



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



Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler



Guest:

Kimberly Maich

Professor & Researcher

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Kimberly Maich is a professor, researcher, author, trainer, certified teacher, special education specialist, board-certified behaviour analyst (doctoral)—specializing in autism spectrum disorder in inclusive classroom settings.

She began her position in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University in December 2016 and is now a tenured full professor.

Kimberly has studied, taught, and lived from coast-to-coast in Canada from Vancouver, B.C., to St. Anthony, NL, and many places in-between. She spent most of her early career as a resource teacher, supporting students with exceptionalities from Kindergarten to Grade 12. She has also been a clinical coordinator with McMaster Children's Hospital's ASD School Support Program (Hamilton, ON) and a tenured Associate Professor at Brock University (Niagara, ON).

I am a special education specialist, a certified teacher, a registered psychologist (provisional, master's level), a professor and Newfoundland and Labrador's first board certified behaviour analyst.

Kimberley's primary interests lie in disabilities and special education, with a focus on autism spectrum disorders in inclusive school environments. She also works in the areas of emotional/behavioural disorders, problem behaviour, applied behaviour analysis, assistive technology, inclusive school leadership and the early years. One of Kimberley's greatest joys in the professorship role is mentoring graduate students in research, writing, presentations and publications.

Key Issues in this Chat Session:

- 1. Moving Away from Labels:** A major stride that Newfoundland and Labrador has made towards inclusion in recent years is implementing a tiered approach to accessing resources. It is no longer necessary for students to obtain formalized identification of barriers to learning or “labels”, to access resources they would benefit from in schools. This means that more students across a broader spectrum of needs can access the supports they need to be successful in the classroom.
- 2. Distance Learning – Proceeding with Caution:** Long before the pandemic, Newfoundland and Labrador has been interested in distance learning. Due to the geographic vastness and low-density population of the province, distance learning has many advantages. Kimberley recognizes that distance learning works very well for some students, but stresses that for other students we must be careful it does not foster greater exclusion in schools. Using distance education when teachers feel that a student is not “a good fit” in a classroom is not acceptable.
- 3. Celebrating Uniqueness:** Kimberley believes that principals play a major role in fostering inclusion within schools. This can be done by destigmatizing disability and celebrating difference and diversity in classrooms and can be especially effective when students are just starting their educational journey.
- 4. The Early Years are Critical:** Educators who work with students in their first few years of school require more support to promote inclusion. Professional development on topics related to inclusive education should be made available and encouraged for this group of educators. This is a critical stage for fostering inclusive attitudes because students at this age are just starting to notice differences between themselves and others.
- 5. Increased Awareness:** The most notable positive change related to inclusive education Kimberley has witnessed during her career is the increased awareness of different barriers to learning an individual student might experience. For example, when Kimberley began her career, parents often told her they had never heard of Autism. She seldom hears this in her current work, and believes the public has an increased awareness and understanding of student diversity.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. How do you celebrate uniqueness or diversity in your daily life? Consider both your personal and professional lives when discussing this question.
2. What are the key benefits of distance learning?
3. Can you identify limitations of distance learning related to students experiencing barriers to learning?

Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. What are the most critical actions a principal can take to foster inclusion in a school?
2. Do you agree that awareness and understanding of different barriers to learning students experience have increased in recent years?
3. What factors do you believe are contributing to this increased awareness and acceptance of diversity among students?

More from Kimberly Maich:

- Sider, S.; Maich, K.; Morvan, J. (2017). School principals and students with special education needs: Leading inclusive schools. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 40(2). Retrieved from https://cje-rce.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/07/Regular-2417-Sider.Final_June_21.pdf
- Maich, K., Sider, S., Morvan, J., Specht, J., Smith, D. (2020). Making the unknown or invisible accessible: The collaborative development of inclusion-focused open access case studies for principals and other school leaders. *Exceptionality Education International Special Issue*, 30(2), 68-79. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/eei/vol30/iss2/7/>
- van Rhijn, T., Maich, K., Lero, D., & Irwin, S. H. (2019). Assessing inclusion quality: The SpecialLink Early Childhood Quality Inclusion Scale. *Exceptionality Education International: Special Issue on Quality Early Childhood Education & the Need for Special Education Services*, 29(3).
- Fairbrother, M., Maich, K., & Sider, S. (2019). School principals and inclusive schools: A case study of complex contexts and competing perspectives. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT, and Education*, 3(2). doi: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3519497>.
- Maich, K., Rutherford, C., & Bishop, C. (2019). Phones, watches, and apps: Engaging everyday mobile / assistive technology for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. *Exceptionality Education International*.
- Maich, K., & Sider, S. (2019). Special education needs and disabilities in secondary education (Canada). *Bloomsbury Education & Childhood Studies*. doi: 10.5040/9781474209441.0054
- Van Rhijn, T., Osborne, C., Ranby, S., Maich, K., Hall, C., Rzepecki, L., & Hemmerich, A. (2019). Peer play in inclusive child care settings: Assessing the impact of stay, play, and talk, a peer-mediated social skills program. *Child Care in Practice*. doi: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13575279.2019>

- Sider, S. & Maich, K. (2022). *Leadership for inclusive schools: Cases from principals for supporting students with special educational needs*. Rowman and Littlefield. <https://amzn.to/3IDkSq3>



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