

Common Threads for Inclusive Education



iStock

Professional Growth Resources

PLANNING YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY

What resources are available to support my professional learning goals related to establishing an inclusive learning environment to benefit all students?

FIRST STEPS

The Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education 2018) requires teachers to establish, promote and sustain inclusive learning environments in which diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe. Teachers' annual professional learning goals are based on the Teaching Quality Standard and are informed by their classroom and school context, curriculum needs, school and district goals, and professional self-reflection.

The resources listed in this publication

- **align with the Teaching Quality Standard competency 4**, establishing inclusive learning environments, and the five dimensions and indicators of inclusive schools (Alberta Education 2013);
- **support individual and collaborative professional learning** about fostering equality and respect for human rights; building welcoming, caring, respectful and safe inclusive environments; establishing positive, engaging learning environments; responding to specific learning needs; and celebrating and incorporating students' personal and cultural strengths; and
- **support the development of professional knowledge and skills consistent with competency 4**, establishing inclusive learning environments.

When a teacher considers their classroom and school context, they may need to further explore certain topics to address specific student learning needs.

*When educators learn,
students learn more.*

—Hayes Mizell



Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills educators need in order to address students' major learning challenges. (Mizell 2010, 5)





Intercultural understanding is critical if you are to connect effectively with your students. An intercultural perspective enables you to better understand what students value, what they think and how they learn.

Inclusion is founded on beliefs and values that promote equal opportunity for all learners in Alberta.

FOSTERING EQUALITY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Inclusive education is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and creates a sense of belonging for all students in the school community. Inclusive education is not just about learners with special needs. Inclusion is founded on beliefs and values that promote equal opportunity for all learners in Alberta. These beliefs and values are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and the Alberta *Human Rights Act* and reflected in Alberta legislation and policy. The inclusive education policy reads as follows:

To support children and students in attaining the goals as stated in the Ministerial Order on Student Learning, school authorities must ensure that all children and students (Kindergarten to Grade 12), regardless of race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, or any other factor(s), have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports. (Alberta Education 2019, 27)

An inclusive learning environment is defined as a classroom, school, online environment or other educational setting structured to anticipate, value and respond to the diverse strengths and needs of all learners (Alberta Education 2018, 3). All teachers are required to establish and sustain an inclusive learning environment and demonstrate an understanding of the legal frameworks and policies that are the foundation of the education system.

Legal Frameworks

K to 12 Legislation and Regulations

- **Government of Canada *Human Rights Act* and *Alberta Human Rights Act*.** Alberta Education.
www.alberta.ca/K-12-education-legislation-and-regulations.aspx
- **Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Professional Conduct.**
www.teachers.ab.ca/TheTeachingProfession/ProfessionalConduct/Pages/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx

Inclusive Learning Environments

- **“Inclusive Learning Environments.” Inclusive Education Policy and Principles of Inclusive Education.** Alberta Education.
www.alberta.ca/inclusive-education.aspx
Valuing All Students. Video (4:24) and conversation guide.
Alberta Education. 2018.
www.alberta.ca/inclusive-education.aspx

Respect for Diversity

- ***Changing How We Talk About Diversity*.** Video (3:06).
Alberta Education. 2016.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONQ9O_RF_iQ
Video conversation guide.
www.alberta.ca/inclusive-education.aspx
- ***Here Comes Everyone: Teaching in an Intercultural Classroom*.**
Alberta Teachers' Association. 2011.
www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/MON-3%20Here%20comes%20everyone.pdf
- **“Supporting Every Student's Learning, Supporting LGBTQ Students, Their Families and Staff.”** PolicyWise for Children & Families. 2016.
<https://policywise.com/initiatives/ses/supporting-lgbtq-students-their-families-and-staff/>
- **Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Resources.** Alberta Teachers' Association.
www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity-Equity-and-Human-Rights/Resources/Pages/Resources.aspx

For Further Study

- ***Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*.** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2005.
www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/Guidelines_for_Inclusion_UNESCO_2006.pdf
- ***Evolution of Inclusion*.** Video (5:00). Moore, S, and Government of British Columbia. 2018.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQgXBhPh5Zo&feature=youtu.be
- **Respectful Schools Online Toolkit.** Classroom Resources.
Alberta Teachers' Association. 2017.
<http://respectfulschools.ca/teachers/classroom-resources/>



iStock

Supportive school environments make a tremendous difference in the health and achievement of all students.

Teachers are required to be aware of and to facilitate appropriate responses to the emotional and mental health needs of students.

BUILDING WELCOMING, CARING, RESPECTFUL AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

It is a priority to ensure that every student is provided an inclusive learning environment in which they are welcomed, cared for, respected and safe, as reflected in the *Education Act* (2020) and the Teaching Quality Standard. The *Education Act* specifically mentions bullying and defines it as follows:

“[B]ullying” means repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual’s reputation. (Government of Alberta 2020, 12)

Understanding and promoting positive mental health in schools is a responsibility shared by parents, educators and community partners. Physically and emotionally healthy students are more likely to be successful in school and in life (Government of Alberta nd). Teachers are required to be aware of and to facilitate appropriate responses to the emotional and mental health needs of students.

Legal Frameworks

- **Education Act.** Sections 1(1)(d), 31(c)(d)(e), 32(d), 33(1)(2)(3)(4), 34(a), 35 and 197(a.1). Government of Alberta. 2020. www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779814794
- **“Safe and Caring Schools.”** Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools.aspx

Bullying Prevention

- **“Bullying Prevention for Educators. Learn how to recognize, prevent and respond to signs of bullying in school.”** Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/bullying-prevention-for-educators.aspx
- **“Bullying Prevention—Resources.”** Government of Alberta. www.alberta.ca/bullying-prevention-resources.aspx

Emotional and Mental Health

- **“Mental Health in Schools: Learning More About How to Understand and Promote Positive Mental Health in Schools.”** Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/mental-health-in-schools.aspx
- **Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools.** Government of Alberta. 2017. https://education.alberta.ca/media/3576206/working_together_to_support_mental_health.pdf
- **Creating a Compassionate Classroom.** Alberta Teachers’ Association, Canadian Mental Health Association and Global Television. 2015. www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/COOR-79e%202015%2012.pdf
- **“Trauma-Informed Practice.”** Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/trauma-informed-practice.aspx

Social and Emotional Learning

- **What Is Social-Emotional Learning?** Video (4:05) and Conversation Guide. Alberta Education. 2019. www.alberta.ca/social-emotional-learning.aspx
- **“Social-Emotional Learning.”** PolicyWise for Children & Families. 2016. <https://policywise.com/initiatives/ses/social-emotional-learning/>

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

- **Guidelines for Best Practices. Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions.** Alberta Education. 2016. <https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626737/91383-attachment-1-guidelines-final.pdf>

- **“Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.”** Alberta Teachers’ Association. www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity-Equity-and-Human-Rights/Sexual%20Orientation/Pages/Index.aspx

Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Students

- **“Supporting Refugee Students.”** PolicyWise for Children & Families. <https://policywise.com/initiatives/ses/supporting-refugee-students/>

For Further Study

- **“The Effects of Bullying on Children.”** PolicyWise for Children & Families. <https://policywise.com/initiatives/ses/the-effects-of-bullying-on-children/>
- **Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools.** Alberta Education. 2005. https://education.alberta.ca/media/142774/the_heart_of_the_matter_character_education_and_citizenship_in_alberta_schools.pdf
- **“Teachers and Schools: Addictions and Mental Health.”** Alberta Health Services. www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page2674.aspx
- **“Curriculum Guide Professional Learning.”** Teen Mental Health.org. <http://teenmentalhealth.org/schoolmhl/professional-learning/curriculum-guide-professional-learning/>
- **PRISM Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussions About Sexual and Gender Minorities for Elementary Schools.** Alberta Teachers’ Association. 2016. www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For%20Members/ProfessionalDevelopment/Diversity-Equity-and-Human-Rights/PD-80-15cPrismToolkitBooklet_Web.pdf
- **PRISM Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussions About Sexual and Gender Minorities for Secondary Schools.** Alberta Teachers’ Association. 2016. www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/PD-80-15e%20PRISM.pdf
- **“Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling.”** Calgary Board of Education and Alberta Education. <http://teachingrefugees.com/>



Stock

Teachers play a critical role in developing student self-esteem. The most important thing teachers can do is hold appropriately high expectations for all students.

Using evidence-based teaching and learning strategies, teachers can remove barriers to student learning.

PROVIDING POSITIVE, ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Teachers believe that all students can learn and be successful. Establishing a positive, engaging learning environment requires the teacher to employ effective classroom management strategies. Teachers plan for and accommodate diverse learning needs by using appropriate universal and targeted strategies and supports to address students' strengths, learning challenges and areas for growth. Using evidence-based teaching and learning strategies, teachers can remove barriers to student learning.

Positive Behaviour and Social Participation

- **Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: A Classroom Approach.** Alberta Education. 2008. https://education.alberta.ca/media/464617/supporting_positive_behaviour_classroom.pdf
- **“Positive Behaviour Supports.”** Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/positive-behaviour-supports.aspx
- **“Getting Started.”** Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports. US Department of Education’s Office of Special Programs. www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started

Classroom Management

- **“Effective Classroom Management.”** Indiana University Bloomington Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. <https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/teaching-strategies/classroom-management/>
- **Beginning Teachers Handbook for Teachers New to the Profession and the Alberta Teachers’ Association.** Alberta Teachers’ Association. 2019. (Note: this resource is available only to members of the Alberta Teachers’ Association.) [www.teachers.ab.ca/Members%20Only%20Documents/Beginning%20Teachers%20Conference/PD-34-2%20BTC%20Handbook%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Members%20Only%20Documents/Beginning%20Teachers%20Conference/PD-34-2%20BTC%20Handbook%20(English).pdf)

Universal and Targeted Strategies

- **Response to Intervention.** “Response to intervention (RTI) is a way of providing evidenced-based support to students.” Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/response-to-intervention.aspx
- **Making Sense of Universal Design for Learning.** Video (3:48) and conversation guide. Alberta Education. www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3j2KuvzFU&list=PLvrD8tiHIX1Kyc2RNs7klPyC2qIjv-CAy&index=15
Video conversation guide <https://education.alberta.ca/media/464638/video-discussion-guide-4-making-sense-of-universal-design.pdf>
- **“Universal Design for Learning.”** Centre for Teaching and Learning. Red Deer College. <http://ctlrdc.ca/curriculum-design-pedagogy/universal-design-for-learning/>

- **Building on Success: Helping Students Make Transitions from Year to Year.** Learner Profiles. Alberta Education. 2006. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/0778551547>
- **Making a Difference: Meeting Diverse Learning Needs with Differentiated Instruction.** Alberta Education. 2010. https://education.alberta.ca/media/384968/makingadifference_2010.pdf
- **“Instructional Strategies and Supports.”** Alberta Education. www.learnalberta.ca/content/ieptLibrary/lib08.html
- **“Instructional Supports.”** Assistive Technologies. Alberta Education. www.alberta.ca/instructional-supports.aspx#toc-6
- **Infusing Assistive Technology for Learning into the IPP Process.** Alberta Education. 2006. <https://education.alberta.ca/media/385036/chapter-9-atl-in-ipp-2006.pdf>

For Further Study

- **Inclusive Learning: Everyone’s In.** Video (11:13). Edmonton Public Schools. 2012. www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTXtT05782Y
- **Pastel Education.** <https://learn.pasteleducation.org/courses/>
- **“Learning Technologies.”** Alberta Regional Consortia. www.learningtechnologiesab.com/
- **“Diversity and Inclusive Education.”** ATA Library. Alberta Teachers’ Association. <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/diversity>
- **“Strategies to Support Inclusive Education.”** Padlet. Council for Inclusive Education of the Alberta Teachers’ Association. <https://padlet.com/khuck/3q30kn8vflb5>



Developing a student's individual program plan (IPP) with their parents or guardians can be an effective way to ensure the student has optimal support both at home and in the school environment.

Developing and implementing an individualized program plan requires a collaborative team approach.

RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC LEARNING NEEDS

An inclusive learning environment may include students who are gifted and talented, or who struggle with academics or present challenging behaviours even after being provided with additional intervention strategies and support. These students may require an instructional support plan/individualized program plan (ISP/IPP) that outlines their adapted or modified education program to enable and improve their learning. The Standards for Special Education apply to any student with special education needs (Alberta Education 2007). Developing and implementing an individualized program plan requires a collaborative team approach. The student's learning team may include school-based and/or division-based teachers and administrators, the student's parents/guardians, and external specialized resource professionals. Working together, members of the learning team identify the interventions and supports specific to the student's learning needs.

Alberta Education Regulations

- ***Information Bulletin on Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004.*** Alberta Education. 2007.
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3115424/information-bulletin-on-standards-for-special-education-amended-june-2004.pdf>

Understanding Individual Learning Needs

- **“Understanding Medical and Disability Information.”**
Alberta Education.
www.learnalberta.ca/content/inmdict/html/index.html

Programming for Individual Needs

- **“Student Support Plans.”** Revised Individualized Program Plans/ Instructional Support Plans. Alberta Education.
www.learnalberta.ca/content/ieptLibrary/lib07.html
- **“Diverse Learning Needs.”** Alberta Education.
www.alberta.ca/diverse-learning-needs.aspx
- **“Strategies to Support Inclusive Education.”** Padlet. Council for Inclusive Education of the Alberta Teachers’ Association.
<https://padlet.com/khuck/3q3okn8vflb5>
- **“Individualized Program Planning.”** Alberta Education. 2006
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/384992/individualized-program-planning-2006.pdf>

Inclusive Learning Team

- ***The Learning Team: A Handbook for Parents of Children with Special Needs.*** Alberta Education. 2003.
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3531893/learning-team-handbook-for-parents.pdf>
- ***Rethinking the Role of Education Assistants.***
Video (5:26). Alberta Education. 2018.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulh7Dz3wMpQ
Video conversation guide
www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/ed-video-discussion-guide-8-rethinking-the-role-of-educational-assistants.pdf
- ***Teachers and Educational Assistants.***
Alberta Teachers’ Association. 2016.
www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Teachers-as-Professionals/MON-5%20Teachers%20and%20Educational%20Assistants.pdf

For Further Study

- ***The Golden Rule of Providing Support in Inclusive Classrooms: Support Others as You Would Wish to be Supported.***
Julie N Causton-Theoharis. 2009.
<http://www.inclusion-ny.org/files/GoldenRule-1.pdf>
- ***The Journey: A Handbook for Parents of Children Who Are Gifted and Talented.*** Alberta Education. 2004.
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/464613/the-journey-a-handbook-for-parents-2004.pdf>



When students experience a positive and culturally responsive learning environment, they are more likely to be relaxed, receptive to learning and more confident to take risks.

An inclusive learning environment is one in which diversity is valued and viewed as a strength.

VALUING STUDENTS' PERSONAL AND CULTURAL STRENGTHS

An inclusive learning environment is one in which diversity is valued and viewed as a strength. Incorporating a student's personal and cultural strengths will enhance awareness and appreciation of diversity for all members of the learning community. Embracing students' personal and cultural strengths makes learning more engaging and empowering; students see themselves reflected in the classroom, which increases their sense of belonging. Teachers work with parents/guardians and community members to provide intercultural learning opportunities.

Intercultural Education

- ***Understanding ESL Learners: Moving Toward Cultural Responsiveness—A Guide for Teachers.*** English as a Second Language Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. 2010.
www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Specialist-Councils/ESL-3-6%20Moving%20Toward%20Cultural%20Responsiveness.pdf
- **“Diversity, Equity and Human Rights: Resources.”** ATA and Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation Resources for Teachers Working with Students from Immigrant (South Sudanese, Somali, Karen, Arab, Central Africa, Pakistani) Families.
www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity-Equity-and-Human-Rights/Resources/Pages/Resources.aspx
- ***Education Is Our Buffalo.*** Alberta Teachers' Association. 2016.
www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Education%20is%20Our%20Buffalo%20%28PD-80-7%29.pdf
- **“Indigenous Education and Walking Together.”** Alberta Teachers' Association.
www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/IndigenousEducationandWalkingTogether/Pages/WalkingTogether.aspx

Student Leadership

- **“Gay-Straight Student Alliances.”** Alberta Teachers' Association.
www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity-Equity-and-Human-Rights/Sexual%20Orientation/Gay-Straight%20Student%20Alliances/Pages/Index.aspx
- **“Student Mentoring.”** Alberta Education.
www.alberta.ca/student-mentoring.aspx
- ***Peer Leadership: A Guide to Implementing School-Based Peer Leadership Programs.*** Alberta Health Services. 2010.
www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page2680.aspx

Community Service Learning

- ***The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools.*** Alberta Education. 2005.
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/7ce67821-e0f4-4ff6-b1af-5b4b60aa1273/resource/f4e3fe98-b92a-41bd-b689-e2b342e8929f/download/2005-heart-matter-character-citizenship-education-alberta-schools.pdf>

NEXT STEPS

Teachers are required to reflect on the success of their annual professional growth plan activities. Delors's four pillars of learning, adopted by UNESCO and published in *Learning: The Treasure Within* (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century 1996), provides teachers with a useful framework for lifelong learning and professional self-reflection (Zhou nd).

Learning to Know

What have I learned about establishing, promoting and sustaining an inclusive learning environment where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe?

Learning to Do

How will I incorporate what I have learned to enhance my professional practice?

Learning to Be

How have my professional learning activities changed my understanding and appreciation of human rights and human diversity?

Learning to Live Together

How will I use my knowledge, understanding and skills to advance inclusion in the school community?

REFERENCES

- Alberta Education. 2007. Information Bulletin on Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004. <https://education.alberta.ca/media/3115424/information-bulletin-on-standards-for-special-education-amended-june-2004.pdf>.
- . 2013. *Indicators of Inclusive Schools: Continuing the Conversation*. https://education.alberta.ca/media/482253/indicators_of_inclusive_schools.pdf.
- . 2018. Teaching Quality Standard. www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/ed-standards-doc-tqs-print-2018-02-05.pdf.
- . 2019. *Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12 2019-2020*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/d119dba4-36cd-4e41-927b-b436fb2e75b1/resource/d49b4753-f531-4c35-bd06-f87d40b1f715/download/guide-to-education-2019-2020.pdf>.
- Government of Alberta. 2020. *Education Act*. www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncIn=9780779814794.
- . nd. “Mental Health in Schools”. www.alberta.ca/mental-health-in-schools.aspx.
- International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. 1996. *Learning, The Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Mizell, H. 2010. *Why Professional Development Matters*. Oxford, Ohio: Learning Forward. Available at <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/professional-development-matters.pdf>.
- Zhou, N. nd. “Four ‘Pillars of Learning’ for the Reorientation and Reorganization of Curriculum: Reflections and Discussion.” Available at www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/cops/Competencies/PillarsLearningZhou.pdf.

Editor's Note: All URLs in this document were checked and verified on February 5, 2020.