for students with complex needs, organizing a team of ten Educational Assistants, and becoming a mentor for inclusive practice for my colleagues. It was here at Gleneagle that I found my true passion for inclusion. One of the most memorable moments in that program was working with our community policing to create a meaningful work experience program for one of my students with cerebral palsy. When the work experience program started and I ask them where they would like to work, they said they wanted to be a police officer. Though previous teachers said I could not be done, I reached out to collaborate with our community policing to created meaningful work that met at his access point for ability. Wearing police-issued gear and the biggest smile, my student and their EA informed and distributed information about local crime to businesses around the area.

When we were relocated to Fort St. John in 2018, I jumped at the opportunity to stretch my inclusion muscles in the role of English Language Learner teacher. That same Fall, I began my M.Ed. online courses with TRU.

After I completed my teacher education program, I knew that graduate work was always in my future. In 2017 I started applications for various master's programs across western Canada. I was offered places at UNBC and the University of Saskatchewan, but shortly afterwards we learned that my partner had been accepted into the RCMP training program. Because there was no way of knowing where in Canada we would end up, we decided an online program would be best. I put my application into TRU shortly afterwards.

Furthering My Interest in Inclusion as a Student

When I first started the M.Ed. program, I was a little wary of the online delivery, but eager to be back as a student again. When I began the program, I assumed that all my classmates would be fellow teachers but was surprised and happy to see not only people from across the country, but also with a wide variety of experience.

I feel that many of the courses on my learning journey developed my interest in inclusive practice. The first experience that comes to mind is the eye-opening reflective journaling from the Diversity: Constructing Social Realities course, specifically reading texts like Brookfield's (2014) piece of the prevalence of white supremacy in our everyday lives. It made me really realize how engrained traditional Eurocentric practices are in the public school system and how exclusive they can feel for neurodiverse learners and learners whose culture doesn't align with a European approach. Working with diverse learners, I was able to take the educational theory and see its application in

my own school and in my own classroom teaching. I realized that what I thought was “best” practice and content was so strongly biased by my own white and neurotypical perspective, and I needed to take this into account when unit planning.

Another learning experience that was important in developing my topic was the challenges I learned about making larger systemic changes beyond my own classroom in the Principles and Processes of Educational Leadership course. Reflecting on my own experience mentoring colleagues about inclusive practice, it can be challenging to make lasting change for community members who are comfortable in their set ways. Because I knew very little about inclusion when I first started teaching, I can empathize with teachers who are also new to the world of inclusive practice. It can feel like you need to completely start over as a teacher, and when faced with that daunting prospect it can be easier to deny its importance and stick to what you already do. In this course I realized the importance of implementing change slowly and purposefully in a space that makes teachers feel safe to venture out of their comfort zone. In practice, I’ve come to learn that no one becomes an amazing inclusive educator overnight and a sustainable approach to changing your practice comes from little changes over time with time to reflect and adjust.

Another course that was important in my development of this topic was Philosophy and History of Education. In this course I took my own educational credo and was able to connect foundational theory to my already established beliefs. I felt more confident explaining and identifying why I do what I do in my classroom and where that knowledge rooted from. It also helped me better understand why an inclusive approach to classroom teaching is important in our current history today. The purpose

of education and the population we teach is constantly shifting and our practices need to shift with it.

This M.Ed. program has gifted me the space to think deeply about topics, specifically how inclusion fits into all aspects of education, and make connections to my professional life. I have learned that online learning offers a lot of flexibility, but at the same time requires a lot of discipline. Balancing a busy home and work life over the past few years I have found creative ways to work through this program one course at a time. And despite challenges along the way, I feel that I have come out of the program with a new appreciation for education, a better understanding of my own educational philosophy, and a stronger skill set in articulating and defending it with relevant resources. I feel like I am still the same educator but with a clearer vision of where I've been, where I am today, and where I want to be moving forward, particularly in regard to inclusive practice.

Significance of This Topic

Inclusion is not a tool to be contained to the resource room. Every student comes into their classroom with a diverse history of background knowledge, skillsets, and learning styles and inclusion offers a guided lens to shift educators' perspective on "best practice" and make learning more engaging and accessible. Each student has the right to learn and connect with what they are learning and providing differentiated approaches to teaching and inclusive choices in planning offer a safe space for students to make those connections. Through my experiences both as a teacher and a learner, I have seen the positive impacts of incorporating inclusion into both practice and planning on the learning experience for every learner. It is important that educators begin to see

inclusive practices as more than tools for specialized programs and rather a lens for bettering everyday learning in the mainstream classroom where they benefit the learning of both neurodiverse and neurotypical students alike.

Presenting My Argument

In this paper, I claim that educators have a responsibility to create a meaningful inclusive atmosphere that makes learning accessible and flexible for all learners by implementing universal inclusive teaching strategies and intentionally challenging our comforts found in traditional Eurocentric practices. This is necessary for the following reasons: every student has the right to learn and connect with what they are learning, traditional Eurocentric practices only fit with a certain type of learner and risk exclusion and disconnection for others, and utilizing these more rigid teaching practices makes it difficult for all students to gain a powerful understanding of challenging topics. This argument is based on the following evidence: inclusion is essential for making learning accessible to all (Moore, 2016; Tomlinson, 2014), creating a meaningful inclusive and safe atmosphere through a culture of care is essential to explore challenging themes (Smith, 2020; Pransky & Bailey, 2003; Brookfield, 2014), and making meaningful connections with difficult topics requires feelings of ownership through student-led intrinsic learning (Therrien et al., 2011; Rizzo & Taylor, 2016).

This paper proceeds as follows: in Chapter Two the current and contemporary literature is presented, in Chapter Three application of inclusive planning and teaching is exemplified in sample unit plan of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and in Chapter 4 provides summary and implications of this topic.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter explores educational theorists and contemporary research that illustrates why inclusive education is beneficial and necessary for all students. This lens had a significant influence on my own growth, both in the development of the sample unit in the application chapter of this capstone paper and in my overall development as an educator and graduate student.

Make Learning Accessible for All

Every student has the right to learn and connect with what they're learning. It is rooted in a belief that diversity, whether it stems from ability, cultural, racial, linguistic, socioeconomic or gender identity, is important and that a quality education for all students is a human right (UNESCO 2017). UNESCO (2017) reports that it is crucial for schools work towards educational equity by considering barriers that affect access, participation, learning styles, and outcomes that results in every learner equally valued and engaged in the learning.

Ryan et al. (2009) in their study found that despite the exceptional growth in the number of Canadians citizens of colour in recent years, which in turn has resulted in an increase in our student body diversity, the number of teachers and school counsellors of colour is not representative of the changing population. With the increase in racialized Canadians, the ratio of teachers is falling (Ryan et al., 2009). Because of unconscious biases every educator holds, it can be easy for white and privileged teachers to default into traditional Eurocentric practices that align with their own learning styles, but unknowingly risk excluding others.

British Columbia public schools teach an extraordinary diverse group of learners. Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2017) found that over 20% of the Canadian population over 15 is living with one or more disabilities, and this is reflective in our classrooms. There are multicultural classrooms, with Canadians reporting over 250 different origins and immigrants representing nearly 30% of our population (Government of Canada, 2017). And with rising immigration, there is an increase of English Language Learners in our classrooms. Tomlinson (2014) argues that teachers are faced with the challenge of addressing a population of students who vary greatly in not only learning readiness, but personal interests and cultural perspectives. With this diversity, teachers cannot assume all students will connect with the same content and engage in the same learning activities. Engaging in inclusive practice offers a way to engage all learners no matter their access point in learning.

Hutchinson and Specht (2019) found that in Canada, where the educational curriculum is managed provincially, most provinces and territories have shown a commitment to creating an inclusive policy in their schools. Though in previous policies, inclusive education refers primarily to students with special education needs (Province of British Columbia, 2020), we have started to see a shift in policy to incorporate the wide array of differentiated learners. Whitley and Hollweck (2020) argue in their research that these new policies place a higher importance on valuing diverse students identities beyond intellectual abilities to include consideration of ancestry, gender identity, ancestry, and socio-economic status as well as addressing any other potential systemic barriers.

Tiered inclusive strategies. Sailor et al. (2018) found that one of the most efficient ways to engage in inclusive practice to support differentiated learners in the mainstream classroom is utilizing the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which (re)approaches the problem of making learning accessible to all through a different lens and offers opportunity for social and academic growth. The model also provides opportunity for growth for students who have extensive needs and may have previously been not included in mainstream classroom learning (Sailor et al., 2018). Tiered inclusive strategies is one tool that contributes to a whole-school application of special education, as opposed to a placement model that excludes students from mainstream classrooms. As Sailor et al. (2018) state in their article, by embracing a whole-school application, it not only makes a permanent space for diverse learners in the wider curriculum but more importantly, it enables the entire student body, including students deemed neurotypical, to benefit from access to various specialized supports and services already in place. MMTS refers to a “data-driven, problem-solving framework to improve outcomes for all students” and relies on a “continuum of evidence-based practices matched to student needs” (Center on PBIS, 2022). Generally, it falls into three categories of support: universal interventions that benefit all students, targeted prevention that benefit some students, and intensive and individualized intervention that benefit a few students.

MMTS, and other inclusive strategies, makes learning accessible for students in theory, though the active application in the everyday classroom can be prove more challenging. In Sailor et al.’s (2021) study that looked at implementation of MMTS in schools, they found that teachers and administrators need frontloaded preparation and

guidance when preparing for a state-wide implementation of this technique. The evidence suggests that teachers need to feel supported and have practical tools when making the shift to inclusive practice.

Planning through a UDL lens & considering learning outcomes. Universal Designs for Learning (UDL) is a science-based framework for curriculum development based on the way humans learn and considers how the brains responds to engagement, representation, and expression (Rose et al., 2005). It is based on the purpose of providing clarity and easier comprehension for instruction. A visual metaphor to illustrate the benefits of UDL provided by Moore (2016) uses the example of a wheelchair ramp. Designing a building with wheelchair ramps is more cost effective than adding ramps later, and the addition of ramps can unknowingly benefit more than just those who use wheelchairs: moms with strollers, kids on skateboards, or even toddlers who have a hard time with stairs (Moore, 2016). In education, if teachers design their units backwards with inclusion in mind, not only does it save teachers' time and energy trying to adapt later, but it also may aid other students unknowingly (Moore, 2016).

In numerous repeated studies comparing pretest to post test results, educators increased the number of UDL strategies used in their own lesson planning after just a 1-hour training session (Spooner et al., 2007, Courey et al., 2012; Navarro et al., 2016). Spooner et al. (2007) found that providing a simple introduction to UDL methods in a brief training session increased the likelihood of teachers creating lesson plans more accessible for all students. Courey et al. (2012) found that, in their analysis of teacher candidates, providing professional development training resulted in the inclusion of various differentiated options in their lesson planning. Evemenova's (2018) study, which

explored how educators can learn about UDL from an online course designed using UDL principles, found that afterwards educators demonstrated a genuine want to include diverse learners in their classrooms through meaningful learning experiences. It's clear that in order to engage more educators to make their lessons more engaging, practical tools and opportunities for UDL in action need to be made accessible.

Tyler's (2017) philosophy dictates that "it is very necessary to have some conception of goals that are being attained" (p. 74). And that mantra has resonated to impact contemporary educational practices of UDL. In BC, learning outcomes still form the bedrock of where teachers stand and justify what they teach. Part of the practical application of inclusive strategies in mainstream classrooms includes the use of UDL planning. Like Tyler's (2017) learning outcomes theory, UDL approach begins with the end goals in mind before building up a scaffolded approach to learning.

Challenging Eurocentric practices. As addressed, our classrooms are more diverse than ever before, but our teaching staff often doesn't reflect that diversity. An important component in inclusive curricula planning is to challenge traditional Eurocentric practices that limit access and engagement to only certain types of learners (O'Brian, 2004). As O'Brien (2004) states in her article, "developing an inclusive learning experience involved not only decentering whiteness...in course material, but also making space for nondominant modes of interaction" (p. 68). The traditional way of socialization as educators emphasizes classroom management and that we "maintain control" over our students (O'Brian, 2004, p. 71). To engage with all learners, O'Brian (2004) asserts that diversifying the content alone isn't enough, but rather teachers need to "confront the biases inherent in the *process* of teaching" (p.71) Two areas to consider

when beginning to break down the pillars of Eurocentric modelling are physical classroom environment, and learning material used.

In their article, Brown and Di Lallo (2020) found that discussions in circles offers benefits including increasing student voice and decreasing their invisibility. In addition, this approach also reinforces to the classroom community that one worldview is not better than another (Brown & Di Lallo, 2020). Seating students in groups or pairs can also foster a stronger classroom community and provide opportunities for inclusive learning. Gremmen et al. (2016) found that interpersonal connections in the classroom because of close seating proximity had a positive effect on their social perceptions of each other. Another study by van den Berg et al. (2018) looked specifically at how purposeful seating rearrangement promoted social acceptance and an increase in prosocial behaviours among students. They found that over time, the students who demonstrated externalizing behaviour, a trait that often negatively affects their social standing among peers, were reportedly better liked by their seatmates and displayed fewer problem behaviours after utilizing this approach (van den Berg et al., 2018). Considering a more inclusive physical classroom layout can be an impactful step in creating an inclusive classroom.

As St. Denis and Schick (2003), that looked at collection of predominantly white teacher candidates from Alberta, found that when faced with professional development targeting cultural diversity in their classrooms, many hold the mindset that they are going to learn about “the cultural other” and be given strategies to “deal with” these others in their classrooms. The task of addressing Eurocentric privilege in inclusive planning requires more than simply “providing more information, doing multiculturalism

more effectively, or the simple adjustment of students' attitudes” (St. Denis & Schick, 2003). Much like incorporating UDL or MMTS into curricular planning, breaking down reevaluating dated Eurocentric practices require a deep reflective approach to perspectives and biases teachers hold. Individual teachers need to “look at the discursive practices [in their own classrooms] and [their] institutions as well as at the ideological assumptions that underwrite these practices” (St. Denis & Schick, 2003).

Creating Powerful Student Understanding for Everyone

Two educational theories that lay the foundation in creating inclusive spaces for learning are Nel Noddings’s culture of care and Maxine Greene’s conscious awareness of learning. By establishing a learning environment and classroom community where all students feel safe to feel vulnerable in the learning process, classroom teachers are able to facilitate the exploration of challenging themes in a deep and meaningful way.

Creating a culture of care. One prominent educational philosopher that seeded the growth of contemporary inclusion policy is Nel Noddings and her ideas surrounding care in the classroom. It is important to approach topics “without imposing values on [the students] ...[and] realize that treatment of [them] may deeply affect the way [they] behave in the world” (Smith, 2020). Because of the trust and vulnerability that is needed to explore more challenging topics and create powerful understanding for all students, it is important to incorporate opportunities for developing genuine relationships with students in the class.

There are various strategies to that help build these relationships. One is establishing start and end routines, which establish norms and expectations and provide predictability for students who need it. Research by Farmer et al. (2019) and Garrote et

al. (2021) both found the positive impact of teacher classroom management and routines has on student social outcomes. Garrote et al. (2017) found that by establishing predictable routines, teachers foster opportunities for all students to practice prosocial behaviours. Bucholz and Scheffler (2009) found that these routines reinforce a bond students make to their class through positive feelings. Another strategy is to create opportunities for teachers to demonstrate the realities of learning. Wilhelm's (2001) theory on "think alouds," a process where teachers and students talk their thoughts aloud as they are making a cold analysis of a text, is an example of modeling that vulnerability while also contributing to a culture of care. Both Huddy (2015) and Brown (2012) found that modeling emotional vulnerability is one of the most effective ways to build trust in the classroom. Monroe-Baillargeon and Shema (2010) found that establishing learning communities through collaborative activities, like literature circles, also can establish a trusting classroom community. As Noddings argues, "what is learned from caring teachers...is often incidental and very powerful precisely because it is given freely" (Smith, 2020). If the students think that I care, they will care what I think and share with them.

Conscious awareness and learning. In her writing, Greene (2017) looks at the role of consciousness as a goal for learning and its possibility for integrating into curriculum. Greene (2017) uses studying literature as a lens to understand the importance of engaging student consciousness into learning: "if [a student] could not suspend [their] ordinary ways of perceiving, if [they] could not allow for the possibility that the horizons of daily life are not inalterable, [they] would not be able to engage with literature at all" (p. 149). To create powerful understanding in students, they need

scaffolding learning that allows for meaningful connection and space for reflective metacognition. As Greene (2017) states, “there must be...continual reconstructions if a work of literature is to become meaningful” (p. 148). Studying a prescribed text, just because it is on the syllabus is not enough and doing so does the learners an injustice. Rather, educators need to see these texts as an opportunity to find new lenses that connects these texts to relevant contemporary issues that allow all students and teachers to make deep connections their existing themes. Creating a conscious awareness to relevant social or political phenomenon has a much more meaningful impact and drawing in contemporary issues creates an access point for all students to make a connection.

One strategy that offers flexibility for ranging ability and space to practice genuine metacognition is reflective journaling (Ma & Oxford, 2014). This learning activity not only is easily adaptable to meet students at their ability level for students with disabilities, but as Ma & Oxford (2014) found in their study, it also has shown to be very beneficial for English Language Learners. As Greene (2017) suggests, in a radically changing world where “the contemporary learner is much more likely...to experience moments of strangeness, moments where the recipes he has inherited for the solution of typical problems no longer seem to work,” fostering the confidence for every learner in their own abilities is necessary (p. 153).

Making difficult topics more accessible. As Brookfield (2014) states in their article, “even the most experienced white anti-racist educators are likely to have elements of learned ideology of racism living within them” (p. 90). Openly exploring

teacher biases, vulnerabilities, and learning processes with students in the classroom is important way to engage in challenging topics in a genuine way.

Freire (2017), another foundational educational theorist of contemporary inclusion, warns of the ‘banking model of education,’ where teachers simply deposit knowledge into empty student heads. When exploring challenging topics like racism and privilege that can feel uncomfortable for educators, it can be easy to fall into that superficial banking model to avoid the discomfort of exploring their own vulnerabilities. An inclusive practice recognizes that all students are valuable members of a classroom community because of the diverse background knowledge they arrive with, and that classroom learning is enriched for all when that background knowledge is shared. Making safe spaces for students to contribute their background knowledge on challenging topics requires a well-established feeling of trust with their teacher and peers. Freire (2017) states that the “literacy process demands among teachers and students a relationship of authentic dialogue” (p. 181). Engaging with literature to create powerful understanding requires fostering authentic relationships in the classroom (Freire, 2017). Embracing their own vulnerabilities through unscripted activities with students, like using “think-alouds” (Wilhelm, 2001), teachers demonstrate the genuine and rough process of analysing a text for the first time and this encourages a more open and authentic dialogue about what’s happening in the story and what students are thinking.

Inquiry-based curricular planning. Montessori (2017) argues that “all human victories, all human progress, stand upon the inner force” and that genuine and meaningful learning stems from a student’s intrinsic drive to want to learn (p. 29). This

can be a challenging task when students are nearing the end of their journey through public education in secondary school. By this time, many students have learned that “success” in learning come from knowing what their teachers have told them to know, rather than developing competency in areas of interest. Translated into application, teachers can use a variety of essential guiding questions where students can choose which drive their interest, rather than centering the mechanical skill of analytical reading.

Martin-Hansen (2002) identifies four different forms of inquiry-based learning: open inquiry, guided inquiry, coupled inquiry, and structured inquiry, which fall on a spectrum from less support to more support in the learning process. Though true open inquiry can prove challenging for students with disabilities or low executive functioning skills, Therrien et al. (2011) found that structured inquiry can be an effective teaching method for students with learning disabilities and Therrien et al. (2014) found it effective for those with emotional and behavioral disorders. In an analytical review of the literature looking at science education, Rizzo and Taylor (2016) found that inquiry-based instruction when teaching students with disabilities required structured supports to see progress on achievement measures. Incorporating inquiry-based approaches, with appropriate structure, to curricular planning is one inclusive strategy that helps provide varying access points for every learner and fosters an intrinsic motivation for learning lost to those who may be struggling in mainstream classes.

Reviewing the summary of the literature, it is clear that utilizing inclusive strategies in planning and teaching not only benefits learners with exceptionalities, but the greater student population who regularly wouldn't have access to differentiated approaches to learning. And to create powerful understanding, engaging in strategies

like creating a culture of care, conscious awareness of thinking, fostering students' connection to challenging content and inquiry-based planning all contribute to creating an inclusive learning space where all students can learn and connect to what they are learning. Chapter Three demonstrates the educational theory in practical application through the design of a sample unit that uses these inclusive strategies.

Chapter Three: Application to the Teaching Profession

This chapter takes the culmination of my learning from the introduction and the literature review and applies it to a practical setting in the mainstream classroom. In this chapter I present a detailed sample novel study unit plan of Harper Lee's (1960) *To Kill a Mockingbird* through a modern lens. In this practical application, I showcase not only how inclusive strategies can be utilized in planning and teaching in action, but also how reassessing how to teach an old novel offers a new lens to explore contemporary issues like power and privilege through a multicultural lens. It is my hope that this application chapter not only serves me in offering a new unit plan to use in my own future classes, but one that other educators may adapt and use for themselves.

One way I want foster meaningful connections is interweaving relevant non-fiction content about worldview connections behind challenging themes present in the text. The development of this sample unit uses a multicultural and globalization lens when analyzing *To Kill a Mockingbird* and utilizes impactful and contemporary examples of systemic racism alongside the novel study. I was inspired by a resource from one of my M.Ed. courses: Jane Elliot's philosophies in the documentary, *A Class Divided* (Peters, 1985), and the way she used an exercise in her third-grade class as a steward for experiential learning, I wanted to have that similar powerful learning moments in this curricular design. Because this unit challenges students to explore the uncomfortable topic of privilege, I incorporated Brené Brown's ideas on vulnerability and shame. Brown (2012) found that shame is so closely connected to vulnerability - a key element that is necessary embrace if we want to bridge the topic of racism and create a more culturally competent classroom community. As she says in her TED talk, "Listening to Shame,"

what she learned about vulnerability by "studying shame" was the realization that we "cannot talk about race without talking about privilege", and when they do, they get "paralyzed by shame" (Brown, 2012, 10:00). From there, the multicultural lens that started this unit also influenced the incorporation of additional content and materials, all consciously selected because of the potential perspective and multiple connections they could offer students to gain a deeper understanding of themes presented in the novel.

To Kill a Mockingbird

To Kill a Mockingbird (Lee, 1960) is considered one of the "classics" in literature and, across BC, is often one of the standard texts for English 10 classroom teachers. Design of this unit began with the consideration of how best to utilize resources that I already have at my disposal, and developed from theoretical perspectives explored throughout this M.Ed. program.

Lee's (1960) novel has been considered dated by some teachers, arguing that it is not relevant for youth today. I disagree. I believe, that as we are moving towards a more globalized world, it's important to teach these texts not as tomes to respect, but as a possible opportune lens to consider perspectives and biases of both authors, readers, and society alike. As Greene (2017) states in the review of the literature, continual reconstructions of works of literature is essential. Discrimination today may not look like it did in Lee's Maycomb in the 1930s, but discrimination and social inequity is still very much an issue today for Canadians and for students in my classroom.

I was also influenced by the cultural context of the specific student body I was building it for. Teaching in a predominantly White student population in a small town where education can seem devalued, I thought these themes especially important for

my students to explore. Fort St. John is a small city of approximately 20,000 people in northeastern BC. There are three key cultural factors that impact my learners here. First, the primary economy for the city stems from the oil and gas industry and for that reason is sometimes called a 'transient town' with people continuously moving in and out for work. Because of this, many of my students may feel disconnected from the school community because they did not grow up through the district. Second, this town is the fifth highest earning city in Canada, with an average income of over \$100,000, and yet a majority of the residents have minimal education compared to larger cities (Statistics Canada, 2016). As a result, as a teacher, I often see a clash between the value of education put forth by the school community and the greater community. Many of students I teach do not have a lot of educational support at home because their parents do not see value in it. And third, most residents are third-generation or more English-speaking Canadians, and do not identify as a member of a minority (Statistics Canada, 2016). Talking with these students, I learned many come from polarized households and do not come in contact with other cultures or ways of being very often. When they do, it is often superficial because many have never left northern British Columbia, let alone left the country. These three factors had a significant influence on my curriculum design because I needed to consider which cultural and societal components that my students would benefit from learning about. Lee's (1960) novel offered a setting similar to my own town: small and primarily White, and a main character naïve to the cultural diversity in the world but open minded in learning.

Finally, I was also motivated by personal professional development. I am an individual who has always valued and enjoyed school and being a life-long learner is a

very much engrained part of my own philosophy. That philosophy not only transcribes into the way I learn, but also the way I teach. I believe that it is important for educators to continually refine and redefine their practice. And so, I wanted to develop this unit so that I have another new one in my repertoire to choose and adapt for future classes. I have found that the key to successful of adaptation of inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms lies in continuous and gradual reflective changes to my own practice.

Content

Reflecting on educational content and material is also important when breaking down Eurocentric barriers in inclusive planning. Though the BC curriculum documents purposely provide vague content guidelines in their learning outcomes, many educators rely on comfortable content when teaching their courses.

For example, the Social Studies 10 curriculum states that students need to learn about “international conflicts and cooperation” (Province of British Columbia, 2021) and yet many teachers will fixate on previous Eurocentric thinking of “important content” and dedicate weeks of learning to World War II. Teachers need to start questioning why they believe they have done students a disservice if we taught them about Canada’s involvement in Syria instead of Germany or our involvement in the Paris Climate Agreement instead of the League of Nations. All students bring with them their diverse backgrounds (some with families who were not even in Canada during WWII) and we need to reflect on how our diverse populations are connecting with the content we select. In English class, if they only hear the voices of white male authors, what does that teach students about who the “important” voices are?

Finding lens to explore challenging topics in novel ways in traditional literature is one way to break Eurocentric habits of teaching and engage with the diversity of a classroom. In this unit, I use Freire's (2017) ideas around awareness of the power inequity in education in a critical lens of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As opposed to teaching the novel in a traditional sense and inadvertently continuing the unconscious bias of the 'white saviour' character in western literature, this unit harnesses this novel as an opportunity for students to closely examine selected additional content, consciously consider what implicit biases they may carry, and ultimately how it reflects privilege and power in our Canadian society.

The content, as examined through Tyler's (2017) lens regarding curricular design, considered the four influential factors in curricular development: the essentialist perspective, the educational philosopher perspective, the progressive perspective, and the sociologist perspective. I felt the novel satisfied the essentialist motivation in curriculum development, as it is often dubbed the grade 10 text of choice within my school's English Department. The educational philosopher motivation was satisfied in my essential guiding questions, which were selected to view the text through a lens that challenged a variety of values. The progressive motivation in design stemmed from the student involvement in the learning process, as well as the incorporation of more relevant and engaging paired texts like CBC's *The Book of Negroes* (Virgo, 2015) and CBC's *8th Fire* series (Walker, 2012). And finally, I joined the sociologist perspective in the incorporation of relevant, recent, and local non-fiction media that connects to the themes and topics as we progress through the novel. By considering all four influential

factors in curricular development, Tyler's approach offers a similar lens to UDL's backwards design and takes a holistic and inclusive approach to unit design.

Materials. I choose to use a variety of materials throughout the unit. I was conscious to incorporate materials that would engage a variety of types of learners: novel, audiobook, non-fiction media, images, film, and documentary. To aid in access, I also considered what educational technology to include. For this unit, I will have regular access to a teacher computer, projector, audio speakers, class set of student Chromebooks, and internet access.

Scope & Sequence

Even in the earliest educational texts, scope and sequence in educational planning is the bedrock in which all curriculum builds on. Reflecting Plato's *Republic*, where Socrates explores the "education of our heroes" and what elements are essential to creating the ideal citizen, many of our own educational roots on why and how we educate stem from similar areas of thought (Plato, 2000). The purpose and intention of scope, referring to learning goals, and sequence, the succession of steps to reach those goals, is to create an environment where human development can flourish. Like Egan's (2003) comparison to "a race-course" with obstacles, the curriculum provides a roadmap for educators to navigate through the scaffolded steps to reach intentional learning goals. Though, as I have come to realize in my learning journey, the path to meeting these goals is rarely as simple as intended, so being able to predict, plan, and adjust scope and sequence can be equally as important.

Though novel study typically centers around students being able to read and understand the story presented, which, as Freire (2017) warns about, inherently

reinforces the underlying message of “intrinsic inferiority of a certain class of [students],” incorporating accessible learning opportunities and flexibility in ways to demonstrate learning remedies that injustice (p. 179). Considering the broader definition of literacy and incorporating as many points of access as possible into unit planning is key. In this sample unit, as opposed to assigning reading homework or requiring students read on their own, which excludes a proportion of students who may not have the skillset to successfully do this on their own, I make reading and thinking a collective group experience. Remembering the end learning outcomes, I established though backwards design, I know that success in unit doesn’t rely on being able to read well already, but rather being able practice effective reading skills regardless of where a student’s access point is.

Intended skill level for unit. This unit is a literature circle novel study unit intended for Composition 10 (also referenced as English 10). This unit is built for junior English classes in a secondary school setting, though can be adjusted for higher or lower levels depending on the text the teacher selects. The summative learning goal of the unit is for students to develop skill in all four areas of language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By scaffolding skill development throughout the unit, students will have multiple opportunities to practice and improve upon these skills before demonstrating them for summative assessment at the end of the unit. Because this unit explores sensitive topics, it is important to utilize a carefully scaffolded and structured learning environment to create a safe space for students to embrace vulnerability while develop their oral language skills, build confidence in sharing their own analysis of the

texts, and feel comfortable divulging respectfully and thoughtfully into difficult topics without judgement or consequence.

While planning, I needed to consider that many students in my English 10 classroom arrive from middle school without successfully completing the English 9 requirements or are English Language Learners with underdeveloped English skills. Though summative assessments will still need to align with standards associated with grade 10 ability level (unless otherwise modified in consultation with an individual student's case manager), I need to consider that they typical access point for learning may need to be adjusted depending on what skillset each student has arrived with in my classroom.

Learning outcomes. Goals and objectives of this unit stem from BC's Curricular Documents for Composition 10 (Province of British Columbia, 2021) and are examined through the exploration of unconscious bias, as well as the limitations of the Lee's novel and other texts through multi-cultural and social justice lens on discrimination and social inequity then and now. Competencies from the curricular documents include:

- “Students can apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts” (Province of British Columbia, 2021)
- “Students can think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts” (Province of British Columbia, 2021)
- “Students can construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world” (Province of British Columbia, 2021)
- “Students can identify bias, contradictions, and distortions” (Province of British Columbia, 2021)

- “Students can respectfully exchange ideas and viewpoints from diverse perspectives to build shared understanding and extend thinking” (Province of British Columbia, 2021)
- “Students can express and support an opinion with evidence” (Province of British Columbia, 2021)

Expectations for teachers. I would suggest that this unit be incorporated into the latter half of a semester course after students had already laid foundation for course routines and students have established an initial understanding of components to a story and rudimentary reading skills. In my classroom, this unit follows a previous unit that examines reading and writing of short stories. To provide enough scaffolded practice, it is essential that teachers dedicated a significant amount of time to this unit, provide multiple opportunities to formal and informal feedback, and frequently reference clear expectations for the summative goals of the unit. I have selected Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (1960) and CBC’s *The Book of Negroes* mini-series (Virgo, 2015) as foundational texts that students will use to build their skills, but teachers have educational autonomy to choose from numerous texts that best fit the cultural and social contexts, as well as the academic skill level of their learners.

Scaffolding and duration of the unit. The unit is approximately 11 weeks long and will have a curricular focus on the concepts of prejudice and privilege through the literary lenses in the foundational texts. The unit will also integrate relevant and contemporary non-fiction supplements that underline racism and discrimination in Canada and in Fort St. John. This unit uses a repeated construction of pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading activities to scaffold understanding and build student

confidence in skills, as well as integrate opportunities for gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Unit introduction (Week 1). Before reading, students will first explore their initial opinions to unit themes and essential questions, learn what it means to have unconscious bias, and explore historical context relevant to the novel. Students will also understand the scope and sequence of the unit, how they will be assessed, and give a brief introduction to reading strategies we'll be practicing.

Table 1

Unit Plan for Week 1

Week	Summary of Learning Goals & Activities	Formative & Summative Assessments:
Week 1	<p>In introduction to the unit, teacher will explain the purpose and value of reading a novel with a literature circle, introduce scope and sequence to the novel, and the essential questions present through the story.</p> <p>Students will reflect on their own opinions through opinion lineup activities & written reflections.</p> <p>Focus Day: Historical Context (have students examine secondary and primary resources relating to topics present in the 1930s & document their learning in a graphic organizer)</p> <p>Focus Day: Unconscious Bias (reflection activity on identity and explore topics of unconscious bias with students, end with a circle discussion and students' reflection)</p> <p>Focus Day: Shame and Vulnerability (watch Brown (2012) "Listening to Shame" and talking circle about thoughts and reflections)</p>	<p>Formative Assessments: Assess student understanding with start/end routine activities like question of the day and exit slips</p> <p>Summative Assessments: N/A</p>

Unit body (week 2-9). As a class, teachers and students will read through the novel together. I recommend that the teacher use an audiobook so that they can model effective reading strategies through “think-alouds” (Wilhelm, 2001) to model a gradual release of responsibility of close reading skills, as well as provide a visual access point for students whose analysis skills are lower than their peers. Using tools like, ESL-bits.net, give options for reading speed, which I’ve found is a helpful tool for English Language Learners or students with learning disabilities. When modeling novel analysis, is important that teacher does not have a pre-written “think-aloud” planned but creates it organically as they listen to the novel with students to mimic the same thinking process students are practicing. As mentioned in the review of the literature, using this process which models emotional vulnerability an effective way to build trust your classroom community (Huddy, 2015); Brown, 2012). Through this process, teacher can integrate teachable moments on how to use various reading strategies. I find Hadden and Gear’s (2016) book, *Powerful Readers*, a helpful tool in introducing connecting, visualizing, questioning, and inferring.

As small scaffolding assessments, students will reflect on their learning through weekly dialectical journaling using strategies highlighted in reading and critical thinking strategies (questioning, visualizing, connecting, and inferring) as highlighted in Hadden and Gear’s (2016) book. These journals will contain two parts: (1) a rough part completed initially where students can summarize what they read and highlight specific passages that they would like to explore deeper, and (2) a more polished analytical paragraph where they focused on one of the reading skills to write a thoughtful and

reflective response to what was read that week. Note the following figure exemplifying the formal of dialectical journaling.

Figure 1

Sample Dialectical Journal I Give to Students

Name: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE Dialectical Journal #1

Student Name: Anna Cullen

Novel Chapters: 1-4

Part 1: Evidence (about 150 words)

I've decided to focus on Chapter 1. In chapter 1, we learn who the main characters of the story are going to be (Jem, Dill, Atticus, Calpurnia, and Scout (narrator)). They live in Maycomb, Alabama. We learn about Scout's family history, a little about the town, we meet Dill (a neighbour who comes to stay for the summer), and about the history of the Radley family (a neighbour down the street). I've chosen two quotes that I want to focus on for my response:

Quote #1:

"Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum." (Harper, Chapter 1)

Quote #2:

"There were other ways of making people into ghosts" (Harper, Chapter 1) - said by Atticus to Jem after he suggested Mr. Radley chained Boo Radley to his bed.

(This is about 200 words.)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 2: Journal Response (about 300-500 words)

In this first chapter, we start to see the introduction of key plot elements. One that Harper displays is the development of the setting of the story. Two very conflicting descriptions of setting are the description of Maycomb and the description of the Radley house. I'd like to focus on the description of the town in this journal response, because I feel like I made a personal connection to it, as well as it sets the mood of the people who live there.

Harper first describes Maycomb as an "old town," which at first made me think of other old towns and cities I'd visited that had a lot of history and older buildings. That thought changed when Harper adds that "it was a tired old town when I knew it." Now, instead of a grand old city, like London or Paris coming to mind, it makes me think of some of the tiny run-down towns that I've seen on road trips around BC and Alberta. By calling the town "tired" and "old," Harper uses personification. I almost imagine the town as a person - an old man sagging in his rocking chair. In the rest of the paragraph, Harper uses specific images to create the picture of a town that is pleasant, but unkempt - almost a comforting feeling, like a really worn and comfy couch. Diction like "grass grew on sidewalks," and "sagged in the square" use soft alliteration sounds and oxymoron phrasing like "stiff collars wilted" make the town seem "tired" but also relaxed. I like the image of calling the ladies of the town "soft teacakes" at nightfall. If anyone else has been baking during this social distancing, I'm sure you can imagine how sloppy, tired and relaxed they all would seem comparing them to this baked good in this simile. Based on this evidence of diction and setting, I would say the mood of this story (and this town) is mellow and friendly.

The second quote that caught my eye while reading was when Atticus said to Jem, "There were other ways of making people into ghosts" when Jem was assuming Mr. Radley chained his son to his bed. I wondered what this might mean. Making a prediction, based on the evidence that Calpurnia said that Mr. Radley was one of the meanest men she ever knew, I think that Mr. Radley controlled his son with threats and psychological abuse. I think the 15 years of abuse took a toll on Boo and we're going to see it come out later in the story.

(This is about 400 words)

Students practice their oral language skills by meeting in small groups at the beginning of every week to discuss their thinking before moving onto the next section of the novel. These meetings usually last 15 minutes, and teacher can set a timer on the

board to encourage students to provide a visual for those who benefit from it. Take time in your planning to pre-teach effective group discussion skills and I recommend assigning students into unfamiliar groups of four or five. That way, as Have students meet with their same group every week, so they can develop more confidence as they progress through the unit and build miniature communities within the classroom. Establishing predictable routines, especially with a skill I have found many students struggle with like oral language, teachers reinforce a bond students make to their class and their literature circles (Bucholz & Schffler (2009). Provide opportunity for students to reflect on their oral language skills after meetings, set personal goals for the next one, as well as provide teacher with anonymous feedback on how their group worked together.

Intermingled with in-class reading, students will watch the CBC mini-series and have focus days where they examine non-fiction articles pertaining to themes in the text. Suggestions for texts on these focus days are listed in the table below. These supplemental materials are meant to deepen reflective thinking while journaling, as well as provide students more opportunity for making connections while they read the novel.

Keeping a start and end of class routine can help students reflect and focus on their learning in the classroom. Teacher could open class with a “Bell Work” question written on the board for students to consider while they are settling into class that either reflects a topic from the chapter finished the previous day or one that will be relevant in the day’s reading. For collecting formative data, teachers should also close each class with an “Exit Slip” activity where, on a stick note or slip of paper, students respond to a question written on the board reflective of what was read that day. Students had their

answers to teacher as they leave the room. As an alternative tech-friendly option, students could also respond to an exit slip on their devices using platforms like Kahoot! or Google Forms. In the following table is a more specific sequence for this part of the unit.

Table 2

Unit Plan for Week 2-10

Week	Summary of Learning Goals & Activities	Formative & Summative Assessments:
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teacher read Chapters 1-4 together. Teacher will “think-aloud” on the board with an audiobook playing. Focus Day: None. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding: Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 1-3 of <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> . Teacher collects this first journal for formal feedback.
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 1-3. Students and teacher read Chapters 4-7 together. Focus Day: Non-Fiction Media Selection (have students examine relevant and recent news articles that showcase discrimination in Canada and record learning in a graphic organizer) 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 4-7.
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 4-7. Students and teacher read Chapters 8-11. together. Focus Day: Watch CBC’s <i>The Book of Negroes</i> Episode 1. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 8-11. Teacher collects this third journal for formal feedback.
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 8-11. Students and teacher read Chapters 12-15 together. Focus Day: Watch CBC’s <i>The Book of Negroes</i> Episode 2. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 12-15.
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 12-15. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teacher read Chapters 16-19 together. Focus Day: Indigenous Inequality in Canada (Watch CBC's <i>8th Fire</i> Episode 1 with questions, discuss as a class) 	Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 16-19.
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 16-19. Students and teacher read Chapters 20-23 together. Focus Day: Watch CBC's <i>The Book of Negroes</i> Episode 3. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 20-23.
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 20-23. Students and teacher read Chapters 24-26 together. Focus Day: Watch CBC's <i>The Book of Negroes</i> Episode 4. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 24-26.
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 24-26. Students and teacher read Chapters 27-29 together. Focus Day: Satire Day (watch "No Reservations" (Crazy8sFilm, 2021) short film & "Give Nothing to Racism (NZ Human Rights Commission, 2017);" have students explore other satirical clips that pertain to social inequality and record learning on graphic organizer, discuss as a class) 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 27-29.
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 27-29. Students and teacher read Chapters 30-31 together. Focus Day: Watch CBC's <i>The Book of Negroes</i> Episode 5. 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students complete a dialectical journal on Chapters 30-31.

Unit conclusion (week 10). The summative assessments for this unit will be divided between formal assessment of oral language skills and written reading analysis skills. To assess student ability of reading analysis, students will proofread, edit, and submit their preferred two dialectical journal entries and will be graded using a criterion-based rubric utilizing the Learning Map template from Shelley Moore's resource

website, BlogsSomeMoore (Sherri et. al., 2019). Students will have the opportunity to self-assess their work prior to submission. To assess student oral language skills, grading will be a combination of teacher assessment and student self-assessment using a criterion-based rubric as well. Students will be familiar with both rubrics and will have practiced reflective self-assessment during the progression of the unit.

Table 3

Unit Plan for Week 11

Week	Summary of Learning Goals & Activities	Formative & Summative Assessments:
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet in their literature circle groups to discuss Chapters 30-31. Focus Day: Watch CBC's <i>The Book of Negroes</i> Episode 6. Student given time in class to choose their top two journal entries to polish and resubmit as their written summative assessment for the unit 	Informal & Formal Checks for Understanding; Students self-assess their discussion skills on the rubric as their oral language summative assessment for the unit; Submission of top two dialectical journals with self-assessment using a rubric.

Assessment

As part of my UDL design of this unit, students are taught the difference between formative and summative assessment, are told what summative assessments to expect in this unit from the beginning, as well as have access to a clear marking rubric written in student-friendly language. I also diversify my assessment by focusing on different skills (writing, reading, and oral language) and used student-friendly language transcribed from the BC Curricular documents, whose roots in learning outcomes philosophy stem from Tyler's (2017) ideologies. For summative assessment, I illustrate how assessment goals are broken down into tiered levels to meet individual students at their access point, as referenced in the review of the literature (Sailor et al., 2018). The

following figure illustrates the marking rubric for the reading and writing skills demonstrate in their dialectical journals.

Figure 2

Dialectical Journal Marking Rubric Using Learning Maps Template with Access Point

Course/Subject/Grade(s): English 10 Novel Study of <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>		Planning Team Anna Cullen				
Unit Big Idea: Power & Privilege		Unit Guiding Question(s): Where does prejudice and racism stem from? Who does it benefit and who does it hurt? How do you overcome it?				
Goals		Access – This is what I NEED to know and do	All – This is what I MUST know and do	Most – This is what I CAN know and do	Few – This is what I COULD know and do	Extension – This is what I can TRY to know and do
Content Goal: Recognizing literary techniques in literature		I need to recognize a literary technique in what I'm reading	I must recognize some literary techniques; but often feel frustrated by figurative language	I can recognize and interpret some literary techniques and figurative language	I could recognize and interpret many literary techniques and figurative language	I can try research new literary techniques and figurative language and look for them in the text.
Curricular Competencies:	Reading Comprehension	I need to identify characters and events in the story	I must accurately describe setting, characters, and events; I make simple inferences supported by some specific evidence; I offer and support logical interpretations of obvious themes	I can accurately and thoroughly describe setting, characters, and events, and their relationships; I can make inferences supported by specific evidence; I offer and support logical interpretations	I could describe and analyzes setting, characters, events, and themes, and their relationships; I make insightful inferences supported by detailed evidence; I may risk making unusual interpretations of themes	I can try taking risks making new and unusual interpretations of the text using evidence from the story and evidence from additional supplementary texts
	Responding & Analyzing	I need to connect to the story	I must make obvious connections to own ideas and other selections; I offer reactions or judgments with some support; I may	I can make logical connections to my own beliefs, other selections, or universal themes; I offer reactions or judgments	I could develop a creative or insightful response; I support reactions and judgments and analysis with reasoned arguments;	I can try linking my ideas to larger themes (essential questions) and support them with evidence from the text and additional

			show evidence of reflecting on initial responses or ideas of others, but rarely revises them	supported by reasons and examples; I often show evidence of reflecting on and revising previous responses or ideas of others	I always show evidence of reflecting on and revising previous responses or ideas of others	supplemental texts; I can try and use accurate MLA citations in my writing.
	Creating Meaning in Writing	I need to express my ideas	My ideas must be generally straightforward and clear; they may be unevenly developed; I use some relevant examples & details; I may connect to own experience	My ideas can be fully developed and show depth in places; my supporting details and examples are relevant; I personalize the topic	My ideas could be fully developed with some originality, maturity, and individuality; My details and examples often show some subtlety; I try to elicit a specific response from the reader	I can try writing an effective thesis statement at the beginning of my response that links all my ideas together; I can try connecting my thoughts to a larger worldview perspective.

One area on inclusive assessment practice I emphasize both in this unit and in my discussions with colleagues is providing opportunities for students to practice their learning without feeling penalized when they get it wrong. In building a trusting classroom community, especially one where I plan on students exploring sensitive topics like power and privilege, students need to feel safe to make mistakes. Incorporating assignments for “practice” or formative assessments, allows students to practice the skill without worry about how it will affect their grade. For this unit, students are practicing without penalty in every dialectical journal that they write because they know that the ones that count towards their grade (summative) they will have opportunity to choose, use feedback, and revise their response.

Offering Choice for Learning

I have learned to offer choice whenever possible for learning. When students have choice, they are more likely to engage with what is in front of them. When I’ve worked with other colleagues about incorporating inclusive practice into their classroom, one of the biggest concerns they bring up is the extra time and effort that they cannot spare. This a completely reasonable point, making inclusion work in the classroom

requires teachers to work smarter, not harder. When I create choice, I do the same. Some standard opportunities for choice that I incorporate into my routines include choice in note taking, choice in demonstrating learning with technology, and choice in essential questions.

I found that giving students opportunities to choose how they took notes did wonders for engagement. Prior to my switch, I would have my master copy and fill-in-the-blank copies for students to follow along. Now, I have students give me information about their learning preferences at the beginning of each unit and one question I ask is, “How do you prefer your notes” with three choices being: write them myself, fill-in-the-blank, and filled-in for me to follow along. Initially, I predicted a wave of students asking for completed notes. After all, what student wouldn’t want the “easiest” option? I was pleasantly surprised to find the class was divided almost equally into thirds. A few of my high achieving students wanted the creativity to organize their own notes, a few of my students with learning disabilities found it helpful to stay engaged with fill-in-the-blanks, and some of my English Language Learners liked the filled-in notes because it gave them peace of mind about not missing anything and space to write translations in the margins. The best part? It required almost no additional prep on my part. I already had a filled-in master copy for me and all I had to do was run a few more copies through the copier.

With the increasing opportunities for using educational technology in the classroom, it has offered more choice on how students can show their learning. Prior to the pandemic, I used a printed booklet for my literature circle units that students worked through as we progressed through the novel. Some students liked the format because it

made the unit progression predictable having the whole unit in one place. Though I found it limiting, especially for students with disabilities or students who were English Language Learners. When we switched to online learning, my literature circle units moved online too. Through my own exploration and learning in two elective EDDL courses in this M.Ed. program, I found a wide array of online resources to offer more choice in how students show their learning. Now, I have an easily adaptable template for dialectal journaling on Google Docs for those students who would benefit from it. Using tools like Google Read and Write, where students can have online text read aloud to them and scribe their words, or Google Translate feature in Docs, where students can write in their first language and translate it into English, I can offer my students different options to show me what they are learning. My students can work smarter and not harder too. The following figures show how creating an easily adaptable online template can offer choices for how students can show their learning, creating a more inclusive approach to teaching.

Figure 3

Template for Dialectical Journaling on Google Docs used for Remote Learning

To Kill a Mockingbird Dialectical Journal #1

This is your first journal. It is due on Google Classroom on Sunday Night at 6:00pm. Please make sure your responses are written in complete sentences and carefully proofread.

You will receive **2 completion marks** if your journal is **handed in on time** and **meets the minimal expectations** for English class. If you choose at the end of the unit, this journal could be one of your two marked journals that will be assessed with the rubric on the second and third page.

After completing this journal, please practice self-assessing where you feel it falls on the rubric by **highlighting**. Then, reflect on what you did well and what you want to work on next time.

****THIS WEEK YOU'LL GET SPECIFIC TEACHER FEEDBACK ON YOUR JOURNAL****

Student Name:

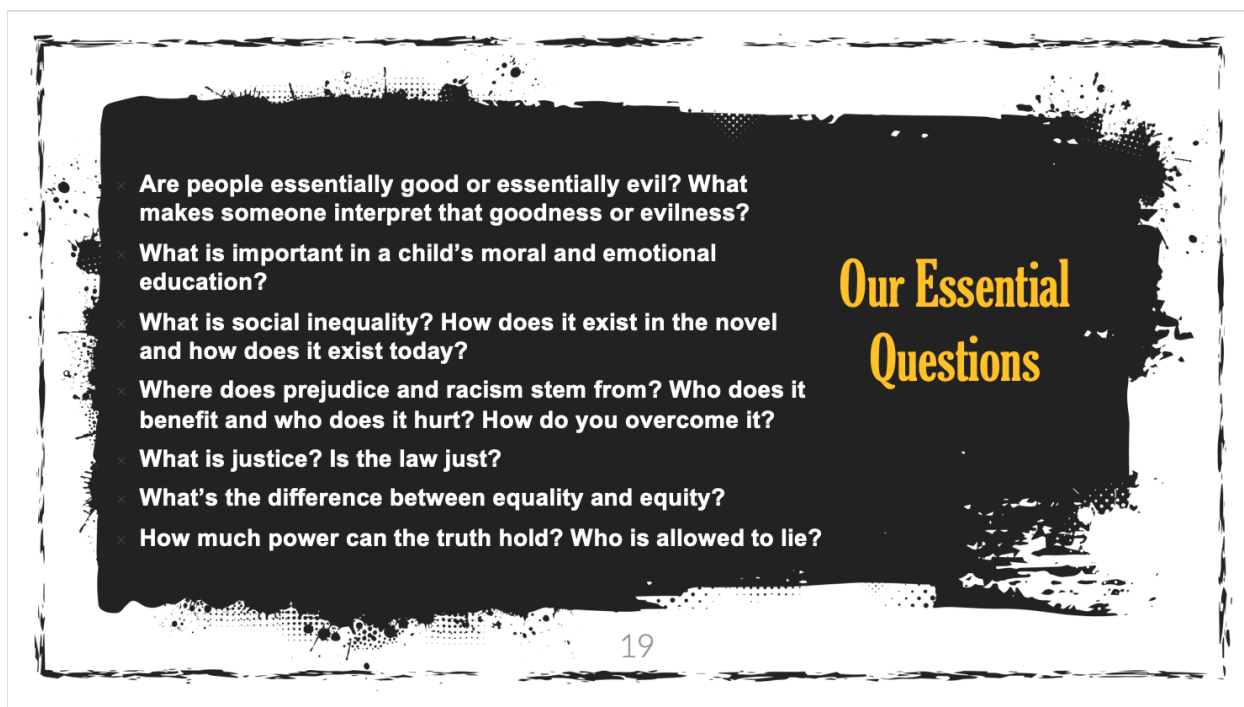
Novel Chapters: **1-4**

Part 1: Evidence (about 150 words)
Type your response here
Part 2: Journal Response (about 300-500 words)
Type your response here

Lastly, a standard choice I provide in my classes is having multiple guiding essential questions at the beginning of units. That way, students can choose one that piques their interest and use it as a lens as they progress through the unit. Like Therrien et al. (2011) found in their research about the benefits of structured inquiry, providing overarching questions acts like a tether to help students exploring themes in a story. The following figure shows the guiding questions that I would use in this sample unit.

Figure 4

Essential Guiding Questions for *Power and Privilege: To Kill a Mockingbird Novel Study*



Sample Lesson Plan Using Inclusive Practice

Below is an example lesson plan for one class in our unit. Its format is influenced by Understanding by Design with Universal Designs for Learning, and Shelly Moore's Learning Maps Assessment.

Table 4

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> Chapter 8 Reading Day	
Unit: Power & Privilege: A Novel Study of <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> .	Subject & Grade: English 10
Length of Lesson (Timing): 75 minutes	
Developed by: Anna Cullen	Date: April 2022
Stage 1 – Desired Results	
BC Curriculum Learning Standard to Focus on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts. 	
Activation of Background Knowledge (Access Point):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students need to know what it means to connect, visualize, question, and make inferences in a text. 	
Established Student Learning Goals for the Lesson:	
(Adapted from Learning Maps template on BlogSomeMoore.com)	

Curricular Competency Goals:

- I can identify important plot events in Chapter 8
 - (All) Students must identify 2 important events in this chapter.
 - (Most) Students can identify and record a variety of important events in this chapter and make connections to events in previous chapters.
 - (Few) Students could make connections to *The Book of Negroes* Episode 1 to events in the novel.
 - (Extension) Students can try making connections from external sources they've read or world events they know about.

Core Competency Goals:

- I can communicate my ideas to others.
 - (All) Students must communicate with familiar peers.
 - (Most) Students can communicate purposefully using practiced strategies.
 - (Few) Students could communicate confidently using tools to connect with the intended audience.
 - (Extension) Students can try communicating with intentional impact in a well-constructed format that matches the audience

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Informal Checks for Understanding

- Thumbs up, thumbs down, thumbs sideways check in
- Contribution to classroom discussion
- 1:1 conversation with students
- Looking at faces
- Noticing behaviour that is indicative of kids who are bored or not getting it

Formal Checks for Understanding

- Answering open-ended questions at the beginning and during class
- Contribution to class discussion
- Small group sharing
- Ticket Out the Door/Exit Slip Activity

Summative Assessment

- Working towards: Dialectical Journal for Chapters 8-11 of *To Kill a Mockingbird*
-

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Processing / Learning Activities to Consider that are Designed to Ensure Understanding and Promote Critical Thinking:

A/B partner share, think-pair-share, opinion line-ups, class discussion, graphic organizers

Description of the Learners:

- Class of 26 diverse learners; five students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP), one with a Learning Support Plan (LSP), five with Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), one English Language Learner student (ELL), and two other students pending official support through assessment.
- Reading skill set is below expectation for English 10. 70% of these students did not meet the learning outcomes for English 9.

- 10 students are also frequent non-attenders.

Step by Step Through the Lesson (Directions):

On the board: Write the “Plan of the Day” in a location where all students can see it all of class. Write the scaffolded curricular competency on the board.

5 min: Bell Work Question: “What’s your go-to activity when there is a snow day?”

- While students are settling into their seats, encourage them to consider and reflect on the question. Students may write down their thoughts if they wish. Students know they will be expected to share.

5 min: Welcome & Attendance

- Review the plan of the day and take attendance.
- Think, Pair, Share Activity for the “Bell Work” Question. (Think) Have students think for 1 minute to themselves (access point for those who came in late), (Pair) students talk with the person next to them about their thoughts for 2 minutes, and (Share) have volunteers share what their pairs talked about. Teacher chooses students if no one volunteers.

40 min:

- Listen to Chapter 8 of *To Kill a Mockingbird* using the audiobook (28 minutes)
- As students listen, keep sticky notes and their Vocabulary Journal on their desk. As students find new words, jot them down in their Vocabulary Journal. Students practice annotating with sticky notes using the 4 reading strategies as they listen.
- Teacher models effective annotating on the white board as the class listens to the story. Examples of annotation include:
 - Important plot events I see
 - Questions I have
 - Predictions I have
 - Connections I’ve made to myself and other texts
 - New character information I found
 - Connections to essential questions and themes
 - Literary devices I noticed
 - New words I’m hearing
- Pause at the halfway point for teachers to do “Think-aloud” about what they wrote on the board. Explain what your thought process looked like as you were listening.
- Continue reading the chapter and teacher continues modeling on the board.

10 min:

- At the end of the chapter, give students 10 minutes to complete their annotation notes and fill in their Vocabulary Journal.

15 min:

- Have students pair up with a partner or group of three. Give students 10 minutes to “think-aloud” their annotations to a partner. Encourage students to “steal” good ideas from their peers. Gather any additional ideas to add to the white board in a class discussion afterwards.

Exit Slip: “How has your understanding of Boo Radley’s character changed in this chapter?”

Materials Needed:

- *To Kill a Mockingbird* novels (one per student)
 - *To Kill a Mockingbird* audiobook (free access on ESL-bits.com or available for purchase on Audible)
 - Vocabulary Journal (students will have this already)
 - Whiteboard & markers
 - Sticky notes
-

Potential Barriers to Success (Anticipated Challenges):

Maintaining student engagement with the topic, motivation to contribute to classroom discussion and group work, organization of small groups, keeping students on task, student exceptionalities, varying reading level ability of students, & catching up students who frequently miss class.

Even though this unit was built with a specific English 10 class in mind, I like to think that the core curricular values and philosophies encapsulated in its development are transferable and valuable to other classes, grade levels, and school communities. I’ve always believed that resource sharing and teacher collaboration is a critical component in meaningful professional development. When I first started as a teacher, I was fortunate to have other teaching mentors share their work and resources and have always strived to return the favor by been very open to sharing what I create for my classrooms with any teachers interested. I hope that with the creation and potential sharing of this curricular project, it will open more dialogue, particularly in English departments, about the potential ways to explore old texts in new and contemporary ways and incorporate more inclusive practices into everyday classes. I believe the flexibility of this inclusive curricular design makes it easily adaptable for all types of novels and themes depending on the class it is intended for.

Creating an inclusive space in the mainstream classroom does not have to be overwhelming; small and steady changes to practice and planning make opportunities

for educational equity for every student. Being the English Language Learner teacher at my most recent school, and a special education teacher in previous ones, helping teachers embrace inclusive practice in the mainstream secondary classroom has become a passion of mine. One of the obstacles I often face in discussion inclusion with educators is the belief that adapting inclusive practice will take a lot of work. So, in addition to enlightening other teachers about alternate ways to teaching content, I hope that this curricular design offers teachers insight about how easy it can be to incorporate small and different practices to make learning more accessible and engaging for all types of learners. The final chapter will summarize my findings in this paper and discuss the implications of incorporating inclusive practices and planning into every mainstream classroom.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In this paper I argue that creating a meaningful inclusive atmosphere in mainstream classrooms is a crucial responsibility for teachers as it is necessary in making learning accessible and flexible for every learning. As displayed in the development of this paper, two important ways to accomplish this are implementing universal inclusive teaching strategies in everyday learning and intentionally challenging Eurocentric teaching habits. Every student has the right to learn, but previous rigid and Eurocentrically-influenced practices impede many students' ability to deeply engage with learning. Throughout this paper, I have provided a multitude of evidence that showcases how inclusion is essential for making learning accessible for all, a safe and inclusive classroom community is an essential first step and engaging every student in challenging topics is amplified by fostering feelings of student ownership in their learning.

Summary

In Chapter One of this paper, I discussed my learning journey as a students and educator, both in my practical experience in the classroom and coursework through the M.Ed. program. I spoke about how my passion for inclusion sparked in my initial teaching practicum, flourished in my various roles over my teaching career, and developed into a greater understanding in my graduate studies. In Chapter Two, I reviewed the relevant and contemporary literature supporting the benefits for every student by adopting inclusive practice in mainstream classrooms, specifically looking at tiered inclusive strategies, UDL planning, challenging present Eurocentric practices, culture of care, conscious awareness in learning, and inquiry-based approaches to

planning. Finally, in Chapter Three, the application of my argument was presented in the form of a sample unit utilizing these inclusive strategies in action that looked at *To Kill a Mockingbird* through the modern multicultural lens of power and privilege.

This paper has clearly shown the not only why implementing inclusive practice makes learning accessible to all learners, but also how accessible implementing them can be for educators nervous about making changes to their practice. Research shows that making small positive changes to planning and teaching, whether it is adopting more community-building activities to create a culture of care or planning your next unit through a UDL lens, creating the habit of inclusive practice in mainstream classrooms make it easier for every student to engage in learning. In my application of this learning, I've demonstrated one way to utilize some of these inclusive strategies in action.

Implications

As educators in a quickly globalizing world, we recognize that our learners are more diverse than ever before. And yet, many still rely on teaching practices that are built to serve only one type of learner. Teachers need to question whether the practices they are implementing in their classrooms are benefiting and engaging *all* students. Educators are back to teaching in a one room schoolhouse, but instead of accommodating multiple grades, they now cater to a wide range of ability levels, background knowledge, cultural and societal influences, and learning styles. And because teachers do not teach cookie-cutter students, so they cannot rely on cookie-cutter methods. Instead, educators need to embrace the diversity of their students with more flexible and inclusive approaches to planning and teaching.

This paper contributes to the larger conversation about the importance of a wider educational shift towards inclusion. Inclusion is not only just tool for resource rooms and case managers, but also a necessary shift in perspective for all mainstream classroom teachers to make learning accessible and engaging for every student they teach. By embracing inclusive practice, this paper gives educators research about the success of utilizing inclusion in their classrooms and a practical application of these strategies exemplified in a sample unit plan. I would like to see the immersion of inclusive practices actively adopted by all educators, hope that the importance of making this perspective shift in education will make it so every student has to opportunity to succeed and feel like a valued member in their classroom community from K-12.

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