

**Inclusion: is it working for all? Addressing the Impacts of Inclusion in Diverse
Elementary Classrooms**

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A capstone project submitted to Thompson Rivers University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master's of Education.

Presented July 29, 2024

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction.....	5
My Teaching and Learning Journey	5
Significance of the Need to Change Inclusive Classrooms	8
Presenting the Argument.....	8
Overview of Paper.....	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	10
Inclusive Learning Environments.....	11
<i>Teacher Training and Support.....</i>	12
<i>Increasingly Diverse Classrooms.....</i>	14
<i>Complex and Diverse Needs.....</i>	16
<i>Unmanageable Classrooms for Educators.....</i>	18
Summary of Literature.....	20
Chapter Three: Application to My Professional Life.....	22
Experiences of Inclusion in Public Education.....	22
Effective Implementation of Inclusion.....	23
Professional Development on Challenging Behaviors.....	24
<i>Structure of Professional Development Modules.....</i>	25
<i>Mandatory Violent Risk Assessment Pro-D.....</i>	29
Government Funding.....	30
Improving Inclusion Practices.....	32
<i>Role of District Administrators and Policy Makers.....</i>	33
<i>Role of Teachers.....</i>	34
Advocating for Change with Inclusion.....	35
<i>Current Disadvantages.....</i>	36

<i>Current Advantages</i>	37
Summary	38
Chapter Four: Conclusion	39
Summary	39
Implications	40
Limitations	42
References	44

Abstract

This paper is set within the context of my experiences as an elementary school teacher in British Columbia and as a student in the Master's of Education program. During my career, I have had the opportunity to teach in a full time classroom from kindergarten through to grade twelve, as well as a learning assistance resource teacher. Through my journey as an educator, I have come to realize that inclusive classrooms has been an educational phrase that has been circulating throughout the Canadian school system for many years. Children with a variety of different abilities, diagnoses, learning challenges, genders, and behaviors are combined within classrooms. With growing communities of diverse learners, teachers are feeling ill-equipped, prepared, and supported by the Canadian school system to properly educate their students. In this paper, I claim that inclusion within mainstream elementary classrooms is not setting up all of our young students for success in their learning and allowing them to reach their full potential. I make this claim based on four points of evidence. First, is that teachers require more support and training. Second, is that mainstream public school classrooms have become increasingly diverse. Another reason is that teachers are left alone to struggle daily with the complex and diverse needs of all of their students. Finally, inclusive education has resulted in escalating demands that continue to grow and are becoming unmanageable. The claims demonstrating that inclusion is not working for all learners are further explored in my application, in which I share my experiences, as well as those of my colleagues. Educators are recognising the need and value for more support within classrooms that moves beyond expecting teachers to manage everything on their own. This inquiry is responsive to the need for increased knowledge and understanding of complex behaviors. I advocate for changes to be made in the approach of inclusion so that teachers are sufficiently supported within their classrooms to improve their efficacy in educating their diverse learners and providing equitable learning for all students.

Keywords: inclusion, efficacy, equitable learning, diverse needs, challenging behaviors

Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter, I explain my interest in the topic of my Capstone paper and how this topic connects to my learning as a student in the Master's of Education (M.Ed) program at Thompson Rivers University (TRU). Next, I explain my interests in connecting diverse learning environments to my pedagogical practice, as well as the significance of my topic in a local and global context within education. Finally, I illustrate my argument and supporting evidence, and conclude by outlining how my paper will proceed.

My Teaching and Learning Journey

I grew up in a household where I had to learn to be independent and responsible for my four younger siblings at a very young age. My father worked away in a logging camp for most of my life growing up, but also ran the family dairy farm. My mother struggled with her mental health throughout her life, so I did not have a choice with having to help support her and take care of my family. Since I started working and grew up around children at a young age, I naturally enjoyed being around children. Having to help manage the farm and the household, I became a very hardworking and responsible individual. These events in my youth helped shape and develop my knowledge and understanding of mental health, learning, adapting, and teaching. As I proceeded into my adult life in search of my own dreams and academic desires, my knowledge and understanding of challenges that individuals may face in their lives assisted me in developing strong and genuine relationships with people that I met.

My academic goals were strongly focused on becoming a neurosurgeon. I wanted to help people and was deeply interested in how the brain worked. I believe that this interest came from dealing with my mother's mental health diagnosis and the deep worry that I or one of my siblings would inherit her disease. Without financial support, I worked full time while taking a full time course load at TRU during my Bachelor of Science degree. I completed the necessary courses that I needed to apply to medical school and wrote my medical college admissions test. I did well, but was unable to make the transition to medical school due to my finances. I adapted

and applied to the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree program at TRU and was quickly accepted. I felt that if I couldn't help people medically, I could help children while educating them. I knew that mental health issues can develop at a young age and I wanted to help those students become just as successful in their lives as any other child without any challenges or disabilities. I became a teacher and have been an educator for eighteen years. I have taught many students during this time and helped and encouraged all of my students to reach their full potential, no matter their individual challenges. In order to continue to learn and grow as an educator, I decided two and half years ago to enter into the M.Ed program at TRU.

I entered the M.Ed program wanting to aspire to create a positive change in my chosen field of work. I have a passion for working with children and I strive to do whatever I can to ensure that my students are successful and develop a love for learning. Within our current public education system, I see so many areas in need of change in order to support all of our students. I feel that by gaining more knowledge and understanding of the system I will be able to perhaps be part of the changes that I would like to see. Having been an educator now for eighteen years and having taught every single grade from kindergarten to grade twelve, I feel that I am ready for something new and the M.Ed program might be able to allow me to move into the new challenge that I am seeking. I am not a person that is comfortable doing the same thing over and over again. I need more than the mundane routine that a teacher can experience teaching the same grade over and over again each year and I want to be able to continue to grow and develop methods that will provide the best learning environments for all students.

I realized that many people have been encouraging me to do more with my career, as I am very capable of juggling many things within my very busy schedule. Being a mom of three busy girls, a wife to a husband that works out of town, and a full time teacher, I am able to handle and juggle a lot of stress and activities. I am very organized and seem to have a lot of energy to just get things done. I can accomplish a lot in one day with my efficient and effective planning and execution of tasks. By searching out M.Ed programs that would work for me, I

chose to try online learning because it looked as though it would work with my hectic schedule. When I told others that I was also working on my Master's Degree, not one person was surprised that I added being in school to my full schedule. There have been many new skills that I have gained throughout my learning journey and I have enjoyed putting them to use within my work with my students everyday, but as well as, with my colleagues and family. The knowledge that I have gained from the different courses that I have taken throughout the M.Ed program has definitely helped me feel as though teaching is where I am meant to be and that I can accomplish anything that I put my mind to.

Now that I am reaching the end of my M.Ed journey I feel as though I have developed into a more confident and competent teacher. I do feel that I would make a terrific administrator one day and throughout this journey and the reflection that I have been asked to do has made me realize that I need to do some matter of leadership within my education career. I have always felt as though I needed more, and have always enjoyed a challenge. I have been called a change maker in the past and I would love to make changes happen in the future that are positive and beneficial for many students and educators within the public education system. When I was presented with the opportunity to write a paper for my Research Methods course, I immediately felt that I needed to write about inclusion and diverse classrooms within public education. My focus on inclusion in this course led to a deep exploration of the literature surrounding inclusion, diverse learners, and the need for providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Finally, my learning in the Diversity course also encouraged me to reflect on my life experiences, my personal teaching pedagogy, and providing a welcoming and accessible learning environment for my learners. Through my learning and reflections, I have come to realize that inclusion may not always be the most equitable and effective learning environment for everyone.

Significance of the Need to Change Inclusive Classrooms

There has been a shift from exclusion of children with diverse learning challenges to inclusive classrooms within public education within British Columbia, Canada, and other countries in the world. With this shift, teachers may feel unprepared with regard to their abilities to provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all of the students within their classrooms. Every child has “the fundamental right to education and should be given the opportunity to learn with their peers within a child centered pedagogy, capable of meeting their learning needs” (Mohanty, 2019, p.805). This topic is significant not only for teachers and administrators, but for parents, district policies, and procedures as every child has the right to an education and to feel safe while at school. It is very important that educational practices are beneficial and equitable for all learners, but are the current practices achieving the desired effect for all?

Presenting the Argument

In this paper, I claim that inclusion within mainstream elementary classrooms is not setting up all of our young students for success in their learning and allowing them to reach their full potential. The first reason is that teachers require more with respect to assistance with providing an equitable education for all students. Teachers need to be sufficiently supported within their classrooms to improve their efficacy in educating their diverse learners and providing equitable learning for all students based upon evidence from studies using semi-structured interviews by authors such as Anglim et al (2018), Navarro-Mateau et al. (2020), Mohanty (2019), and Sider et al. (2021). Anglim et al. (2018) explained that teacher decisions in dealing with the behavioral needs of their students are based on their own experiences rather than knowledge they have acquired from training or consultation with professionals (p.76). Navarro-Mateau et al. (2020) stated that “prior teacher training and updated training become vital to the better preparation of teachers to work with children with educational needs, increasing their self-confidence and helping them to develop a more positive attitude toward

inclusive practices” (p.9). A second reason is that classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. Evidence to support this shows that classrooms, now, have become more diverse than earlier, in terms of students’ abilities and diverse requirements (Mahonty, 2019, p.806). Another reason is that teachers are left alone to struggle daily with trying to meet the needs of all of their students and end up only being able to focus on those with the greatest behavioral challenges. Anglim et al. (2018) found that teachers feel challenged by increasingly diverse and intense classroom experiences and have relayed their experiences of guilt, self-questioning and uncertainty (p.76). Finally, the demands placed on educators are growing and becoming unmanageable. Inclusive education has resulted in escalating demands on teaching a range of learners, while attending to the rights of all students and focusing on good teaching techniques from classroom teachers applicable to all learners (Sider et al., 2021).

Overview of Paper

After the conclusion of this introductory chapter, my paper will explore inclusion practices within the public school system. The literature review will explore four areas of evidence to demonstrate what educators are experiencing in their diverse classrooms in order to create a positive and safe learning environment for all their students. I will inquire about the need for teacher support and training, teaching within increasingly diverse classrooms, complex and diverse needs of students today, and unmanageable classrooms for educators. In the application portion of my paper I will investigate legislation, policies, the roles of administrators and teachers, as well as, the disadvantages and advantages of inclusion practices. Lastly, I conclude my paper with a discussion of effective and realistic implementation practices that could be incorporated in public mainstream classrooms, and a final summary.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I begin by defining terms that I am using throughout the literature review. Next, I outline my argument and the evidence that supports the four main themes of my argument from the literature. These themes are: teachers require more with respect to assistance with providing an equitable education for all students, classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, teachers are left alone to struggle daily with trying to meet the needs of all of their students and end up only being able to focus on those with the greatest behavioral challenges, and the demands placed on educators are growing and becoming unmanageable. Finally, I conclude by summarizing how my argument connects to the literature.

Definition of Terms

Inclusion can include a variety of terms and definitions when being addressed within diverse learning environments. Some of these include:

- Individual Education Plan (IEP): A document designed to meet the unique educational needs of a child, who may have a disability as defined by federal regulations (Nemours Children's Health, 2023).
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): A persistent deficit in reciprocal social communication and interaction, including responding inappropriately to conversations, misreading nonverbal interactions and experiencing difficulties in building age-appropriate friendships (Anglim et al., 2018).
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD): A condition where people, especially children, are extremely active and unable to concentrate on anything for very long, with the result that they find it difficult to learn and often behave in inappropriate ways (Nemours Children's Health, 2023).
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): A behavior disorder in which individuals are uncooperative, defiant, and hostile toward peers, parents, teachers, and other authority figures (Nemours Children's Health, 2023).

- Emotional Intelligence (EI): The emotional processing capacity of individuals (Nwosu et al., 2023).
- Special Educational Needs (SEN): A child has special educational needs if they have a learning challenge or disability that make it more difficult for them to learn than most children of their age (Sider et al., 2021).
- Persistent Challenging Behaviors (PCB): Behaviors that can result from not being ready for school and/or having social-emotional delays (McGuire & Meadan, 2020).
- Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD): Individuals exhibit challenging behaviors and social skills delays that can interfere with their ability to build relationships (McGuire & Meadan, 2022).
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): The conceptual and empirical connection to school readiness (McGuire & Meadan, 2020).

Inclusive Learning Environments

The Council of Ministers of Education in Canada define inclusive education as quality education that aims at the full participation of all learners. This definition aligns with the belief that all students belong and all students can make valued contributions to classrooms and schools (Sider et al., 2021). The prevalence of disability in Canada was found to be 1 in 5 or 22% for those aged 15 years of age and older in 2018. From a family systems perspective, disability impacted around 25% of Canadians in 2018. Sider et al. (2021) stated that:

Federal efforts to develop legislation aimed at supporting those with disabilities, in June 2018, the Government of Canada tabled the proposed *Accessible Canada Act* which focused on accessibility in federal jurisdictions. The legislation removed barriers to accessibility such as the built environment, employment and transportation. The *Act* built on principles such as inclusive design and inherent dignity, and on the foundation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Although there has been federal legislation to support inclusion, education is a provincial matter in Canada. Thus, there is a wide spectrum of

policies that relate to inclusive education. Legislation is an important foundation but further change is necessary to address the challenges of supporting inclusive schools in Canada. (p.2)

Inclusive education has resulted in escalating demands on teaching a range of learners, while attending to the rights of all students and focusing on good teaching techniques from classroom teachers applicable to all learners (Sider et al., 2021).

Legislation is an important foundation but further change is necessary to address the challenges of supporting schools and teachers to meet the daily demands and challenges of learners in Canada. A review of the literature suggests that many teachers are left alone to struggle daily with trying to meet the needs of all of their students and end up only being able to focus on those with the greatest behavioral challenges. Teachers are overwhelmed with the amount of needs and learning challenges that they are faced with in their classrooms. The current incentive-based strategies and minimal classroom support are not enough. There needs to be more effective ways to address this problem, so that everyone within the classroom is learning and safe.

Teacher Training and Support

When considering inclusion issues, the knowledge and experience of educators dealing with children with PCBs is a vital one. Improving social participation and the learning opportunities of students with SEN is all too necessary but appears costly at every level, from the policy level down to that of practitioners. Jury et al. (2023) found that teachers expressed concerns regarding inclusion and consistently indicated that they lacked the resources to include students with SEN. They stated that their workloads have increased, that they have experienced more difficulties with classroom management and/or that the inclusion of students with SEN has reduced their teaching/education quality (Jury et al., 2023).

Teachers in Fuchs' (2019) study also expressed that there is no district training, no workshops for mainstreaming, experience is on-the-job training, and there is no district funding.

Some teachers reported that they acquired all of their knowledge and strategies on their own time and budget. Those that did go to offered workshops and inservice training found them to be a waste of time. Teachers also expressed an issue of access to information and ownership of students. Teachers in Fuchs' (2019) study thought that special education teachers were privy to so much, but weren't responsible for those students. There have been definite issues with claiming responsibility for certain groups of students while dismissing responsibility for others. Teachers stated that their teacher training did not prepare them for the inclusive classroom. Fuchs (2019) also found that one required course on special education did not teach educators in his study how to differentiate instruction, make accommodations in the classroom, or work with special education support staff. Fuchs (2019) also found that educators reported a lack of requisite skills and knowledge negatively affected their ability to successfully meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in the general classroom setting.

Looking at Sider et al.'s (2021) study, principals indicated that they were able to help foster further commitment to inclusive education if their staff felt like they had been supported before, during, and following challenging experiences. There can be high levels of anxiety while working with students with significant behavioral and learning needs. Principals within Sider et al.'s (2021) study discussed the importance of supporting their teaching staff when they were feeling tired or anxious. One principal stated, "When a teacher says they aren't coping, we need to be really clear that we are in it together and that we will find ways to try and support them" (Sider et al., 2021, p.236). Another principal (Sider et al., 2021) stated, "I say to staff right at the beginning: if you feel like running away, that's when you need to run into my office. When you find that you are withdrawing and you're feeling overwhelmed, that's when you need to run in, not out" (p.236). A third principal (Sider et al., 2021) stated, "Sometimes it takes a lot of mentoring and support from me when teachers are just exhausted" (p.236). These statements provide powerful illustrations of the value that principals have on ensuring that their teaching staff feels supported.

To further demonstrate the need for teacher training and support, the study by McGuire and Meadan (2020) highlighted how it was important for teachers to seek the guidance of school-based teams for additional resources that may be available for children that persist in PCBs. McGuire and Meadan (2020) found that teachers should work closely with families and parents to better understand the child's and family's strengths and needs, and partner with parents and families to develop a plan to support children's development. They determined (McGuire & Meadan, 2020) that it was important for children who needed those additional supports to receive them, so that they were able to make the necessary changes in their behavior and social functioning. McGuire and Meadan (2020) also found that it was important that schools provided more opportunities for educators to engage in training related to social inclusion and SEL, as well as, ensured that teachers were able to access the research being conducted by experts in the field. The need for increased teacher training and support is further expressed by the overwhelming increase in the diversity of classrooms.

Increasingly Diverse Classrooms

When looking at the increasingly diverse classrooms within public education, Mohanty (2019) found that the lack of requisite skills and knowledge of teachers was evident during his study by stating that "a sensitive teacher having knowledge and awareness on inclusive education could make the teaching-learning process more successful" (p.86). Mohanty (2019) also found that the attitudes of mainstream pre-service teachers towards disability and inclusive education were determined to be negative when they had little or no knowledge and experience with disability. In his study, Mohanty (2019) found that primary school teachers demonstrated mostly negative attitudes towards inclusion. Similarly, Anglim et al. (2018) found that two-thirds of the primary school teachers interviewed within their study were apprehensive and lacked confidence at the initial prospect of teaching a child with ASD.

A common theme that arose from Anglim et al. (2018)'s study was that many of the children with ASD started school without obtaining any input from a psychologist or having a

diagnosis of ASD. This concurs with other findings on inadequate early identification and intervention, insufficient psychological support for schools and geographical variability in the level and availability of support services provided for families (Anglim et al., 2018). McGuire and Meadan (2020) agreed, as they found that it was important for teachers to have a good understanding of who the children were so that they were able to understand and manage the social dynamics of the classroom environment. By knowing and understanding the students that are within the classroom, teachers' attitudes are influenced. Student behavior problems, in particular, appear to influence teachers' attitudes towards teaching and the demands of their jobs. In "Westling's study, 44% of general education teachers reported that student behavior problems made them think about quitting teaching" (Gilmour, et al., 2019, p.12). Other quantitative research suggested that student behavioral challenges were associated with teacher burnout, a strong predictor of turnover or intentions to leave teaching (Gilmour, et al., 2019). Additionally, students without disabilities have lower academic performance and exhibit more behavioral challenges when in a class with a peer who has an emotional behavior disorder and new survey data suggested that teachers spend less time on instruction when teachers' report that students exhibit challenging behavior (Gilmour, et al., 2019). Teachers appear to be "influenced by the students they instruct in ways that may be reflected in their career decisions" (Gilmour, et al., 2019, p.12).

With classroom's becoming increasingly diverse, Anglim et al. (2018) found that teachers also reported feeling uncertainty with managing the behavior of the child with ASD. The lack of confidence in teacher's decision making was due to their decisions being based on their own experiences rather than knowledge acquired from training or in consultation with professionals. In the context of a perceived lack of access to resources, support and advice, the teachers interviewed discussed creative and innovative approaches they had used in meeting the needs of a child with ASD. Anglim et al. (2018) found that a lack of equity in access to early identification, assessment and diagnosis created dilemmas for teachers in their study. Nwosu et

al. (2023) supported this when they found that “emotional intelligence became critical to understanding teachers’ perceptions about inclusive education as it could be associated with positive adaptive behaviors and better coping skills which could facilitate the capacity to meet the diverse needs of students” (p. 39). All of the mentioned studies found that teachers felt ill prepared and relied on their own knowledge and experiences when dealing with children with challenging behaviors and learning needs within increasingly diverse classrooms. These diverse classrooms are due to the overwhelming increase that educators are seeing in the complex and diverse needs of their students.

Complex and Diverse Needs

With the increase in complex and diverse needs of students within mainstream classrooms, Fuchs (2009) determined the following themes to be evident with teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards inclusive classrooms: a lack of administrative support, teachers' perceived lack of support from special educators and support staff, and teachers' lack of sufficient preparation in their preservice programs. Unanimously, the teachers felt that they lacked adequate planning and collaboration time. Specifically, teachers discussed the lack of planning and collaboration time to cover all the additional requirements in the curriculum. Many teachers expressed that trying to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general classroom setting “eats up your time” (Fuchs, 2019, p.32). Exploring these findings, it was found that more educator attitudes were affected by teaching students with complex and diverse needs.

Desombre et al. (2021) found that there was a causal link between social support and attitudes toward inclusive education, indicating that enhancing the former could incline teachers to be more inclusive of students with special needs and therefore be more willing to change their practices. Considering teachers often point to the lack of training and thus the lack of informational support, it is possible that this kind of support influenced their attitudes more strongly (Desombre et al., 2021). The teachers within this study also stated that they felt that inclusion is important, but that they were not receiving the support, time, and training necessary.

Looking at this issue further, McGuire and Meadan's (2022) study indicated that participant general educators wanted students with EBD in their classroom and also felt that social inclusion was important. Their respondents indicated they worked to promote socially inclusive practices using social-emotional learning, collaborating with social workers, consulting with special educators, and trying to build relationships with their students with EBD and between their students with EBD and students without disabilities (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). Respondents also reported barriers to social inclusion of students with EBD, including limited support, knowledge, and professional development. Barriers to social inclusion commonly reported by the participants included limited support from special education educators in the school (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). Special educators provided consultative services and responded to behavioral crises in classrooms as needed. Per respondents, special educators rarely provided direct social, emotional, or behavioral services to students. Only those students who were also educated in EBD classrooms received services from special educators related to their social, emotional, and/or behavioral needs (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). Respondents also expressed a strong desire for needing additional professional development to educate students with EBD, work with students who have a history of trauma, and work with students who have various health needs that impact them socially and behaviourally so they could have a better understanding of how to socially include their students (McGuire & Meadan, 2022).

McGuire and Meadan's (2022) findings aligned with extant literature as many general educators are underprepared to work with students with disabilities in general. Students enter the school system with histories of trauma, and educators must understand the best ways to manage social, emotional, behavioral, and academic ramifications of these past experiences. Such experiences have a direct impact on educational development of students in classrooms, and educators in the study said that they were unsure of how to best support them (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). For educators to provide a socially inclusive environment where students are able to fully participate; achieve behavioral, emotional, social, and academic success; and feel

valued by their classmates, teachers need to receive professional development to address the gaps in their own understanding of inclusion of students with EBD and impact trauma (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). With this increasing need to address gaps in their understanding, mainstream diverse classrooms continue to become unmanageable for educators.

Unmanageable Classrooms for Educators

Unmanageable classrooms have been found to affect a teacher's attitude towards inclusion. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education refer to their beliefs and feelings about including children with diverse educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Yada et al. (2022) found that teachers who taught in elementary schools and kindergarten showed higher self-efficacy in student engagement and classroom management. Teaching the youngest children was linked with a higher sense of self-efficacy. Yada et al. (2022) also found that the effect of grade level on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education have been somewhat inconsistent. In terms of teachers' gender, the authors of various studies have pointed out contradictory findings, in which some authors indicated that there were gender differences in teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes, with higher self-efficacy in classroom management associated among female teachers. On the other hand, several lines of evidence suggest there is no significant effect of gender on teachers' self-efficacy or their attitudes toward inclusive education (Yada et al., 2022). Yada et al.'s (2022) findings suggested that the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes was quite universal, regardless of the time, culture, grade level taught, or gender, even though the magnitude of teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy might differ based on the factors.

A practical implication of Yada et al's (2022) findings were in line with that of an earlier study that indicated that greater efforts are needed to develop pre and in-service teacher training, in which teachers can increase their self-efficacy. When attitudes towards inclusion are regarded as one barrier for inclusive education, it is of utmost importance that new teachers are given a chance to experience inclusive teaching in a safe and supporting environment as part of

their initial teacher education and thus hopefully gain positive experiences and support to have a stronger efficacy to enter the demanding realities of inclusive schools of today (Yada et al., 2022). Yada et al. (2022) also found that school leaders and policy makers should pay more attention to developing a learning community in schools, in which teachers can have regular and positive discussion with their colleagues to improve their self-efficacy beliefs, and subsequently their attitudes, to work successfully in an inclusive education context. Yada et al. (2022) found that if students and parents experience a more positive inclusive classroom and get familiar with various kinds of children, teachers could become more confident in communicating with diverse children and their attitudes towards inclusion might be enhanced in a positive direction. Yada et al. (2022) believed that this may contribute toward the development of a more inclusive society in the future.

Looking further into teacher's attitudes and working in unmanageable classrooms, Nwosu et al. (2023) looked at teachers' concerns about inclusive education and determined that the higher the teachers' EI, the higher their concerns about inclusive education. It is worthy of note that their findings could be explained by the fact that teachers who are emotionally intelligent may possess high empathy which can activate decreasing self-confidence among teachers as result of the demands placed on them in inclusive settings. Nwosu et al. (2023) also thought that there was also the possibility that emotionally intelligent teachers can feel more concerned than others since they may have the capacity to objectively judge their competence. Nwosu et al. (2023) agreed with Yada et al. (2022) in that they believed that courses designed to enable teachers to adopt inclusion are grossly inadequate and are limited to identifying and describing children with SENs. Therefore, Nwosu et al. (2023) determined that efforts should be made to include EI skills to improve teachers' perception of inclusiveness.

Teachers generally agreed that responsibilities and expectations of regular education teachers are unreasonable. Many teachers have had little formal education or training with regard to mainstreaming practices. Fuchs (2009) found that teachers in her study felt that there

was a lack of support from school administrators in the areas of inservice education and training, class size, collaboration and planning time, and shared duties with the special education staff. Teachers' beliefs about inclusion influenced their beliefs about their own ability to educate diverse learners in the general education setting. Numerous studies have reported that as many as 75% of the teacher participants believed that inclusion would not succeed and were not in favor of inclusion (Fuchs, 2009).

Consistently, teachers reported the need for more training in accommodating and adapting instruction/assignments, assessment techniques, and a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of children with disabilities (Fuchs, 2019). In addition to communicating the need for further training, general educators also reported the need for more administrative support and collegiality among general and special educators (Fuchs, 2019). In addition to feeling that they lacked adequate time to plan and teach, the participants agreed with one another that there was not enough administrative support to successfully teach a wide range of learners. Fuchs (2009) found that the predominant area of concern in their study was with unrealistic expectations and job responsibilities. Teachers expressed, "We need the help! People can't just throw'em in there and leave!" (Fuchs, 2009, p.33) In theory, most of the participants agreed that inclusion was a positive educational placement and that both students with and without disabilities benefited from being in the same classroom (Fuchs, 2009). These sentiments were also expressed within Nwosu et al. and Yada et al.'s studies.

Summary of Literature

This chapter explored how teachers require more with respect to assistance with providing an equitable education for all students and how classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. Additionally, it examined how teachers are left alone to struggle daily with trying to meet the needs of all of their students and end up only being able to focus on those with the greatest behavioral challenges, and how the demands placed on educators are growing and becoming unmanageable. All four of these themes have been examined and

support the argument that inclusion within mainstream elementary schools is not setting up all of our young students for success in their learning and allowing them to reach their full potential.

General education and special education programs have the obligation to improve preservice programs to address the significant needs of general classroom teachers. The main focus of schools of education should be to provide a more collaborative, diverse preservice experience that directly addresses the important concerns voiced by current classroom teachers (Fuchs, 2009). In the next chapter, the focus shifts to addressing what can be done to improve inclusive practices within diverse mainstream classrooms. The paper explores various professional development courses and strategies in hopes of finding manageable support for teachers within their learning environments that benefit all learners.

Chapter Three: Application to My Professional Life

In this chapter, I explore the practical setting of my argument in my role as an elementary classroom teacher in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada, and draw from my experiences of inclusion within mainstream elementary classrooms to connect to my argument. My argument is that inclusion within mainstream elementary classrooms is not setting up all of our young students for success in their learning and allowing them to reach their full potential.

I discuss my experiences of inclusion in my pedagogical practice by providing the context of inclusion within public education, its connection to learning environments, the beliefs and attitudes surrounding inclusion from the perspectives of classroom teachers, effective implementation of inclusion, and how inclusion can be improved so that it can provide a successful learning environment for all students. Finally, I summarize how my experiences connect to the literature through a few different areas. I will review the beliefs and attitudes that teachers have towards inclusion and how those feelings can affect their teaching practices. I will also be addressing the absence of relevant training in or prior experience of teaching pupils with various diagnoses and disorders. I will then be looking into the early identification and intervention of students entering mainstream elementary schools without sufficient psychological support and availability of support services provided for families in British Columbia (BC). I conclude by explaining how my learning from these connections will contribute to my further development as an educator.

Experiences of Inclusion in Public Education

When I began teaching in the spring of 2006, inclusive practices involved students being provided various adaptations, extra support outside of the classroom, and usually one-on-one support from a certified education assistant (CEA) within the school district I was working in at the time. Throughout my teaching experience over the last eighteen years, inclusion has transitioned to involve far more diverse needs than before and I do not feel that the current inclusion model is setting up all learners for success in their learning and allowing them to reach

their full potential. To further my own understanding and skills in order to be an effective educator for all of my learners, I went back to school to complete my inclusive education certificate. I found this additional learning to be very beneficial in my pedagogical approach to being able to provide a fun, safe, and effective learning experience for all the students in my classroom. During my inclusive education program I took courses that focussed on different challenging behaviors. I learned what each of them were, signs and symptoms, and then was taught some strategies that could be used within the classroom to assist with teaching children that exhibited these tendencies. I found this program to be extremely beneficial for my practical teaching within a diverse classroom setting. By incorporating similar courses within schools through professional development (pro-d), all teachers would have more knowledge and strategies available to them to use within their classrooms. As examined previously, research has shown that by providing more professional development to better prepare educators in dealing with challenging behaviors and providing strategies to implement in the classroom will set up all of our young students for success in their learning and allow them to reach their full potential.

Effective Implementation of Inclusion

The more knowledge and experience that an educator has, especially when it comes to working within mainstream diverse classrooms increases the success for all learners. There are some strategies that need to be implemented by districts in order to provide adequate support for inclusion to work. Teachers need to be given more opportunities to collaborate with other teachers, there needs to be an increase in the type and amount of professional development available to teachers, administrators need to play a more active role within classrooms and be supportive of all of their staff, and there needs to be a change in how the government provides funding for students with challenging behaviors and needs.

Professional Development on Challenging Behaviors

Professional development for teachers needs to be increased in order for inclusion to be successful for all learners. With an increase in professional development around challenging behaviors and disabilities, then all teachers would have more knowledge and experience at their fingertips to implement different strategies that can be applied within classrooms. There would be a decrease in the need for specialists, learning assistance teachers, and administrators to come up with alternative strategies in order for all learners to be successful in the classroom. By incorporating a mandatory training that needs to be renewed every two years for strategies to use while working with children with ADHD, ASD, ODD, FAS, and other behavioral challenges would be easy to incorporate on the two or three administrative designated professional development days or added to bi-weekly staff meetings throughout the school year. This would be training that would be beneficial for every educator and a better use of time during staff meetings and is my first application towards improving inclusion practices within diverse classrooms.

Every teacher in my current school district has seven professional development days in the 2024-25 school calendar. One is designated as an Aboriginal education day, two or three are used by administrators to use as they will for their staff, and the remaining are used at each educator's discretion for what professional development they feel that they need throughout the year. Below in Figure 1 is an example of what my professional development calendar may look like with the implementation of mandatory training for teaching children with ADHD, ASD, ODD, FAS, and other behavioral challenges for the next school year. This mandatory training would incorporate learning through the Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI).

Figure 1

2024-25 District Professional Development Calendar

Date	Professional Development Category	Topic/Course
September 23, 2024	Administrative: School based	Foundation in Threat Assessment Course (3 hours) Teaching Challenging Behaviors Module 1: ADHD (30 min)
October, 25, 2024	Provincial offerings: Teacher choice	BC Primary Teachers' Association Conference
December 2, 2024	School based: Teacher choice	Self-Directed Professional Development on Implementing New Math Strategies in Primary
February 7, 2025	Aboriginal based: Teacher choice	Educating with the Sacred Teachings in Mind: A Primary Approach through Storytelling
April 28, 2025	District Union Day: Teacher choice	Keynote Speaker Workshop A - Primary Games in Physical Education Workshop B - Teaching Art with No Resources Workshop C - Fun with Poetry
May 16, 2025	Administrative: School based	Teaching Challenging Behaviors Module 2: ASD (30 min) Module 3: ODD (30 min)
June 27, 2025	Administrative: School based	Teaching Challenging Behaviors Module 4: FAS & more (30 min)

Structure of Professional Development Modules

The professional development training involving *Teaching Challenging Behaviors* would involve four modules covering the previously mentioned challenging behaviors that educators are currently facing within their classrooms. Each module would be split into two sections with the first portion providing an introduction explaining the disorder and the symptoms that may be presented by students within their learning environments. The second portion of the module would involve strategies for the teachers to use within their classrooms based on reliable

resources provided by experts on each challenging behavior such as pediatricians, occupational therapists, play therapists, physiotherapists, and behavioral therapists. Each module would take approximately thirty minutes to complete. After the completion of each module the principal may provide a discussion period or additional exercises that may be more individual based that would be beneficial for the specific students within the school. Each school could expand on this training by completing more in depth and specific learning provided by the CTRI. CTRI provides over sixty training topics in a variety of formats, as well as, certificate programs (CTRI, 2024). By providing this valuable collaboration time for teachers within a school, strategies can be shared and further developed to best meet the needs of all the diverse learners within a classroom. By understanding how children with challenging behaviors learn best would allow teachers to spend more time with all the learners within the classroom, rather than spending all of their time managing behavior.

As teachers build a socially inclusive environment there are strategies that they can use to promote reciprocal and positive relationships, which is also part of the curriculum. A teacher can model or help facilitate a reciprocal relationship for children by first encouraging and showing children how to appropriately interact with each other. This can be done by role-playing, or can be done during play sessions in the classroom or on the playground. As McGuire and Meadan (2020) stated, teachers can also facilitate reciprocal relationships for children by helping with a conversation between children who have been engaging in an argument (p.67). In order for teachers to provide a positive and inclusive learning environment beneficial for all, it is evident from the literature that educators require sufficient support and training that involves collaboration and fostering of positive relationships.

Other practices identified as effective for improving the academic and behavioral outcomes of students with disabilities include direct instruction, using data to make individualized changes to validated educational programs, and an overall behaviorist approach to instruction and addressing students' behaviors. In contrast, effective practice in general

education is often characterized as a constructivist approach focussed on assisting students with guiding their own learning and making connections between concepts; an approach that may at times conflict with the explicit and strategy focused instruction that is characterized as effective instruction for students with special needs (Gilmour et al., 2019). The difference in definitions and expectations of effective teaching across special education and general education may explain why general education teachers report that they do not have the necessary skills for effectively teaching students with special needs. When general education teachers have classes that include large numbers of students with special needs, their job demands may not match their internal resources from training (Gilmour et al., 2019). Therefore, by providing mandatory professional development opportunities throughout the year and during monthly staff meetings, every staff member's internal resources are increased.

During the first week of school, administrators have to provide district training for anaphylaxis reactions, harassment and bullying protocols, anti-discrimination and racism protocols, and mental health awareness. These certified training courses are inputted by the human resources department and tracked using the school districts Oasis system network. By having training for each of the previously mentioned behavioral disorders and challenges, the district could track which teachers have received the training and when it is necessary for the training to be renewed. By having all teachers trained in how to work the most effectively with all learners, then there wouldn't be such a need for the special education teachers that are in short supply in all school districts. I myself am a special education teacher, but prefer to be teaching within a classroom setting rather than being deemed the "expert" within a school to provide support and plans for every student within the school that needs special education support. By providing specific courses and training for teachers that will improve everyone's efficacy within the classroom would be extremely beneficial for all the students within the classroom, as well as a personal benefit for the educators as they would feel far more prepared and have more resources to pull from to assist them with their teaching.

By addressing these challenging behaviors in a proactive manner, rather than a reactive manner that all schools currently function in, would relieve so much extra work, address and alleviate a lot of stress, and provide an easier platform for parents to communicate with their child's teacher. In my opinion, the most challenging behaviors that school's are currently dealing with are ADHD, ASD, and ODD. These three disorders can come with an array of issues that teachers, CEA's, and administrators are expected to understand and manage effectively throughout the day. Many children that come to school with one of these disorders can be extremely violent and volatile to deal with. There are training sessions for teacher assistants that provide a definition of what these disorders are and could possibly look like. Rarely are there effective strategies that are taught for people to use. These current training sessions are also different from the ones that teachers can take. I feel that it would be beneficial for everyone working in education to receive the same training, so that everyone is on the same page and can avoid hours of meetings trying to understand what one educator or teacher is using within their classroom with their challenging behaviors versus what another teacher is doing.

By providing clear and concise strategies that everyone could use, the student that has challenges would know every adult's expectations and rules whenever they are working with anyone. This would also remove the ability for some children trying to manipulate adults into allowing them to do or perform activities that they know that they are not permitted to. Tracking of strategies that work and have been tried would be far easier for special education teachers and classroom teachers to keep track of and document within a student's IEP. Parents would also benefit from hearing the exact same language from every adult that works with their child while they are at school. By addressing and using this communication tool, less effort would be going into each individual student's case, which tends to happen.

Educators spend a lot of time working on effective tools and strategies that work for a student. This amount of effort put forth by the teacher tends to lead to teacher burnout or results in a leave of absence because the teacher is working harder than the student. Aloe et al. (2014)

has found that student behavior is a critical correlate of teacher burnout. “The moderate to large correlations between students’ misbehavior and emotional exhaustion is particularly important as this is a primary element of burnout that indicates a teacher not having emotional resources to give of themselves psychologically” (Aloe et al., 2014, p. 38-39). It is likely that the exhaustion may hamper a teacher’s ability to use effective, positive behavior management strategies to reduce students’ misbehavior. Aloe et al. (2014)’s results also indicated that depersonalization and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment are correlated moderately to student misbehavior. Another important professional development opportunity would be the implementation of mandatory violence risk assessment for all teachers, which would assist educators with another tool for improving the current inclusion model and set up every learner for success.

Mandatory Violent Risk Assessment Pro-D

Safety for all learners should be at the forefront of any teachers and school organizations priority. With inclusion functioning the way that it is, safety in my opinion is not currently a priority for all. I have personally experienced and witnessed educators being physically attacked and injured while on the job and nothing happens. This only teaches the children that participate in these incidents that they can do whatever they want to anyone without consequences. My school district uses the violent threat risk assessment (VTRA) system tool to identify, develop, and provide assessment between someone who is talking about violence versus one who is actually becoming operational (CTIP, 2023). This assessment is only available to certain individuals within the school district and not all staff. Another change that I propose to improve learning for all would be to have mandatory VTRA training provided for educators.

The VTRA training would include the three hour *Foundation in Threat Assessment* course that is provided online for sixty days from the date of enrollment (CTIP, 2023). This

course contains six modules that staff would start on the first administrative pro-d day and then finish together during the staff meetings that occur during the months of October and November.

By having this practical training, all district staff members would be able to monitor, assess, intervene against, and prevent violence within a learning community. By having all staff know and be aware of each of the three stages of the VTRA framework, the amount of trauma and violence that is witnessed and endured by students and staff could drastically decrease. I feel that not being able to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment throughout the day for all of my learners completely goes against my own teaching pedagogical practice and is currently something that I have little to no control of every day.

Government Funding

The next application that would address my argument is that government funding needs to be changed in order for inclusion to be successful within mainstream diverse classrooms. With the introduction of Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which prohibits discrimination against children with disabilities and mandates the right to inclusive education, the pendulum of inclusion has swung from one extreme to the other. From segregating or stigmatizing children with disabilities to providing any and everything a student could need in order to be successful while excluding the rights of the other students without disabilities within a classroom. There needs to be a balance between exclusion and inclusion, where all students truly receive an equal opportunity to learn. The current inclusion system isn't working and is pushing teachers and educational assistants to walk away from educating their students.

With the growing amount of childhood diagnoses and disorders, about 6% of kids experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives (CMHA, 2014). ADHD affects just under 5% of BC children at any given time, while conduct disorders which lead children to be extremely aggressive and destructive towards other people, pets or property affects about 3% of children in BC (CMHA, 2014). ASD affects 2.2% of children within BC and approximately 53.7%

of children and youth with ASD are diagnosed between the ages of zero to four (Government of Canada, 2022). With diagnoses occurring prior to entering public education, parents are able to receive funding and support for their children that would assist the overall development and understanding of their own children's individual learning needs. These statistics demonstrate the need for interventions to be put into place proactively within schools in order for all students to be successful within mainstream diverse classrooms.

The government currently only provides funding to schools for children with ASD. In the 2019/2020 school year, this extra funding was \$20,200 per diagnosis to be used to provide supplemental support for students, though not targeting individual students, they are intended to support inclusion (British Columbia, 2024). School districts and independent school authorities receive the funding and then combine it to provide support and services in the way they think is best suited to the needs of all students (British Columbia, 2024). Unfortunately, the reality is that since there is no funding provided for any other behavioral disorders, all of the government funding provided to school districts to support inclusion is used up by providing support for aggressive and destructive children. Most of these supports tend to end up providing exclusion practices for these types of children because they cannot function within a classroom setting and cause harm to others. I have taught many children that have been and haven't been diagnosed yet with aggressive and destructive tendencies. Principals, teachers, and support staff are at a loss of what to do for these students. What typically happens in my experience is that no support is given to the classroom teacher or the child is removed from the classroom and spends their time in either the office or sensory room away from other students.

For those children that are diagnosed with ASD and do not have violent tendencies, they do not see much additional support while at school. The government needs to change the way funding is provided to school districts and for what diagnoses. I propose that the government develop a new assessment tool that follows the VTRA program to determine how much funding would be provided to educate a student that exhibits violent and aggressive tendencies. Using

this funding, school districts would be able to post additional behavioral positions for CEA's that would improve the classroom environments within diverse classrooms. CEA's apply for jobs within school districts based on behavioral and toileting support. There is a severe shortage of those that will apply to behavioral support services at schools due to how they are treated by the children that have behavioral disorders and challenges. With CEA's also participating in mandatory professional development on challenging behaviors, they too would have more resources to use when working with children with challenging behaviors. By using the VTRA program, children that pose too much risk to others within an inclusive classroom would not be able to attend regular mainstream schooling. The way that these children treat others and act within schools is causing schools across British Columbia to become communities of trauma for all of the other students trying to learn within the same learning environment. Without appropriate expectations and support for these children, every school culture is affected negatively.

Improving Inclusion Practices

By providing additional support such as having teachers trained each year with a two year mandatory renewal course on behavioral disorders and diagnoses, and changing how funding is provided to school districts by the government, school cultures may be able to return to a more positive experience for everyone. With the additional education and funding, perhaps more CEA's would be more willing to apply to behavioral positions within their school district. By having all three of these improvements, principals would be able to spend more of their time fostering valuable and genuine relationships with their students and staff. Sider et al. (2021) found that principals who work persistently to foster relationships with students, staff and parents build intentional and purposeful communities while nurturing the kinds of environments where all community members feel an authentic sense of purpose. One principal (Sider et al., 2021) said, "We can't expect from our staff what we are not willing to do ourselves" (p.237). Principals need to be able to shift between recursive perspectives and practicalities, from

advocating for inclusive schools to supporting teachers in their classroom (Sider et al., 2021). With my past classroom experiences, if I had been provided more support from administration and CEA's, as well as, current strategies to use with my diverse learners, I strongly feel that all of my students would have benefitted and learned more. With an improvement in teacher training, adjusted government funding, and increased support from administration and education assistants, school cultures and the safety of all learners would also improve.

Role of District Administrators and Policy Makers

By implementing my proposed applications, district administrators and policy makers would be able to improve the current inclusion practices and the learning environments for all. The way that district administrators and policy makers are currently mandated to provide support and funding within schools places them in an uncomfortable position. School districts must follow class sizes and composition rules mandated by the Supreme Court of Canada, but with Act 24 and the introduction of more special needs students into schools, classrooms have moved away from an acceptable composition to diverse learning communities that are unmanageable for educators. Principals and vice-principals must accept undiagnosed students with severe learning and behavioral disabilities, knowing the lack of funding and support needed. They have to do all that they can to ensure that a student with SEN is welcomed into a classroom and included in all activities, even if the child may cause multiple learning disruptions or safety concerns. Principals and vice-principals must maintain a positive relationship with the parents of children with SEN at all times, otherwise issues can be taken to the school district and superintendent. Sometimes, this need to keep the parents happy with the school and principal causes issues between the administration and teaching staff. The superintendent must also do anything in their power to avoid any legal issues concerning a student with SEN from not being provided or being perceived as not being provided an equal access to an education as other students. By implementing my two applications, relationships between educators within all the levels in a school district would improve, which benefits everyone.

Role of Teachers

Most of the challenge with educating and providing an equitable education for all of the learners within a classroom falls on the shoulders of the teachers. The teacher must ensure that the curriculum is being taught, that the classroom is being appropriately managed, and that every student is provided support in order to learn what is being taught. Due to government funding for only the low incidence children with learning disabilities, teachers regularly find their classroom compositions filled with either undiagnosed, diagnosed, or behavioral needs that do not provide support by a CEA. The efficacy of the teacher, no matter their level of experience, can be greatly affected by the diverse needs within their classroom.

Regularly, if a teacher is struggling to support their students' needs while maintaining a safe and welcoming learning environment, they are immediately under the radar of the administrators in the school. This increases the stress that the classroom teacher is already experiencing, as many administrators will not provide any support to the teacher. "Teachers who find their administrators to be unsupportive are more than twice as likely to leave as those who feel supported by educational administration" (Rasanen et al., 2020, p. 840). The most common result is that the teacher is forced to go onto medical leave and another teacher takes their place. This promotes burnout and an understanding that teachers are not valued or can easily be replaced. A teacher is expected to do everything and anything that they can do in order to educate all of their students by using strategies such as differentiated instruction, whole group instruction, small group instruction, one-on-one support, or asking for home support from parents outside of the classroom. Many teachers don't know how to set boundaries between working and not working. They do too much and wear themselves out trying to please and meet everyone's needs. Unfortunately, I too have endured working under an unsupportive administrator and have had to go on leave due to burning out trying to meet all of the needs of my diverse students and those of their parents. I believe that by implementing more professional development and funding, my principal would have been more capable of providing me with the

support I needed to meet the demands of my classroom. In order to meet these demands, teachers need to be more inclined to voice their opinions and experiences within their classrooms about inclusion.

Advocating for Change with Inclusion

More students with disabilities are being educated in mainstream elementary classrooms than ever before, resulting in higher expectations for the abilities of teachers to meet these diverse needs. When something isn't working or isn't manageable, it is appropriate for someone to question how things could be improved or correct what isn't working. Classrooms are currently composed of learners that have a vast array of needs and many teachers are ill-equipped to educate their learners based on their own experiences or training. In order for the current inclusion system to work, there needs to be changes made to accommodate the challenges educators are facing in their classrooms. Without addressing these challenges, teacher beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion may change from what they currently are.

Most teachers support the concept of inclusion and work hard to support all of the learners within their classroom. Forlin et al. (2011) found that effective inclusionary practices have been found to depend to a noticeable extent on the sentiments of teachers about the nature of disability and their perceived roles in supporting students with special education needs. Prior experience and knowledge about students with disabilities have been found to be directly linked with more positive attitudes by teachers towards inclusion (Forlin et al., 2011). A better understanding of teacher attitude towards inclusion can assist in improving the learning environment. Educators with apprehensive attitudes may use practices that promote exclusion rather than inclusion in their classrooms. On the other hand, educators who hold positive attitudes towards inclusion tend to use teaching strategies that allow them to accommodate individual differences (Forlin et al., 2011). When looking at the current model of inclusion it is important to compare the disadvantages and advantages that teachers are experiencing in order to emphasize a need for change.

Current Disadvantages

Looking at the disadvantages of current inclusion practices, it can be stated that funding is clearly an essential tool for the implementation of inclusive education. It appears to be that more funding is unlikely to result in better outcomes unless clear mechanisms are in place to identify how funds will be used to support teachers (Jury et al., 2023). Teachers welcoming students with SEN could be perceived as a risk of having to devote more time to them, thereby preventing other students from reaching the expected benchmarks (Jury et al., 2023). While special needs students are the focus of inclusive education, many forget to consider the other students in the classroom, who also have the human right to education. With the push to integrate special needs students, classrooms are becoming more dysregulated, leading to classroom environments becoming chaotic and unsafe for others as teachers, educational assistants, and other children witness violence in their classrooms (Poon, 2024).

Whole classrooms are frequently disrupted and forced to relocate to empty classrooms, the school library or the gymnasium for their safety, while a dysregulated classmate's outburst is attempted to be de-escalated by an educational assistant, teacher, or administrator. To avert this, schools often decide to isolate special needs students from their classmates; an experience that many young students have experienced and were placed in the sensory room (Poon, 2024). Although sensory rooms provide a safe and quiet space for a student away from the overstimulation of schools, they are not a replacement for a classroom. As these disruptions transpire within elementary schools, students immediately accept, accommodate and empathize with their classmates, regardless of the continuous distortion to their education (Poon, 2024). Although this empathetic behavior towards their classmates is commendable at this age, the normalization of harmful behavior within classrooms is cause of great concern, as it teaches children to expect to get kicked, punched and hit weekly by students while at school (Poon, 2024). This is one of the most common issues that I have had the unfortunate experience with

in teaching dysregulated and aggressive behavior within my classroom and is a regular topic within staffroom discussions.

Emotional exhaustion, burnout, depersonalization, or feelings of low personal accomplishment in the teaching profession increase the risk for teacher turnover (Rasanen et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers' views of themselves as professional might influence their decision. Teacher turnover is closely associated with continuously developing teachers' sense of professional self or identity. Even if turnover intention leads to staying in the profession, as a protective strategy, a teacher might provide less energy or commitment to teaching to modify or reconfigure their professional identity. Parent-teacher interactions can also contribute to a career change intention. Disadvantaged families who need additional support, demanding parents with high expectations on the school and who question the teacher's professional skills, even in a hostile way, can also contribute to the intention (Rasanen et al., 2020). And it is not only disadvantaged families that can place high expectations on teachers that are doing everything in their power to attend to the needs of all of the students. These types of parents know that they can harass or even bully their child's teacher and if they do not get what they want, will go to the district and place a complaint or state harmful and hateful allegations against a teacher.

Current Advantages

On the other hand, there are also advantages to the current inclusive model that many teachers, as well as myself, find important for mainstream diverse classrooms. Forlin et al. (2011) defined an inclusive approach as "the education of all students covering the spectrum of diversity taking place in an adequately supported regular classroom in the educational context that would be attended if the form of diversity were not present, normally the neighborhood school" (p.50). If the classroom teacher is able to promote a socially inclusive classroom environment that integrates children into the classroom community, ensures equitable and active participation in social activities with typically developing peers, and promotes reciprocal and positive relationships with peers and adults, children who engage in persistent challenging

behaviors may be more successful in school, and have more positive outcomes (McGuire & Meadan, 2020). In order for an inclusive classroom to be successful, it has been found that a teacher's knowledge and experience is a contributing factor and there are many teachers currently educating students that are able to provide a positive learning environment that suits the needs of their students.

Summary

In summary, providing a safe and welcoming learning environment should be the top priority of every teacher and educator. My experience working in classrooms and witnessing how inclusion is functioning within schools demonstrates that it is not working for all students. Schools struggle to balance including special needs students and protecting every student's safety and education (Poon, 2024). If all students have the equal right to access education, as Act 24 states, dysregulated outbursts disrupting students' education are unjust; similarly, it prevents special needs students from attending classes (Poon, 2024). By providing more training, support, and funding within mainstream diverse classrooms, inclusion would be beneficial for all students. By having these improvements, all educators, including myself would feel not only more valued, appreciated, and safe while teaching our students, but have a better sense of teacher efficacy. By implementing these improvements across BC, I and other educators would not only be able to improve our efficacy within our teaching practices, have the knowledge to provide strategies that work, but would also be able to alleviate the stress and burnout that continues to bombard teachers throughout BC. I hope to continue to build upon my knowledge and understanding of the different behavior disorders and challenges throughout my career and I intend to implement this knowledge in the improvement of my classroom. In the final chapter, I will summarize the previous chapters and will contemplate the implications of my argument.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In this paper, I claim that the current model of inclusion does not provide the appropriate pedagogical practices that have been found to support all learners within a diverse learning community and encourage them to reach their full potential. I make this claim because the existing inclusion model is demonstrating a need for more support and training for teachers, classrooms are becoming more diverse, teachers are struggling to meet the needs of all of their students, and the demands continue to grow and are becoming unmanageable for educators. In this final chapter, I first explore how the ideas and claims from the preceding chapters are connected. I then explain the success of the argument in this paper, and conclude by outlining the practical and theoretical implications of the findings of this paper.

Summary

In the first chapter of this paper, I demonstrated how educators are recognising the need and value for more support within classrooms that moves beyond expecting teachers to manage everything on their own. This inquiry is responsive to the need for increased knowledge and understanding of complex behaviors. I claim that inclusion within mainstream elementary classrooms is not setting up all of our young students for success in their learning and allowing them to reach their full potential. In this chapter I demonstrate my teaching and learning journey and the significance for the need to improve the current inclusion practices used within schools.

In the second chapter of this paper, I outlined the literature that supported my argument about how inclusion is not working within mainstream classrooms. I supported my argument based on four points of evidence. First, was that teachers require more support and training. Second, was that mainstream public school classrooms have become increasingly diverse. My review of the literature demonstrated that teachers are left alone to struggle daily with the complex and diverse needs of all of their students. Finally, inclusive education has resulted in escalating demands that continue to grow and are becoming unmanageable.

In the third chapter, I connected my teaching and learning journey to literature in the second chapter through my practical application in which I share my own experiences, as well as those of my colleagues. I advocate for changes to be made in the approach of inclusion so that teachers are sufficiently supported within their classrooms to improve their efficacy in educating their diverse learners and providing equitable learning for all students.

My capstone paper has successfully advanced my argument by demonstrating the link between the literature and my lived teaching experiences within mainstream diverse classrooms. The main focus of schools of education should be to provide a more collaborative, diverse preservice experience that directly addresses the important concerns voiced by current classroom teachers. The paper also focuses on realistic strategies that can be implemented by various levels of education to promote safe and welcoming learning environments for all learners, including the teachers themselves. These teaching tools can be applied within all classrooms to support educators in working with challenging behaviors.

Implications

This paper presents both theoretical and practical implications that should be considered by teachers, administrators, school districts, educational professional development providers, and teacher education programs. Theoretically, educators are constantly searching for ways to improve education practices that will be beneficial to all learners. By implementing the strategies of mandatory challenging behavior professional development courses, mandatory VTRA training for all educators, and changing the way that funding is provided by the government for special needs, educators would be able to engage their learners in a more positive and effective way. In their classrooms, teachers can use the pedagogical practices that they have learned through their professional development knowing that it will not only make learning more accessible and welcoming for all students, but also facilitates their students' skill development in becoming better learners and well-rounded people. More research needs to be done on how to support educators with teaching in diverse inclusive classrooms. A lot of research has been done to

compare inclusion and exclusion, but more needs to be done on how to effectively include all the learning challenges within a classroom and provide strategies that are beneficial for every student.

Practically, I would like for this paper to inspire more educators to be more inclined to voice their opinions and experiences within their classrooms about inclusion. As a teacher myself, I acknowledge that it is intimidating and challenging to voice opinions that challenge the current educational system practices at any stage of a career as an educator. There is inherent time, risk, extra work and possible repercussions involved with bringing to light something that is not working and possibly causing damage to students. Learning about the different types of behavioral challenges that children can have should be a practice worth learning about and then implementing strategies that could be used within classrooms for the benefit of all of our learners. I hope that through the exploration of my argument in this paper, teachers realize that professional development and teacher training need to promote a more supported and more thought out approach to inclusion that better prepares educators for diverse mainstream classrooms. Through this approach, educational leaders and educators would purposefully and openly promote the development of research-driven and a positive collaborative approach supported by experienced and knowledgeable teachers to provide safe and welcoming learning environments for all learners.

Implementing and working within inclusive education is challenging. Teachers stand at the very core of this new paradigm and understanding their worries are essential to changing the system and shaping their professional development (Jury et al., 2023). The widespread implementation of professional development courses that would provide teachers with the valuable tools necessary to provide positive, safe, and welcoming learning environments will not be possible without the financial and professional sponsorship of administrators, school districts, educational professional development providers, and teacher education programs to support teachers' understanding of why and how inclusion can and should be approached in all school

communities. The involvement of these stakeholders is necessary to equip existing and future teachers with the skills, tools and time necessary to confidently facilitate this pedagogical practice with students. Teachers will be more likely to have a positive impact on their students by being equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources to assist them with navigating diverse mainstream classroom learning environments.

The changes that I would like to see happen because of my paper would be to see a shift again between exclusion and inclusion within the public school system. I would like educators to feel prepared, educated, and confident in their understanding of all of the different types of behavior challenges that may appear within their classrooms. I would also like there to be more of a focus on valuing teachers by the government, schools, and principals by prioritizing teacher well-being, as well as, the other students within a diverse classroom that may not have any behavioral or learning challenges. Improvements need to be made to ensure the success and sustainability of the public school system and the futures of our students that are in our classrooms today.

Limitations

Challenges with this research included differing school, district, provincial, country, and national policies and guidelines to do with inclusion. The amount of variation between classroom support within a school can be staggering. Additional research on ways to support teachers within diverse inclusive classrooms would benefit students, teachers, education assistants, learning assistant resource teachers, early education workers, daycare providers, vice-principals, principals, district staff, policy creators, and parents. Many teachers do not favor inclusion, in its current practices, because they feel unprepared to meet the demands and responsibilities. It is important that the educational community acknowledges the validity of classroom teachers' daily challenges. By increasing the level of support, available inservice training, and improved preservice preparation, research indicated that teachers' attitudes tend to improve and teacher efficacy increases (Fuchs, 2009).

General education and special education programs also have the obligation to improve preservice programs to address the significant needs of general classroom teachers. The main focus of schools of education should be to provide a more collaborative, diverse preservice experience that directly addresses the important concerns voiced by current classroom teachers (Fuchs, 2019).

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