

Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

Inclusive Education: Stories of Success and Hope in a Canadian Context

by Kim Calder Stegemann and Angela Aucoin

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Education in Canada is arguably more inclusive now than ever before; however, progress is never without its imperfections nor is it ever really complete. Before I share my review of Stegemann's and Aucoin's book, I feel it is imperative for me to disclose my social positioning as a non-white female educator who has not worked extensively with students with disabilities. While my background and knowledge certainly overlaps onto the domain of inclusive education, they are grounded in conversations about race, racism, and anti-racism in the classroom. I was attracted to this book because of its title, and did not realize its focus was on students with disabilities, but 219 pages later, I am grateful for this fact. So although an educator with a breadth of experience and knowledge on working together with persons with disabilities could certainly offer a valuable review of this book, I hope that mine offers you another perspective: one that is distinctively from

outside this specific domain, but hopefully still of some use as you consider *Inclusive Education: Stories of Success and Hope in a Canadian Context* for your reading list.

Stegemann's and Aucoin's book is targeted towards pre-service as well as in-service teachers in hopes of better preparing them to work in diverse classrooms where they will undoubtedly work with students with all different types of abilities. Chapter One helps to establish a foundation by offering readers three key learning blocks: the significance of using person-first language, the value of multiple perspectives in public education, and lastly, a definition for inclusive education as a process and not a place. The authors' explanation, albeit brief, of the jurisdictional nature of education in Canada, is particularly appreciated with respect to this textbook's relevance in pre-service education programs across provinces and territories.

In Chapter Two, a history of inclusive education is poignantly outlined, providing key context for how attitudes towards people with disabilities have evolved, and continue to change. From the Middle Ages to the North American context, this recap of key events helps readers situate our current situations with respect to the progress that has been made, and that is still left to achieve. The Cascade Model is a straightforward three-level diagram used to depict the gradual inclusion of individuals with disabilities into general education, and used to elaborate on the key terms of integration and mainstreaming. Again, Stegenann and Aucoin effectively bring these topics into a Canadian context, speaking to key cases in Canadian court decisions, as well as addressing the injustices and situations faced by Aboriginal peoples and children. In particular, I appreciated the succinct summary of recent research findings in the domain of inclusive education. I have always been a believer of not reinventing the wheel, and taking stock of some of the incredible work that has already been completed. Here, realities such as teachers' confidence in their skills, limited planning time, limited school resources, parents' desire for their children to learn life skills as part of their education, and the concerns of school administrators are highlighted for readers' consideration.

Chapter Three makes a natural progression onto theoretical frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Multiple Intelligences, Response to Intervention (RTI), and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The order in which the authors have chosen to present this material has a logical progression, and will be easy for readers to follow as the remaining Chapters Four to Thirteen navigate through various case

studies. As someone who has not has a breadth of experience working with individuals with disabilities, these chapters were remarkably informative; not only do they explore a range of conditions such as Alport, Tourette, Bi-Polar Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, and more, but this is done through the perspectives of parents, students of all ages, educators, therapists, and medical professionals. These chapters give voice to each of these individuals and their journeys, providing the opportunity for readers to learn from their experiences and apply new knowledge.

Each chapter wraps up with a list of key terms and questions to consider, leaving space for readers to write directly into the textbook. While these questions are a good starting point for classroom discussion, some of them could be framed more objectively to allow a more liberal exploration of the subject rather than leading readers in a certain direction. For example, instead of asking readers whether or not they think an event should occur (e.g., a family to financially support their child with cerebral palsy once that child is an adult in college), a question that simply asks readers how they might envision an event occurring (e.g., what supports are important for a college student with cerebral palsy) could leave more room for discussion, demanding more of the students' imagination, and giving space for a spectrum of potential responses. While it is important to reflect on key dispositions and preferred practices in the classroom, it is equally important to address that inclusive education is not easy; in fact, it can be really, really difficult. I would encourage teachers leading these discussions to be transparent about the potential obstacles as well as the reactions and responses, some of which may be harsh, and at times hurtful. For example, I have used my firsthand experiences with racism and teaching about race while facilitating student discussions, and I believe that these difficult conversations keep our ideas grounded. Though Stegemann and Aucoin could have included more material on the challenges of fostering inclusive education, their book still sets a good starting point for educators to facilitate critical dialogue.

Inclusive Education: Stories of Success and Hope in a Canadian Context wraps up strongly by reviewing common themes and then looking ahead to the future. Trends among case studies such as parents as fierce advocates, teamwork, culture, and fluidity between tiers to name a handful are summarized and readers are asked to imagine inclusive education in their classrooms. Taking one last step back, the final chapter zooms out to the big picture, addressing legislation and public policy, teacher education and

professional development, changes to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*, and inclusive education within public education.

Lastly, let's go beyond the suitability of this text for a preservice or in-service course on inclusive education; I believe this book could be a compulsory read for any and every individual studying to become an educator. While it could demand some more critical thought from readers, this text is nevertheless resourceful, well laid-out, and above all, a thorough introduction to working with individuals of all different abilities.