

# Turning Mirrors into Windows: Perspectives on Classroom Inclusion

**PRESENTED BY**

**Krista Rowland-Collins, Belinda Mendes ,  
Laura Mackay & Jennifer Flemming**

**SERIES SESSIONS**

Date	Time
January 29, 2020	12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

**LOCATION**

**St. Paul Centre - 124-24 Ave. NE**

**FEE**

**\$15.00**

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## Program

**TARGET AUDIENCE: K-6 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, DISTRICT LEADS/COACHES, TEACHERS, PARENTS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND**

Inclusive education from the perspective of teachers, therapists, administrators and families with a focus on attitudes toward inclusion; supportive communication and collaboration, classroom environment and support and training for educators. What are the factors that impact the classroom when it comes to successfully implementing inclusion?

"Inclusion is about valuing every person, every child, every student. Inclusive school communities value every child by respecting and welcoming them, not just to be present in the general education class, but by setting up the necessary supports, services, and activities. These inclusive communities set plans in place so that every child can be a successful participant and learner with a genuine sense of belonging". Down Syndrome Parenting 101 by: Natalie Hale

## Presenters

**Krista Rowland-Collins**

is a mother, wife, teacher and founder of Adele's Over the Rainbow Baskets. She attended Mount Royal University and The University of Calgary. She graduated without honours, which was ok in her books, but she did have a full scholarship, so parking fees were bearable. Krista thought about doing stand-up comedy, but chose to use her grades 1, 5 and 6 students as her audience, as they had no choice. Krista later went on to teach at-risk high school girls, where

they thought her comedy routine was sub-par. The past three years, Krista worked with families receiving FSCD (Family Support for Children with Disabilities) as well as overseeing programming for preschool children who qualified for occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy and behavioural support. In the fall, Krista started a new chapter; teaching in the Disability Studies Program at Bow Valley College. Krista has two beautiful girls, Brinley (7) and Adele (6). She is also married to a man who has a load of patience. After the arrival of her second child, Krista realized that new parents who have a baby born with Down syndrome, needed support, a basket full of goodies, a valuable resource list and a great big CONGRATULATIONS. Krista's goal is to educate others about inclusion, acceptance and the true beauty which lies within every individual with Down syndrome.

### **Belinda Mendes**

is a born and raised Calgarian. She studied psychology at the University of Calgary and went on to get her Masters of Arts Degree in Counselling Psychology. She also holds a certificate in Expressive Arts Therapy. Belinda had a private practice for several years, where she used play and art therapy in her work with children. She also conducted parenting capacity and psycho-educational assessments. She currently works as Family Counsellor on the Mental Health Unit at the Alberta Children's Hospital. She is also the Vice President of the Board of Directors to the PREP Program, an early intervention and support program for families of children with Down syndrome. Belinda is married and has two wonderful yet busy children. Her first born, Grayson, was born with Down syndrome and is also a cancer survivor (currently in remission). Although he is mischievous and cheeky, he has the sweetest soul. Her daughter Gabriella is a sweet and sassy chatter bug who has a special love for her brother. Belinda found Adele's Over the Rainbow Baskets through Facebook and struck up an immediate friendship with Krista (especially after deciding Grayson and Adele should be betrothed). Belinda joined Adele's Over the Rainbow Baskets in 2016 and shares Krista's vision of the importance of supporting new families while spreading awareness of the beauty of Down syndrome. Lastly, Belinda is an avid gardener, with a love of travel and all things wine!

### **Laura Mackay**

is a wife, mother and teacher in northern BC. She completed her teacher certification in 2004 and has worked in several independent schools as well as the public system. Laura has five children; Katie (26), Michael (24), Greg (21), Samantha (9) and Emma (8).

It was the birth of Emma that changed the direction of Laura's life. Even before Emma was born, she was not valued – to the extent that Laura was counseled to terminate her pregnancy. The lack of support and information about Down syndrome left her with little hope. The journey with Emma started with profound fear, gradually shifted to acceptance and ends with joyful celebration.

Emma's health issues required many visits to BC Children's Hospital, and it was during these trips that Laura realized two things; one that there is a strong movement to change the public's perception of disabilities and two there was a role for her to play.

Laura was born in BC and has spent most of her childhood enjoying a wide variety of outdoor activities such as canoeing, hiking, skiing, camping and biking. This led her to attend a semester at Yamnuska Mountain School in Canmore. Her passion for the outdoors continues. In 2014 she climbed Mount Kilimajaro as part of a fundraiser for BC Children's Hospital.

She is passionate about inclusion and education and completed her Master of Education in Special Education at Vancouver Island University in 2016. Laura's thesis emphasized that fear can be a paralyzing experience, but new knowledge can lead to acceptance and hope. Learning to appreciate everything about life and celebrating with those around you is the most rewarding experience possible.

### **Jennifer Flemming**

is a wife, mother and Rocky View Schools Education Assistant with a passion for inclusive education. Jennifer attended Nova Scotia Community College and earned her diploma in Hospitality Services. After many years in the service industry, Jennifer sought a career change and attended the University of Calgary where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Law and Society with special interest in human rights. Her greatest achievement, of course, are her three

children. Jennifer dedicated several years to be a stay at home mom to Ellie (11), Gage (9) and Clara (7). During those years, Jennifer volunteered her time with local not for profit organizations and looked to build her knowledge of child development before returning to the workforce in the education sector. After the birth of her son Gage, Jennifer has been committed to advocating for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities particularly in educational and social settings.

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