

# Finding a Place for Every Student: Inclusive Practices, Social Belonging, and Differentiated Instruction in Elementary Classrooms

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## *Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage*

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### **Finding a Place for Every Student: Inclusive Practices, Social Belonging, and Differentiated Instruction in Elementary Classrooms**

By Duquette, Cheryll

Pembroke Publishers, 2022, 192 pages

#### **Reviewed by:**

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In Cheryll Duquette's book, *Finding a Place for Every Student: Inclusive Practices, Social Belonging, and Differentiated Instruction in Elementary Classrooms*, Duquette explores strategies to cultivate a classroom whereby students of various ages and abilities may develop a sense of academic and social belonging. A professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, Cheryll Duquette is known for her work in Special education, Pre-service teacher education, Parent advocacy and Inclusive education; in particular, differentiated instruction which is utilized at length in this book as part of her approach to the topic.

Positioning the book towards a practical approach, Duquette provides a segregated yet holistic view of the inclusive classroom. Exploring the inclusive classroom, she compartmentalizes the book under an over-arching theme of supporting all students at every step in the learning environment. In comparison to her prior book, *Students at Risk: Solutions to Classroom Challenges* and its revised edition, *Students at Risk*, the author's current work does not focus on the real experiences of teachers but easy-to-apply

instructional strategies for students with exceptionalities focusing on cultivating a sense of belonging for students, and social connections with students and parents. In the final section of the book, Duquette concludes with a discussion of the transitional periods between classes, levels of schooling, employment, and community living. It is—in essence—a curated guide for the in-classroom education practitioner.

Duquette draws lightly from several scholars, such as Bloom (1956), Gardner (1983; 1999), Lyon (1995), Maslow (1970), and Sternberg (2008) -who regards the works of John Dewey- to apply psychological theories about learning and instruction to education. Inspired by these scholars but not weighted in theory and with the consideration of her intended readership, the author discusses various differentiated instructional (DI) approaches. These branch from the universal design for learning (UDL) approach facilitating student learning according to their exceptionality and taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) to achieve academic success. Forming a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1970), the student-teacher relationship establishes a safe inclusive classroom climate the cornerstone on which successful practice can occur. Describing these practices Duquette uses several DI strategies such as Visual, Auditory, Read/Write and Kinetic (VAKT), and cognitive supports (such as chunking and scaffolding) for the accommodation of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; 1999; Sternberg, 2008) shaping them methodically in each chapter.

Cognizant of the scholarly works reference throughout the book and informing its practical application, Duquette organizes the topics reflective of the needs of educators (the intended audience) with each chapter explained in a logical order. The author's writing and sequencing of chapters are in mirrored essence of Maslow's work (1970). Here, Duquette meticulously describes for her readers how to develop student belonging by satisfying their basic needs (Maslow, 1970) before the practice of differentiated instruction (DI) can occur. She also superficially considers the needs of varying exceptionalities such as behavioural disorders, giftedness, and sensory impairment to name a few. Duquette goes on to describe a myriad of contextually appropriate approaches for each of these exceptionalities. Supporting this in her writing as she explains, "[having an] instructional plan ensures that students with exceptionalities are not singled out and feel as though they belong in the class with others." (Duquette, 2022, p.27). Subsections in each chapter are usually one to two paragraphs in length and, the gradual development of terms and explanations of strategies allow for easy reading for the on-the-go classroom educator.

Although the book may not be well suited for those in scholarly pursuits it does provide and is best suited for, educators working with students of kindergarten age to grade 8. The limited scholarly exposure and dated references offer little depth to the conceptual underpinnings of inclusion or inclusive education, however, this was not the writer's intent for the book. With an expressed audience of in-service and pre-service teachers, Duquette's purpose — to provide educational strategies for Kindergarten to Grade 8 teachers so that they may be able to develop a sense of social, and academic belonging for all students in their classroom regardless of needs— is achieved with generous, methodical writing.

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