Background: *Project Inclusion*

Origin of *Project Inclusion* e-learning modules

Holland Bloorview's work with children with disabilities led to the hospital being approached by the Ministry of Education to produce an online resource for educators that would address the importance of accessibility, inclusion, and full participation of students with disabilities in school settings. All phases of development, from instructional design and review phases through final production were shared with our Ministry partners for approval.

Co-creation approach

Our contributors included people with personal and/or professional experience of a range of disabilities—visible and invisible, physical and developmental, autism and intellectual, blind/low vision and deaf and hard of hearing. By the numbers, this included:

- 53 students and former students,
- 117 family members,
- 79 educators,
- 71 partner organizations.

Input from comprehensive surveys and empathy interviews completed by our partners provided information on what worked, what didn't, and what they would like to see implemented that would best address inclusion of all students in the classroom and beyond.

One clear message was the chance to learn from people with lived experience. As a result, there are just over 30 lived experience videos that chronicle challenges and creative solution finding and collaboration. There is diversity (disability, age, roles, race, ethnicity) of experience across all modules and topics that provides a jumping off point for individual reflection and/or group discussion.

Format & content

Project Inclusion consists of five open-access online modules in both English and French are organized by key concepts that allow you to explore concepts based on your needs and interests. Timing can vary for modules from 30 minutes to 1 hour. Records of learning (content summaries, strategies, suggested links) accompany each module and a facilitator guide details learning paths and plans across the five modules.

Framework

Module 1: The importance of accessibility, inclusion, and participation
       Ableism | Stigma | Accessibility | Human Rights Legislation
Module 2: Promoting accessibility and inclusion
       Accessibility tools | Belonging | Friendship

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Module 3: Enabling engagement in choices, goals, and plans
      Agency
Module 4: Participation beyond classroom and school walls
      Health and Wellness
Module 5: Preparing for life after high school
      Experiential learning and skills | Employment | Community participation

Empowering educators for inclusive learning

Inclusion is more than a concept; it's a force that shapes the educational landscape for all students. When school leaders commit to fostering an inclusive environment, they enable educators to champion diversity, dismantle barriers, and create meaningful learning experiences for all students. Whether your role is one of district or school-based leadership or as an elementary or secondary school educator, you play a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive environment where every student thrives.

Project Inclusion was designed and built around five key components of inclusive education.

1. Empowering educators: The heart of inclusion
Inclusion cannot flourish without empowered teachers. *Project Inclusion* recognizes this reality and the full workload you carry as educators. It equips you with the opportunity to engage with materials that contain ideas and suggestions that you can use to build classrooms where diversity is celebrated and barriers to inclusion can be further dismantled.

2. Ending ableism: A collective commitment
Bias against individuals with disabilities has no place in our schools and in our larger communities. By embracing inclusive practices, you actively combat ableism and model this practice for all students. You become advocates for students with diverse abilities, ensuring they receive equitable opportunities to learn, participate, and succeed.

3. Educational resources: Your allies in inclusion
As educators, your time in the classroom and in the hours before and after instruction are full. The design of *Project Inclusion* allows you to engage with the materials in multiple ways—as an individual, as part of a school learning community, or as part of a larger district initiative. Regardless of how you engage with the modules, their design allows for flexibility and open navigation. Start where you like and pick up from where you leave off.

4. Awareness and advocacy: Amplifying voices
Project Inclusion amplifies the voices of kids and youth with disabilities. It raises awareness about the stigma they face and champions their full participation in society. As educators, you become advocates that challenge misconceptions, foster empathy, and build a more inclusive world.

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5. Inclusive work environments: Paving the way
Inclusion extends beyond the classroom. Whether it's adapting physical spaces, offering students multiple ways of engaging in sports and clubs or promoting accessible communication, these pathways ensure that youth with disabilities thrive not only as students but also as future professionals.

Project Inclusion implementation

Educators

Project Inclusion lends itself to multiple forms of engagement: individual, school groups, and larger family of schools.

1. Individuals can view the modules, along with records of learning, based on personal and classroom needs and interests.
2. Groups in the same school can use the modules, facilitator resources, and records of learning as the focus for professional learning days or lunch-and-learn sessions.
3. Families of schools or districts can work with a district lead or a Holland Bloorview *Project Inclusion* facilitator to collaborate on the design and delivery of an implementation based on district needs, interests, and timelines.

Students

A second form of implementation focuses on the need for students to explore inclusion from a classroom and social perspective. Holland Bloorview offers implementation options that bring the experiences of youth and young adults with lived experience into classrooms.

1. Holland Bloorview youth leaders address students during school assemblies, sharing personal experiences of inclusion. Their stories highlight the positive impact of inclusion throughout their school years, inspiring others to embrace diversity and create supportive environments.
2. Youth voices and stories from the original *Project Inclusion* can be shared in classroom environments with teachers and students examining what inclusion in their classroom and school looks like and what it could be when individuals and groups adopt inclusion as a goal.

Whether these plans empower educators or students, the end goal is to foster collaboration and drive meaningful change toward inclusive education.

Access:
- *Project Inclusion:* www.projectinclusion.ca
- School Advocacy Hub: https://hollandbloorview.ca/advocacy/school-inclusion-hub

Contact us: projectinclusion@hollandbloorview.ca

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