



Module 3: Challenging Assumptions and Beliefs about Inclusion

FROM THE ONLINE RESOURCE *INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM*

“ We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't done it so far. ”

Edmonds, 1979, page 29

Developing a fully inclusive school culture often involves touching hearts and minds and challenging individual and collective beliefs and assumptions about inclusion.

This module provides opportunities for leaders and teachers to deepen their knowledge and understandings of inclusive practice. It has six activities:

- Activity 3.1 Learning in an inclusive community
- Activity 3.2 Shifting thinking
- Activity 3.3 Building a shared language about inclusive practice
- Activity 3.4 What students say
- Activity 3.5 Learner profiles for teachers
- Activity 3.6 Equality versus equity through a UDL lens

The activities have been designed to trigger in-depth discussions that will surface existing knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions. There will possibly be some dissonance for participants along the way as they examine their current values and beliefs. As Timperley et al. (2007) have noted, dissonance is sometimes a necessary condition for effecting changes in practice.

Each activity has a particular focus. They can be completed in any combination or order.

All resource sheets referred to in the activities are at the back of the module.

Essential reading before facilitating this module:

- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2008). Learning in an inclusive community. *Educational Leadership*, September, 66 (1), 49–53.
- Effective Pedagogy for All Students section in *Implementing an Inclusive Curriculum*
- Building a Rich Knowledge of the Learner section of *Implementing an Inclusive Curriculum*
- Developing Learner Profiles information sheet from the Inclusive Education site

Other related resources

- McArthur, J. (2012). Leadership in the development of inclusive school communities. *Leading Lights*, edition 3. Newsletter of the New Zealand Educational Administration and Leadership Society (NZEALS).
- Developing an inclusive classroom culture guide on the Inclusive Education site
- Supporting Māori students guide on the Inclusive Education site
- Supporting Pasifika students guide on the Inclusive Education site

Activity 3.1 Learning in an inclusive community

The purpose of this activity is for participants to understand the strategies needed to create inclusive classrooms and to explore how they could use these strategies in their own school.

“*Inclusive classrooms create students who are comfortable with differences, skilled at confronting challenging issues, and aware of their interconnectedness.*”

Sapon-Shevin, 2008, page 49

How do we encourage students to respond thoughtfully and responsibly to differences in the classroom? In this activity, participants read a short article that challenges us to consider how “inclusive classrooms that pay attention to issues of fairness and justice bring to the surface questions that have the potential to shift students’ consciousness now and in the future” (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, page 53). Developing a schoolwide culture which values all for what they bring will have long-term benefits in shaping future community attitudes.

Resources required:

- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2008). Learning in an inclusive community. *Educational Leadership*, September, 66 (1), 49–53.
- Resource sheet 3.1 Learning in an inclusive community – reading circle

Task 1: Reading the article

Distribute the article to everyone, and allow 10–15 minutes for them to read it and individually complete the reading circle resource sheet.

Select from one of these two follow-up tasks:

Task 2a: Sharing reflections on the reading

Task instructions:

1. Work in small groups and share your reflections on the reading.

2. Record the following on a flip chart or in a Google Doc shared by all groups:
 - key messages we identified in the reading
 - a first step one member of our group is going to put into action
 - a question to explore further.

Bring everyone back together and ask each small group to share their discussion with the whole group using the notes they recorded.

Task 2b: Choosing a strategy for creating a positive, inclusive classroom

Task instructions:

1. Work in small groups and share your reflections on the reading.
2. Select one strategy from page 51 of the reading that is relevant to your school's context.
3. Explore your school's current practice in relation to the strategy, using these discussion starters:
 - *What do we currently do in relation to this strategy?*
 - *What could we do to strengthen the positive and inclusive nature of our school and classroom learning environments?*
 - *How will we know when we have achieved this?*
4. Record the results of discussions on a flip chart or in a Google Doc shared by all groups.

Bring everyone back together and ask each small group to share their discussion with the group using the notes they recorded.

Activity 3.2 Shifting thinking

The purpose of this activity is to examine the ways in which inclusive practices may represent shifts from traditional beliefs, attitudes, and practices and to prioritise strategies to achieve these shifts.

In the activity, participants consider some of the shifts in teacher beliefs and actions that are important for implementing inclusive practice. They share questions they have about barriers to achieving these shifts and work together to problem-solve ways of overcoming these.

Resources required:

- Copies of the 'Moving from – Moving to' table at the end of the [Effective Pedagogy for All Students](#) section of *Implementing an Inclusive Curriculum*; the table shows ways in which teachers shift their practice as they plan to meet the needs of all their students

Task 1: Asking questions

Task instructions:

1. Work in pairs and select three rows of the table. Discuss each row using an example of inclusive practice that you are familiar with.
2. This discussion is likely to raise questions for you about how these practices are made possible or can work in your setting.
3. Write a couple of your key questions onto sticky notes or onto a shared digital board, such as Padlet.

Take some time to read the various pairs' questions (e.g., over a short break) and identify the key themes arising from the discussion. Select two or three questions or issues that reflect these themes for Task 2 of the activity.

Task 2: Finding solutions

Task instructions:

1. Work with another pair to form a group of four. Take one of the questions or issues and brainstorm and record possible next steps and strategies as a school to achieve the desired shifts outlined in the table.

Bring everyone back together and ask each small group to share their discussion with the whole group using the notes they recorded.

Activity 3.3 Building a shared language about inclusive practice

The purpose of this activity is to look at key terminology related to inclusive practice and to ensure a shared understanding of it within the school.

In the activity, teachers and leaders connect their prior knowledge, beliefs, and understandings with key terms associated with inclusive practice, such as 'diversity', 'disability', and 'equity'.

Resources required:

- Resource sheet 3.3 Key terms in relation to inclusion – write the words from the template on iceblock sticks, or photocopy and cut up the template. Ensure you have a word for each person in the group. There needs to be at least two people per word, so, depending on numbers, you may need to restrict the number of words you select.



Task 1: Setting up the groups

Ask everyone to select an iceblock stick/word card and find other people who also have this word.

Task 2: Discussion

Task instructions:

1. In your group discuss the word using the following talk stems:
 - *What is (word)? What is (word) not?*
For example: *What is disability? What is disability not?*
2. Write the following headings on a flip chart and record your responses:
 - *What is (word)?*
 - *What is (word) not?*
 - *Definition of (word).* (You may wish to do an Internet search.)
 - *Questions* (that have arisen for your group that you wish to discuss further).
3. As a group, rotate around the key words and add your ideas to the chart for each word. When the groups return to their original word, ask them to share with the whole group:
 - the key point(s) under the four headings for the word
 - a question for further discussion as a staff.

Task 3: Follow-up discussions

Hang up the word charts in the staffroom for ongoing informal discussions. At the beginning of future staff meetings, unpack one of the questions on the charts and discuss actions for moving forward in relation to it.

Activity 3.4 What students say

The purpose of this activity is to:

- explore students' perspectives on the support they need from teachers in the classroom
- challenge teachers to discover what they can do differently to meet these needs.

In the activity, participants watch an online clip of a student talking about what helps them learn and then carry out interviews with their own students with additional learning needs.

Resources required:

Select one of these video clips to show the group you are working with:

- [Having dyslexia – how teachers can help](#) (Onslow College student, Tate)
- [How teachers can help me learn](#) (Onslow College student, Katrina)

Task 1: What do students with additional learning needs say?

Before viewing the selected video clip, discuss these questions with the group:

- *What strategies do you use to create a learning environment that works for all students?*
- *How do you know these strategies are working for all learners?*

Watch the video clip together.

After watching the video clip, discuss these questions with the group:

- *What strategies help to make Tate's/Katrina's school experience positive?*
- *Tate/Katrina is able to express how teachers can support his/her learning. How does this appear to have impacted on teaching and learning in their learning environment?*
- *Did anything Tate/Katrina said challenge you or make you reflect on your own teaching practice? How will you act on this?*

Task 2: What do your students say?

Task instructions:

1. Work in groups of up to six to develop a plan for interviewing students at your school with additional learning needs about what helps them learn. Consider how you will do this to capture the 'voices' of students who are at risk of not being heard – for example, students who are very shy or who communicate using sign language or a pictorial system.
2. Generate the questions you could ask the students. Sample questions include:
 - *In the classroom, what kinds of things help you learn?*
 - *What kinds of things can the classroom teacher do to make it easier for you to learn?*
 - *What kinds of things can make it difficult for you to learn in the classroom?*

Supplementary questions for secondary students may include:

- *What else could teachers do to help with homework or completing assignments?*
 - *What else could teachers do to help with NCEA?*
 - *What else could teachers do to help you stay motivated?*
3. Before carrying out the interviews, discuss what you think the students will say in response to the questions.
 4. Conduct the interviews. Consider how you could adapt them so that students are interviewing each other. If the students agree to be filmed and it doesn't inhibit their responses, capture the interviews on video. Otherwise, make an audio recording or take notes.

Task 3: Follow-up discussions

Reconvene the group after the interviews to share the students' responses. If the interviews were recorded, watch/listen to them as a group.

Facilitate a group discussion using these questions:

- *What strategies help to make these students' school experiences positive?*
- *What were some surprises in hearing the students' perspectives? What do we need to consider doing differently?*

Let everyone know there is more information about student voice and student agency in the [Building a Rich Knowledge of the Learner](#) section of *Implementing an Inclusive Curriculum*.

See also [Activity 2.4 Whatu pōkeka - students' views on why inclusion is important](#), which suggests an alternative way of collecting the views and perspectives of students.

Activity 3.5 Learner profiles for teachers

The purpose of this activity is for teachers to reflect on their strengths, interests, and what they bring to the teaching and learning relationship by developing their own learner profile.

In the activity, teachers explore some examples of learner profiles and work with colleagues to produce their own, which they share with their students. The group reconvenes after the profiles have been shared to discuss how this went and how learner profiles could be created and used for students in the school.

Resources required:

- Copies of the [learner profile examples](#) from the Inclusive Education site
- Copies of the [Developing Learner Profiles](#) information sheet from the Inclusive Education site

Alternatively, these can be viewed by people online if they have laptops or tablets and an internet connection.



Task 1: Exploring learner profiles

Task instructions:

1. In small groups discuss these questions:
 - *What are learner profiles?*
 - *What is their purpose?*
 - *What experiences do you have developing these with students?*
2. Read the [Developing Learner Profiles](#) information sheet on the Inclusive Education site.
3. Look at the [learner profile examples](#) on the Inclusive Education site.

Task 2: Writing and sharing learner profiles

You could introduce this task with a group discussion about ako, the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning, and the importance of teachers also seeing themselves as learners.

Ask the group you are working with what they would share about themselves as a learner and person with their students.

Task instructions:

1. Work with a partner and create a learner profile for each of you using formats of your choice.
2. Join with another pair and share your learner profiles with each other.
3. As a follow-up task, share your learner profile with your students.

Task 3: Follow-up discussions

Reconvene the group once teachers have shared their profiles with their students.

Facilitate a group discussion about these questions:

- *What did you notice after sharing your learner profile with your students?*
- *Did sharing your learner profile prompt any reaction, feedback, or discussion from your students? What learning or changes (for you) happened as a result of this?*
- *What benefits can you see in students developing their own learner profiles?*
- *Thinking about the students in your class with additional learning needs, what particular considerations are there for developing their learner profiles? – for example, format and involvement of whānau or others in contributing information*
- *What are possible approaches for developing learner profiles for students within our school?*

Let everyone know there is more information about learner profiles and student voice in the [Building a Rich Knowledge of the Learner](#) section of *Implementing an Inclusive Curriculum*.

Activity 3.6 Equality versus equity through a UDL lens

The purpose of this activity is to introduce the topics of equality and equity in an engaging way while challenging teachers and leaders to think about what they mean.

In the activity, participants discuss a cartoon in light of practice at their school and then access and discuss a related blog and video online.

Resources required

- Copies of resource sheet 3.6 – *Equality versus equity*
Alternatively, access the cartoon [online](#) and show it using a data projector or smart board. (The cartoon is on page 17 of the PDF *Advancing Equity and Inclusion*.)
- The CORE Blog [Unpacking UDL, differentiation and adaptation](#)

Task: Talking about equality, equity, and UDL

Task instructions:

1. Hand out or display the cartoon. Ask participants to turn to those around them and to select and discuss two of the following questions:
 - What is your understanding of equality and equity?
 - What are some of the tensions between equality and equity?
 - What has the cartoon got you thinking about?
 - What strategies do we make use of to ensure all students are able to participate fully? How do they relate to equality versus equity?

Allow 5–10 minutes, then ask each small group to share the main points from their discussion with the whole group.

2. Give participants the website link to the CORE Blog *Unpacking UDL, differentiation and adaptation*: <http://blog.core-ed.org/blog/2016/07/unpacking-udl-differentiation-and-adaptation.html>

Ask participants to read the Blog and watch the video, and to then turn to those around them and discuss the following questions:

- What are the key messages shared within this blog?
- How do they challenge your understanding of differentiation and adaptation?
- How might they influence your practice when planning learning opportunities for your students?

Resource sheet 3.1 Learning in an inclusive community - reading circle

'Learning in an Inclusive Community' by Mara Sapon-Shevin

What are the key messages I have taken from this reading?

What questions did this reading raise for me?

How has this reading made me think differently about my practice?

The first steps I am going to take in response are:

Other personal responses to this reading:

Resource sheet 3.3 Key terms in relation to inclusion

Print enough copies so that each participant will have a word, then cut them up. (There needs to be at least two people per word, so, depending on numbers, you may need to restrict the number of words you select.)

social justice	social justice
differentiation	differentiation
inclusion	inclusion
diversity	diversity
adaptation	adaptation
equity	equity
disability	disability

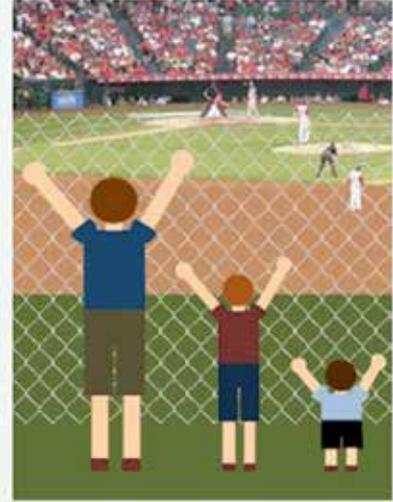
EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Image from *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*,
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