

# Innovative Solutions to Unique Challenges



“As the Alberta education system improves its ability to serve students with disabilities, it becomes more adept at meeting the needs of a range of diverse students.” (Setting the Direction, 2010)



Building an inclusive learning environment naturally comes with its own set of challenges, some of which may be ongoing. Knowing what challenges may lie ahead and planning for them will help teachers and school leaders minimize or overcome typical barriers to establishing inclusive environments. This tip sheet includes some of the common challenges school leaders may face and suggestions for finding innovative solutions.

## Common Challenges:

### Meeting the needs of individual students with significant needs

- Meeting the needs of students within an inclusive learning environment does not rest with one single person, but rather with a team of people (including teachers, parents, specialists, school leaders, etc.) who must work together to provide students with the support they need to be successful learners.
- A small percentage of students with significant learning needs require specialized types of support and instruction and schools will need access to these types of specialized services and supports.

### Access to technology

- Providing students with the tools they need to succeed often means having access to emerging and established technologies.
- Accessing technology also means planning for what to do when technologies may not be available.

### Purposeful planning

- Teachers need professional learning opportunities and a collaborative planning team to develop their skills in purposeful planning and designing learning experiences that incorporate multiple means of presentation, expression and engagement.
- Collaborating on planning with a teaching partner or teaching team can be helpful and can build the capacity of all staff.



## Finding Innovative Solutions:

### Be flexible

- Flexibility is important within an inclusive learning environment as situations can change, depending on the dynamics of the day.
- Getting to know students in an ongoing process. Adjustments may be required to better meet their needs or to emphasize newly discovered strengths.

### Be collaborative

- Working collaboratively with teaching partners, specialists, school leaders, parents and community members is helpful in effectively providing supports needed to build an inclusive learning environment.

### Be a risk taker

- Teachers are encouraged to take risks in their teaching practice and have the courage to try out new strategies and approaches.
- Trying different approaches with your students and having your students actively involved in the learning process can be a powerful experience for both teachers and students.

