



# Let's Chat... about *Inclusive Education*



*Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler*



**Guest:**  
**Marie-Élaine Desmarais**  
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Marie-Élaine Desmarais is a Professeure agrégée at the Université de Saint-Boniface. She completed her doctoral degree as well as bachelor's and master's degrees at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR). She was a college remedial teacher for ten years at Cégep de Trois-Rivières, Quebec.

Marie-Élaine's doctoral dissertation focused on the appropriation and implementation of Universal Design for Learning in a Québec university context. She also has focused on developing a better understanding the transition from a paradigm of normalization to a paradigm of denormalization. She has collaborated on various research projects at the Normand-Maurice Research Chair at UQTR on subjects such as inclusion in childcare; the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in college; and, the contribution of assistive technologies to the success of these students.

Her current research focuses on well-being at school and universal design for learning. She is a researcher and head of the Voices of Young People and Their Families team at the International Laboratory on Inclusive Education (LISIS). She is also a co-researcher in the network promoting research on well-being and success (RÉVERBÈRE) and a member of the Inclusive Education Canada "Network of Associates".

# Key Issues in this Chat Session:

- 1. Authentic Inclusion Requires Support:** Marie-Élaine has come to understand both personally and professionally that inclusion in schools requires support. Her family's experience in Québec with her brother who has Down Syndrome was not good. She discusses the systems of support teachers need to ensure inclusion leads to student success.
- 2. Vision and Leadership:** Marie-Élaine discusses the difference between progress toward inclusion in schools in Québec and Francophone schools in Manitoba. The critical influence of vision reflected through legislation and policy as well as leadership in implementation are explored.
- 3. Insights as a Resource Teacher:** Marie-Élaine's professional experience as a resource teacher at a college in Québec led her to understand the need for support to teachers to implement practices that ensure student success in their classrooms. These insights have guided her work since that time.
- 4. UDL: Clear Outcomes, Flexible Methods:** Universal design for learning requires learning outcomes to be individualized but not lowered. Her experience is that teachers/professors are comfortable implementing UDL when they understand what it is. As a university teacher, Marie-Élaine determines learning outcomes but is flexible on how students demonstrate what they have learned.
- 5. De-Normalization:** Marie-Élaine discusses the concept of “de-normalization”. She provides a definition and rationale for the concept and shares how it can facilitate inclusion in schools and classrooms. If we truly believe that everyone is unique, then there is no ‘norm’ to compare to. She stated that there would then be no ‘average student’, just ‘student’.

## Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. What is your current understanding of the 'principle of normalization'? (Wolfensberger, 1972) What change did the principle bring to policy and practices for people with disabilities?
2. What does inclusion in school really look like? What is the difference between labelling a system as inclusive and the system actually being inclusive?

## Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. What do you think about Marie-Élaine's path to understanding and commitment to inclusive education practices?
2. UDL is a critical element in Marie-Élaine's professional practice. What do you find compelling about the case she makes for it?
3. In what ways do you think the concept of 'de-normalization' contributes to inclusive schooling and enhances the overall community?

## More from Marie-Élaine Desmarais:

Desmarais, M.-É., Kenny, A. et Carlson Berg, L. (2021). Le bien-être comme levier pour contrer la pénurie et faciliter l'insertion professionnelle du nouveau personnel enseignant : une recherche participative. Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC). 147 200\$. 2021-2022.

Desmarais, M.-É., de Moissac, D., Rocque, R. et Gueye, N. R. (2020). Mieux comprendre l'influence de la pédagogie universelle sur le bien-être des enseignants et de leurs élèves en contexte minoritaire franco-manitobain : une recherche-action. Université de Saint-Boniface, Subvention institutionnelle du CRSH. 5 000\$. 2020-2021.

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Desmarais, M.-É., Berthelot-Dilk, S. et Gagnon, J. (2018). S'ouvrir à l'autre pour une réussite commune. Subvention d'innovation pédagogique de l'Université de Saint-Boniface. 1 650\$. 2018-2019.

Rocque, J. et Desmarais, M.-É. (2020). Perception de l'efficacité de la formation initiale en enseignement reçue par les finissants des cinq dernières à la faculté d'éducation (2014 à 2019) : une étude de cas. Université de Saint-Boniface, Subvention au programme des subventions de recherche. 5 217\$. 2020-2022.

Rousseau, N., Bergeron, L., St-Vincent, L.-A., Desmarais, M.-É., et Ouellet, S. (2019). Répertoire de pratiques inspirées de la conception universelle de l'apprentissage. Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. 5 000\$. 2019.

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Rousseau, N. et Desmarais, M.-É. (2018). Réseau de recherche et de valorisation de la recherche sur le bien-être et la réussite (RÉVERBÈRE) : Renforcement du réseau. Programme d'appui aux relations canadiennes (PARC). 10 285\$. 2018-2019.



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