The University of British Columbia

Exploring inclusive education for students with intellectual disabilities in secondary curricular classes: A multiple case study proposal


The 2019 AERA meeting in Toronto is on the shared lands and waters of the Anishinaabe, and the Haudenosaunee Nations, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. AERA always takes place on Indigenous land. This was true last year, when AERA was on Lenape land, and it will be true next year, when AERA is on Ohlone land. Wherever AERA is held, there have been Indigenous communities living, learning, and thriving for millennia. This is not a land acknowledgement, but instead, a call to acknowledge land and waters and what it means to be in right and respectful relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Introduction

The learning experiences of students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms has been a focus of research and advocacy for nearly three decades (Carter, Moss, Hoffman, Chung & Sisco, 2011). When studies are done in secondary contexts, however, they are often focused on non-instructional and non-enrolling settings. There is a call for research which looks at students with intellectual disabilities being included in curricular settings, especially when the general education classroom is the preferred context (Carter, Sisco, Melekoğlu & Kürkowski, 2007).

Many regions, districts and schools are still focusing on inclusive education as special education, or the retrofitting of an already existing system to a marginalized group.

Classrooms and schools are becoming more diverse not less, however, and concepts of inclusive education are moving away from the educational experience of just students with disabilities to the transformation of the education system at large (Messiou, 2017).

Research Questions

Given the current calls for research, this study will investigate what happens when:
(a) guiding conditions of inclusion are emphasized,
(b) educators are facilitated through professional development to co-construct practices to meet the needs of students with and without intellectual disabilities, and then, within the inclusive contexts that are established, examine
(c) how are these practices and processes experienced by students within these secondary curricular classrooms?

Theoretical Framework

Guiding conditions of inclusion describe that all students...

Teacher professional development that...

Planning frameworks that...

Importance of Research

This study can identify the strengths and challenges of PD processes that support teachers to collaboratively construct inclusive practices over time and in their own contexts

This study can provide useful and practical inclusive strategies

This research aims improving the effectiveness of inclusive education for all students, and assist in decision making attempts, to improve the quality of current educational programs specifically for students with intellectual disabilities in secondary schools

Research Design

Methodology

This research project will utilize an exploratory multiple case study design.

Context for this study

- British Columbia has a long commitment to inclusive education (Naylor, 2005)
- In situating the research within a theoretical model and within the British Columbia context, additional foci to further determine research sites included:
  - (a) a district with a strong inquiry based, professional development (PD) structure already in place, and
  - (b) secondary schools already displaying strong evidence of working towards guiding conditions of inclusion

Defining the cases

Within an already established PD initiative in a school district:
- Secondary school teams
- One curricular and one support teacher
- Ongoing collaborative inquiry
- Up to 30 people participating in PD from across eight secondary schools
- Classrooms must meet additional criteria to be considered a case for the study including:
  - (a) the classroom is using academic curriculum, and
  - (b) the classroom includes an enrolling student with an intellectual disability

Procedures

- This study will span 8 months
- Six PD sessions and a celebration
- Each session will include PD activities:
  - community inquiry activities
  - learning activities
  - practice activities
  - reflection activities

Data collection methods

- Data collection to support this study includes observations, interviews, documents, and multimedia (Cresswell, 2013)
- To ensure that all voices are represented in this study, extra attention will be paid to data collection methods for students with whom communication is a challenge

Anticipated Results

- When curricular and support teachers collaborate, they can meet the needs of a diverse range of student ability, including students with intellectual disabilities in secondary academic classrooms
- Through these collaborative efforts, the learning needs of other students will also be met
- This research will show how students with intellectual disabilities have contributions to an academic learning community, when their support needs are strategically designed for, and universally applied to, the community as a whole