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THE ART OF BELONGING: THE JEWISH TASK OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION,
WHY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MATTERS IN JEWISH SPACES, AND
HOW ART CAN BE A TOOL FOR INCLUSION

BY

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RABBINIC CAPSTONE

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Permanent Link to the Exhibit: https://www.rabbielanaackermanhirsch.com/the-art-of-belonging-exhibit

Letter to the visitor:

Welcome to *The Art of Belonging: the Jewish Task of Inclusive Education, Why Inclusive Education Matters in Jewish Spaces, and How Art Can be a Tool for Inclusion,* a virtual museum exhibit intended for Jewish clergy and educators.

Within the exhibit, visitors will find rabbinic texts and other examples of Jewish values that implore us to consider the needs of many different learners; educational ideologies and theories about inclusive education; interviews with Jewish clergy and educators who work in the field of disability and inclusion; and sample inclusive lesson plans.

Judaism demonstrates a care and understanding of the diversity of learners., which is evident in fundamental texts such as the Talmud and Mishnah.

For example, Pirkei Avot 5:15 states:

> "There are four types among those who sit before the sages: a sponge, a funnel, a strainer, and a sieve.
> A sponge, soaks up everything;
> A funnel, takes in at one end and lets out at the other;
> A strainer, which lets out the wine and retains the lees;
> A sieve, which lets out the coarse meal and retains the choice flour."

Of course, we can debate what the text believes about these different types of learners, but it is clear that that Rabbis recognized that no two people absorb information in the same way. Even in ancient times, Jewish teachers and leaders understood that students are not monolithic in the ways in which they show up in the classroom.

We see an example of the rabbinic understanding to care for one's students and teach them in ways that they can understand in *Sefer HaAggadah.* We read:

> Rava said: If you see a student whose studies come as hard to him as iron, it is because his teacher does not encourage him (B Ta 7b-8a).[1]

In these fundamental rabbinic texts, we see that Jewish teachers and leaders have always acknowledged their understanding of the fact that in any given learning space, students will bring different temperaments, skills, learning types, and learning needs into the classroom. It is crucial for teachers to honor and care for each student and their individual needs, talents, and skills.

Judaism points to the importance of honoring all students, no matter how diverse the students are. The Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah, 246:11 explains that:

> A student should not be embarrassed if a fellow student has understood something after the first or second time and he has not grasped it even after several attempts.[2]

Our Jewish texts remind us that everyone learns at different paces; some may be better at others at retaining and understanding information. But that does not mean that those who have different learning styles or skills are unworthy of learning. Rather, as the rabbis remind us in Shevuot 39a:

> *All of Israel are responsible for each other*.

And as scholars Rona Milch Novick and Jeffrey Glanz remind us, "Being responsible for the well-being of fellow Jews includes assuring their access to Jewish communal institutions."[3]

Some of these different types of learners may be attributed to learning disabilities and differences as well as neurodivergence, topics the rabbis did not fully understand on a biological, neuropsychological level. Today, we know more about learning differences, neurodiversity, learning disabilities, etc., and we understand that people learn differently for many reasons. We have educational and scientific research that helps us understand why inclusive education matters, who it helps (all learners), and how to best implement inclusive practices in the classroom.

The need for inclusive education is especially important in religious school settings—students often only attend religious school one to two times a week. As clergy and educators, we often bemoan how little time we have to teach our students all of the Jewish content and knowledge we think they ought to know as Jewish people in the world.

Sometimes, our students' secular lives are disconnected from their Jewish lives; they come to religious school to be Jewish and then live their lives outside of the synagogue space. And course, there is no judgement in naming this reality; many Jewish people in North American are assimilated into broader society. *Kal v'chomer*-- all the more so--we must use time we have with our students wisely and ensure that we include all learners in Jewish spaces.

If we do not take the time to get to know our students and their educational needs, and to better understand who they are and what they bring to the classroom, we run the risk of losing out on helping young Jewish people find meaning in their Jewish identity. We might risk alienating Jewish learners if they do not feel supported by and included in Jewish learning spaces.

Many Jewish leaders want to inspire their students to feel connected to Judaism and to feel like they belong to the broader Jewish community, and many strive to create space for each individual to feel like Judaism is theirs to practice, to shape for themselves, and to own. It can be difficult (if not impossible) to dictate or force connection and belonging; however, it *is* possible to foster connection and belonging in Jewish educational spaces by tapping into learners' emotions.

Emotions are a crucial component of learning, and in order for learners to be able to access their emotions, they need to feel like their needs are being met by the institution. According to Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, a neuroscientist at University of Southern California (USC), emotions play a fundamental role in learning. In order to effectively learn any material, students' emotions need to be engaged during the learning process. And as bell hooks writes, "If we are emotionally shut down, how can there be any excitement about ideas?"[4]

Learners cannot be emotionally engaged if their needs are not being met. One essential part of creating inclusive spaces is fostering an institutional culture that embraces and values emotions as a vehicle to learning and connection. This exhibit aims to provide Jewish leaders with the knowledge and understanding needed to create inclusive learning spaces and the tools to assist their staff in acquiring and developing the same knowledge and understanding to best serve all of the learners in their institutions.

If one goal of rabbis and other Jewish leaders is to promote connection and belonging to the Jewish people and their communities, then their spaces need to honor the souls and needs of all learners. Rachel Kessler addresses this question of connection in her book *The Soul of Education.* She writes, "What is the quality of relationships that nourish the soul of students? Whether it is a relationship to one's own self, to others, or to the world, the experience of a deep connection arises when there is a profound respect, a deep caring, and a quality of 'being with' that honors the truth of each participant in the relationship."[5] Part of honoring each student is acknowledging that each individual is different and brings their unique selves to the classroom every day.

Rabbis and other Jewish professionals cannot honor and respect each learner if they do not know enough about inclusive educational practices—both how to effectively create inclusive spaces and why honoring different learning needs is significant within Jewish tradition. This is where art comes in. The arts offer a different way for learners to approach the world. As Elliot Eisner, the late Professor of Art and Education at Stanford University explains, the arts teach children many lessons that help them become more creative and innovative thinkers.

Among arts many benefits, the arts "teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer."[6] Furthermore, "The **ARTS ENABLE** us to have **EXPERIENCE** we can have from no other source and through such experience to **DISCOVER** the range and variety of what we are capable of **FEELING**."[7]

Art also allows learners to sharpen their critical thinking, practice testing and refining their ideas, as well as learn how to express their thoughts and feelings.

As Dr. Miriam Heller Stern suggests, these skills are invaluable for Jewish education because thinking creatively and using the arts helps learners think "Jewishly in distinctively creative ways to invent their own Jewish lives and contribute to the lives of others."[8]

The arts are a helpful and important tool for creating more inclusive classrooms; this exhibit will delve into how and why the arts acts as an important tool for inclusion, including describing how the arts act as a bridge between cognitive science, educational theories, and the culturally relevant ways we talk about building identity and allowing learners to bring their whole selves to the classroom. All of these are needed for good teaching and for inclusive education.

The arts allow teachers to help their students learn how to create drafts as they work, allow others to assess their work and provide feedback (and give others feedback), and teach students how to take the risks needed to learn and grow.

As a culture and religion, Judaism elevates and honors learning and teaching from its earliest texts. Even the title "rabbi" means teacher, and learning and study are considered to be the most important commandments of all.

We learn in Shabbat 127a that:

> "These are the matters that a person does them and enjoys their profits in this world, and nevertheless the principal exists for him for the World-to-Come, and they are: Honoring one's father and mother,

and acts of loving kindness, and bringing peace between a person and another, and Torah study is equal to all of them."

You might wonder why studying is more important than all of these other commandments. The Rabbis debate this very issue in Kiddushin 40b:

 "Rabbi Tarfon and the Elders were once reclining in the upper story of Nithza's house, in Lod, when this question was posed to them: Which is greater, study or action? Rabbi Tarfon answered, saying: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva answered, saying: Study is greater. All the rest agreed with Akiva that study is greater than action because it leads to action."

In other words, the reason that we study Judaism is so that we know what is important to us and what it is we value as Jewish people. We then must use what we learn to act in the world so that we can leave this world better than we found it.

This exhibit hopefully will provide the knowledge and study needed to inspire Jewish leaders to take what they've learned about inclusive education and create more equitable learning spaces for all Jewish learners to study, learn, and make meaning for themselves as Jewish people, and then go out and act in the world.

Works Cited

[1] Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, David Stern, Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki, and William G Braude. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah : Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Edited by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki. Translated by William G Braude. (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), verse 146, page 417.

[2] Translation taken from: Novick, R.M., Glanz, J. (2011). Special Education: "And You Shall Do That Which Is Right and Good …" Jewish Special Education in North America: From Exclusion to Inclusion. In: Miller, H., Grant, L., Pomson, A. (eds) International Handbook of Jewish Education. (International Handbooks of Religion and Education, vol 5. Springer, Dordrecht), 1022.

[3] Novick, RM, Glanz, J. Special Education: "And You Shall Do That Which Is Right and Good …" Jewish Special Education in North America: From Exclusion to Inclusion, 1022.

[4] Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress,* 154-155.

[5] Rachel Kessler, *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000), 18.

[6] Elliot Eisner. *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, In Chapter 4, What the Arts Teach and How It Shows. (pp. 70-92). Yale University Press, 2002.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Miriam Heller Stern. "Jewish Creative Sensibilities: Framing a New Aspiration for Jewish Education," Journal of Jewish Education, 85:4, DOI: 10.1080/15244113.2019.1686336, 432.

THE ART OF BELONGING

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WELCOME TO
THE ART OF BELONGING

This virtual museum exhibit is intended to inform and educate Jewish leaders in a variety of roles, from religious school teachers to senior clergy.

It asks the questions:
"Why is inclusion important for Jewish educators and clergy?"
"How can art be used to create inclusive learning spaces?"

As you move through the exhibit, feel free to click on anything underlined; those are linked to articles and other resources.

According to research done by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the number of children with **disabilities** [and **learning differences**] rose significantly from 2009 to 2017. Seventeen percent of children in the United States have a disability, which can include neurodevelopmental disabilities, deafness, learning disabilities like dyslexia, etc. Data shows that, in particular, there has been an increase in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), ASD (autism spectrum disorder), and other disabilities **[1]** among children ages 3-17. All of these learning differences directly impact the ways in which children (and adults) learn and participate in the classroom.

Note: The word disabilities references to a legal term for certain medical diagnoses, whereas the learning differences " encompasses specifically-diagnosed learning disabilities and attention disorders, but also includes areas of executive functioning, like task initiation and working memory to help the wider population of students who can succeed if only they are reached in a manner that is compatible with the way their brains work." **[2]** Usage of these terms depends on the situation and preference of the speaker.
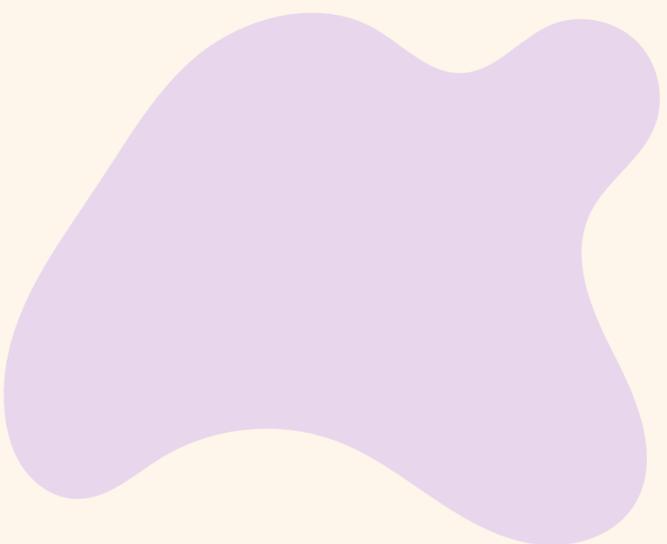
In Jewish spaces, particularly in supplementary educational programs like religious school, time is a precious resource and inclusion efforts are often not included in professional development or staff discussions, unless a particular need has already been identified in the institution. With the continued and steady rise of disabilities among children (please <u>refer to this CDC study</u>), it is all the more crucial that Jewish institutions engaged in any kind of educational work inform their clergy, leaders, and teachers about how to build more inclusive learning spaces for all Jewish people.

As the Gemara says, **"Teach your tongue to say, 'I do not know.'"** (B. Berakhot 4a). The area of educational inclusion and differing needs of learners is an area in which many clergy, even those with educational degrees, do not possess sufficient knowledge. They would benefit from acknowledging that they do not know enough about it and would benefit from learning more about inclusion practices and how to best serve the needs of all learners in Jewish learning spaces (and beyond).
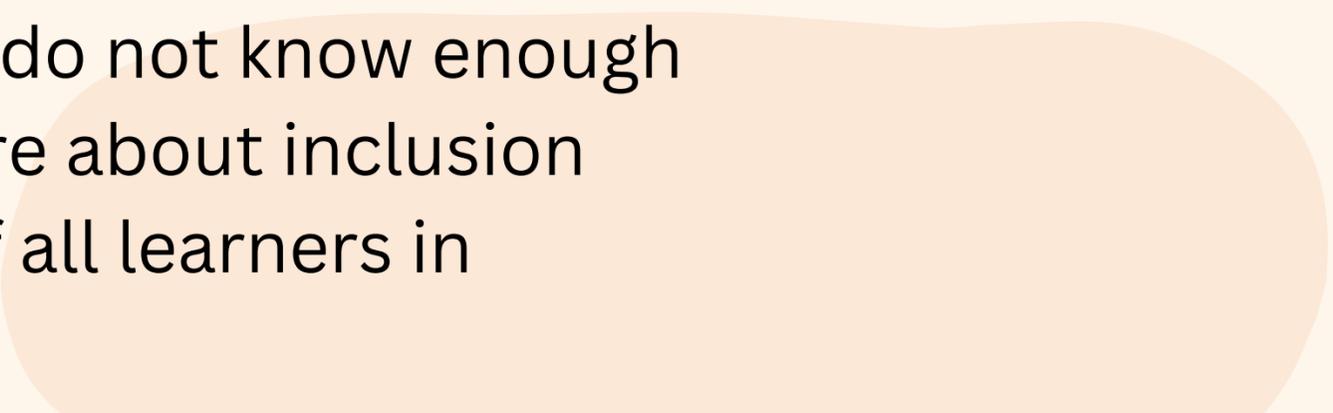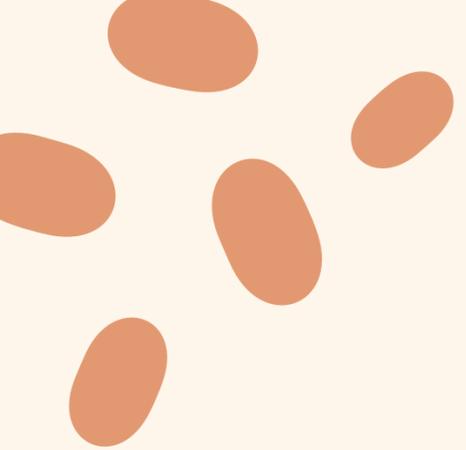
While there are pre-existing resources which discuss issues of inclusion education in Jewish spaces, there is not one central place where clergy and Jewish educators can go to learn about the history of Jewish attitudes and best practices about inclusion of all learners; neither is there a central place to learn about the different types of learners and their various learning needs.

This project aims to address this gap in understanding and knowledge about inclusion efforts, the differing needs of learners, the history of Jewish attitudes and practices of inclusion, and honoring the needs of all learners.

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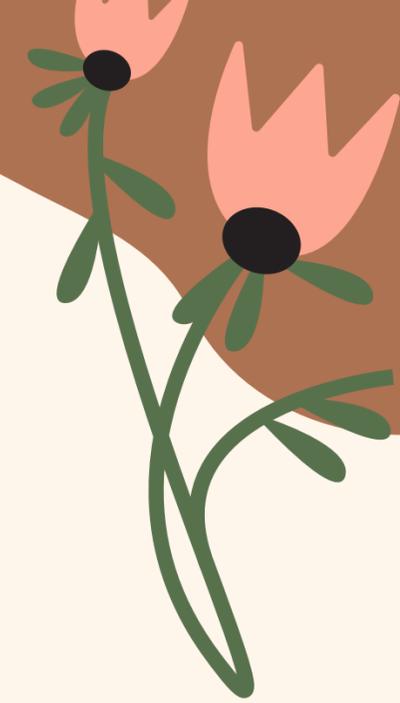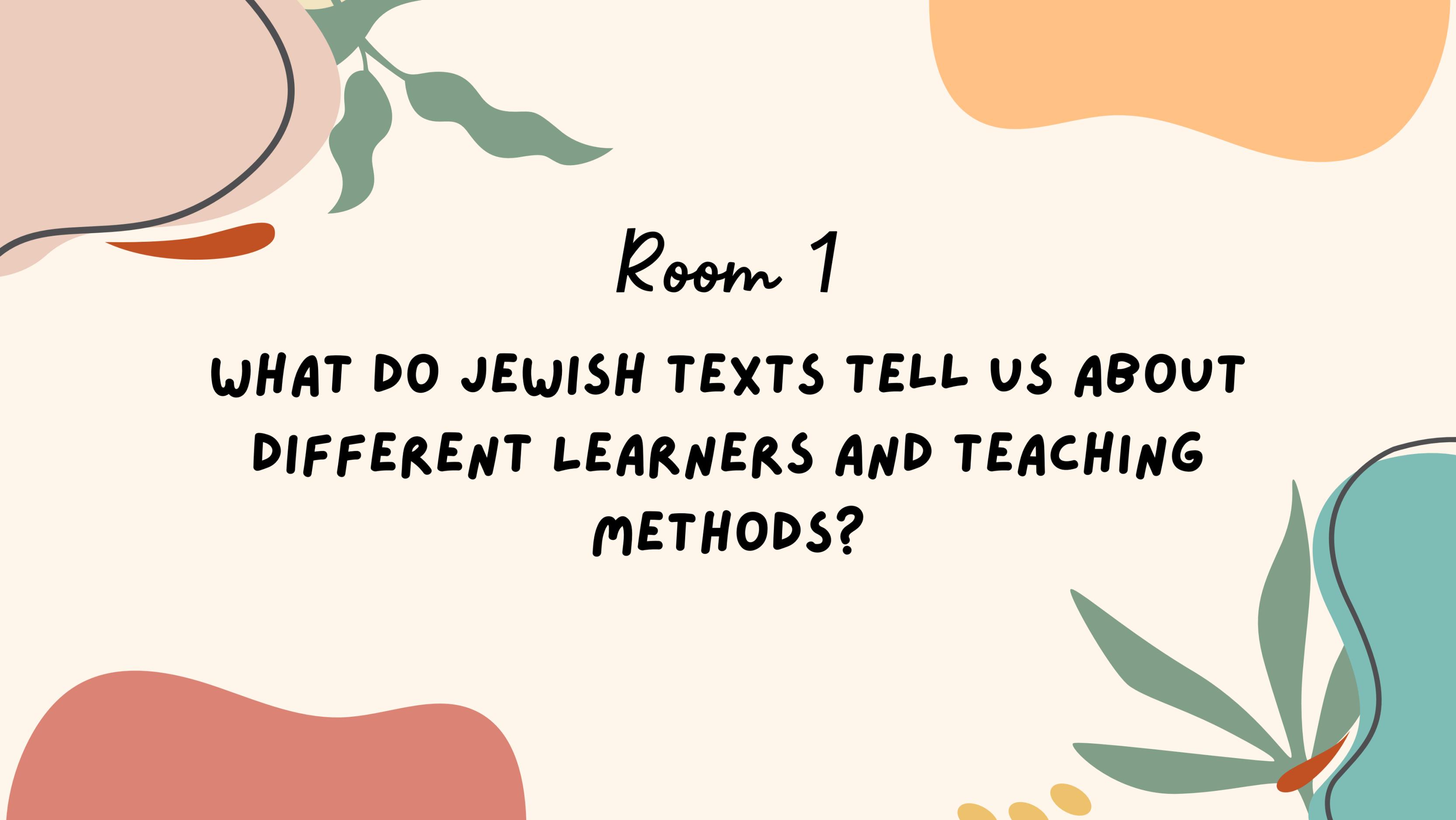
Room 1

What do Jewish texts tell us about different learners and teaching methods?

RABBINIC SOURCES: SEFER HA-AGGADAH

"There are four types of disciples: quick to learn and quick to forget—his gain is dissipated in his loss; slow to comprehend and slow to forget—his loss is offset by his gain; quick to comprehend and slow to forget—that is a good portion; slow to comprehend and quick to forget—that is a bad portion (Avot 5:12)."

There are four types of those who sit before the sages: a sponge, a funnel, a strainer, and a sieve. The sponge absorbs everything. The funnel lets in at one end and lets out at the other. The strainer lets out the wine and retains the lees. The sieve lets out the powdery stuff and retains the good flour (Avot 5:18)."

Be like a deep pit, which holds its water; like a cylinder lined with pitch, which preserves the wine in it; and like a sponge, which absorbs everything DEZ 1).

Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, David Stern, Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki, and William G Braude. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah : Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Edited by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki. Translated by William G Braude. (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), verses 227-229, pages 425-426.

RABBINIC SOURCES: SEFER HA-AGGADAH

"Rav advised R. Samuel ben Shilat: Do not accept a child before the age of six. After that age, accept him, and stuff the Torah into him as though he were an ox [to be fattened.] [...] He also advised: The bright child who is quick to learn will learn to read quickly [by himself]; and the one who is not quick—seat him next to one who is (B. BB 21a)".

What attitudes does this text suggest about the ideal learner? Why do you think the rabbis suggest sitting learners with different abilities next to each other?

Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, David Stern, Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki, and William G Braude. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah : Legends from the Talmud and Midrash.* Edited by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki. Translated by William G Braude. (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), verse 143, page 417.

RABBINIC SOURCES: SEFER HA-AGGADAH

"Hillel said: An impatient man is not fit to be a teacher (Avot 2:5)."

"Rava said: If you see a student whose studies come as hard to him as iron, it is because his teacher does not encourage him (B Ta 7b-8a)."

What do these texts suggest to us about how the rabbis believed teachers ought to behave?

Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, David Stern, Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki, and William G Braude. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Edited by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki. Translated by William G Braude. (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), verses 146, 148, page 417.

RABBINIC SOURCES: SEFER HA-AGGADAH

"R. Nahman bar Isaac said: Why are the words of the Torah likened to a tree, as in the verse, 'She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her' (Prov. 3:18)? To teach you that just as a small tree may set a big tree on fire, so lesser scholars sharpen the minds of greater scholars. This agrees with what R. Hanina said: I have learned much from my teachers, and from my companions more than from my teachers, but from my disciples even more than from all the others (B Ta 7a)."

What does this text suggest about teaching and learning?

Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, David Stern, Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki, and William G Braude. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Edited by Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Ḥana Rawnitzki. Translated by William G Braude. (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), verse 261, page 428.

In discussing effective teachers, teachers who deeply impact their students, the Gemara says:

"Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and the Rabbis disagreed with regard to this matter. One said: Sinai, i.e., one who is extremely knowledgeable, is preferable; and one said: One who uproots mountains, i.e., one who is extremely incisive, is preferable."

What does this text suggest to us about what makes a teacher effective?

RABBINIC SOURCES: ERUVIN 54B

"Rabbi Akiva says: From where do we derive that a person is obligated to teach his student until he learns the material and understands it? As it is stated: "Now therefore write this song for you, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 31:19). This verse indicates that one must teach Torah to others. And from where do we derive that one must teach his students until the material is organized in their mouths? As it is stated: "Put it in their mouths," so that they should be capable of teaching it to others.

And from where do we derive that a teacher must show his students the reasons for the teachings? As it is stated: "Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them" (Exodus 21:1), which indicates that the lesson must be set out in logical fashion for the students. Having discussed the importance of reviewing one's Torah study, the Gemara relates that Rabbi Perida had a certain student whom he would have to teach four hundred times, and only then would he learn the material, as he was incapable of understanding it otherwise. One day they requested Rabbi Perida's presence for a mitzva matter after the lesson. Rabbi Perida taught his student four hundred times as usual, but this time the student did not successfully learn the material.

Rabbi Perida said to him: What is different now that you are unable to grasp the lesson? He said to him: From the time that they said to the Master that there is a mitzva matter for which he is needed, my mind was distracted from the lesson and every moment I said: Now the Master will get up, now the Master will get up to go and perform the mitzva and he will not complete the lesson. Rabbi Perida said to him: Pay attention this time and I will teach you, and know that I will not leave until you have fully mastered the lesson. He taught him again an additional four hundred times.

RABBINIC SOURCES: ERUVIN 54B

Due to the merit of Rabbi Perida's great devotion to his students, a Divine Voice emerged and said to him: Is it preferable to you that four hundred years be added to your life, or that you and the rest of your generation will merit the World-to-Come? He said: I prefer that I and my generation merit the World-to-Come. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the angels: Give him both; he shall live a very long life and he and the rest of his generation will merit the World-to-Come.

RABBINIC SOURCES: SHABBAT 31A

The Sages taught: There was an incident involving one gentile who came before Shammai. The gentile said to Shammai: How many Torahs do you have? He said to him: Two, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. The gentile said to him: With regard to the Written Torah, I believe you, but with regard to the Oral Torah, I do not believe you. Convert me on condition that you will teach me only the Written Torah. Shammai scolded him and cast him out with reprimand. The same gentile came before Hillel, who converted him and began teaching him Torah. On the first day, he showed him the letters of the alphabet and said to him: Alef, bet, gimmel, dalet. The next day he reversed the order of the letters and told him that an alef is a tav and so on. The convert said to him: But yesterday you did not tell me that. Hillel said to him: You see that it is impossible to learn what is written without relying on an oral tradition. Didn't you rely on me? Therefore, you should also rely on me with regard to the matter of the Oral Torah, and accept the interpretations that it contains.

There was another incident involving one gentile who came before Shammai and said to Shammai: Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot. Shammai pushed him away with the builder's cubit in his hand. This was a common measuring stick and Shammai was a builder by trade. The same gentile came before Hillel. He converted him and said to him: That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation. Go study.

What does Shabbat 31a suggest to us about how teachers ought to approach teaching and learning?

A student should not be embarrassed if a fellow student has understood something after the first or second time and he has not grasped it even after several attempts.

(Translation from <u>Milch Novick and Glanz, 1027</u>).
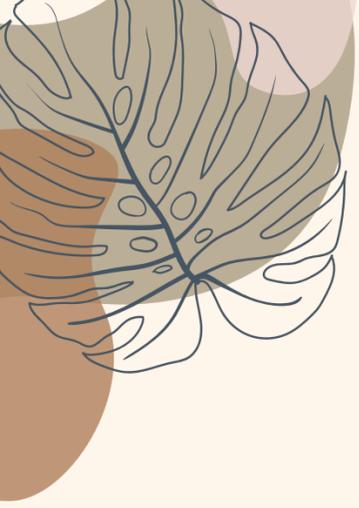
"The ethics of exclusion: Pedagogical, curricular, leadership, and moral imperatives for inclusive practice in Jewish schools" (2008)

Inclusive education is a Jewish imperative (Glanz, 3).

"We are simply used to one paradigm for educating children and treating differences, and are unable to remain open enough to accept alternate ways of structuring classrooms and schools" (Glanz, 9).

Dealing with others with justice and compassion is a Jewish value. This translates to caring (Glanz, 18).

"Interestingly, the terms rahamim and rahmanut ("mercy" and "compassion") are derived from the word rehem ("womb"), thus indicating that our feelings and acts of kindness to others, i.e., treating them justly and with compassion, is endemic to our existence from birth; we are to relate to our fellow human being as if he or she was a member of our own flesh and blood family (Borowitz & Weinman Schwartz, 1999). Many other sources within Judaism support an ethic of caring for the 'other'" (Glanz, 18).

care

Glanz argues that creating a culture of care is one way to develop inclusive classrooms.

"An "ethic of caring" affirms a belief that educators and children alike are to be caring, moral, and productive members of society (Jordan Irvine, 2001)."

Caring involves three things: receiving the other's perspective; responding appropriately to the awareness of this reception; remaining committed to others and to the relationship (Glanz, 19).
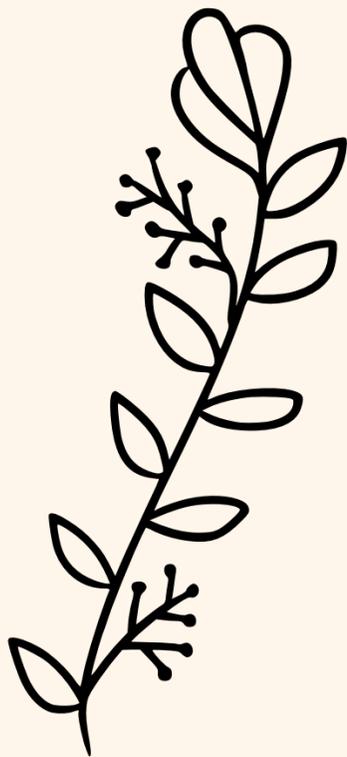
You might be asking, "what is inclusion?"

We'll dive into this definition later, but for now, Glanz defines inclusion as, "a process of facilitating an educational environment that provides access to high quality education for all students (Lambert, et al, 2003). Related to the disabilities issue, inclusion is premised on the notion that all children learning together in the same school and the same classroom, with services and supports necessary so that they can succeed, is critical" (Glanz, 4).

In other words, learners of all abilities are included in the same classroom or school setting.

"The debate between ability and heterogeneous grouping can be traced back directly to Talmudic times. The Talmud in Berakhot 27b, quoted in part above, tells the story of a dispute that took place between Rabban Gamliel, who at the time was the head of the academy in Yavneh, and Rav Yehoshua. As a result of this dispute, Rabban Gamliel was relieved of his duties as the Nasi, and was replaced by Rav Elazar ben Azarya. The Talmud dictates that a heterogeneous educational environment affected the quality of learning that took place in the yeshiva. An argument can therefore be made, based on this gemara that Hazal did, in fact, favor a more heterogeneous academic setting" (Glanz, 20).

"In the Midrash Tanhuma [...] commenting on the inherent diversity of human beings (i.e., just as they look differently, so too they think, and presumably learn, differently), Moshe prays for Hashem to provide a leader (read: teacher) who will be able to deal with each one of them according to his needs while still being able to tend to the whole flock (a differentiated approach)" (Glanz, 20).

שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

ALL OF ISRAEL ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH OTHER
(SHEVUOT 39A)

"Being responsible for the well-being of fellow Jews includes assuring their access to Jewish communal institutions" (Milch Novick and Glanz, 1022).

Room 2

What does neuropsychology tell us about different learners?

Different Learners

In our learning spaces, we will encounter many different types of learners.

Educator Alex Dreier and his colleagues at North Carolina State use the term "learning differences" to explain different learners. This "encompasses specifically-diagnosed learning disabilities and attention disorders, but also includes areas of executive functioning, like task initiation and working memory to help the wider population of students who can succeed if only they are reached in a manner that is compatible with the way their brains work."

These differences can stem from many things: ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, Autism Spectrum Disorder, giftedness, dysgraphia, and more. Some learners may have one or more of these differences at the same time.

As Jeffrey Glanz notes, "Although many students do thrive in traditional classroom settings, many more do not. Extensive research has been conducted that demonstrates that poor academic achievement is often a consequence of a teacher's inability to match instructional strategies to a child's learning styles [and] preferences (Dunn & DeBello, 1999)."

This room...

will focus on neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) and other learning differences. These differences impact learners' needs in the classroom.

The next few artifacts will provide information about NDDs and other learning differences, the rise in their prevalence, and who they affect.

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD)

Neurodevelopmental disorders are multidimensional disorders related to different brain development such as ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, learning differences such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and more. Learners with NDDs may require high support or low support from teachers and guardians; it depends on each learner's unique needs.

Learners with NDDs and [other] specific learning disorders present teachers with numerous challenges, such as disruptiveness, excess workload, inability to complete learning outcomes and poor academic performance (Fuchs et al. 2003:158). (Van der Merwe, Martyn, Jean V Fourie, and Amarachi J Yoro, 1).

Giftedness as a Learning Difference

What is giftedness?

According to the National Association for Gifted Children:

"Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential. Students with gifts and talents:
- Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.
- Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.
- Can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation.
- Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their areas of talent."

Highly gifted learners are described as having different **intensities, sensitivities, and overexcitabilities** than their peers.

To read more about the neuroscience about gifted brains read here.

There are many myths about giftedness, but it is a genuine and important neurotype to consider in the classroom. It directly affects student performance and behavior in the classroom and is important for teachers to understand.

As the Bridges 2E Center writes, "Gifted children come with a certain set of needs. The same is true for students with learning challenges or disabilities. But what about kids who fall into both groups? These children are known as twice-exceptional. 2E kids display amazing gifts, talents, or potential in some areas while also being challenged in other areas with learning differences, such as ADD/ADHD, Asperger's or autism spectrum disorder, sensory issues, and more."

As the Bridges 2E Center explains, "According to the Oak Foundation, approximately 20 percent of children (10 million students) in United States public schools have learning profiles that are not aligned with the expectations and teaching methodologies prevalent in mainstream school systems. Yet, there is limited educational literature providing comprehensive theory and strategies for meeting their academic and social emotional needs, and misdiagnoses, missed diagnoses, and misunderstood behaviors are common problems. What we do know is that this population of students is that their dual diagnosis results in a paradoxical set of needs."

Prevalance of NDD

"**The prevalence of any developmental disability increased significantly** (16.22% to 17.76%; an increase of 9.5%), comparing the years 2009–2011 to 2015–2017. During this time period, significant increases were also observed for ADHD (8.47% to 9.54%; an increase of 12.6%), ASD (1.12% to 2.49%; an increase of 122.3%), and ID (0.93% to 1.17%; an increase of 25.8%), but a significant decrease was seen for the category of "other developmental delay" (4.65% to 4.06%; a decrease of 12.7%). From 1997–2017, the prevalence of any developmental disability significantly increased (38.3%) from 12.84% to 17.76%."

National Institutes of Health Trends in ADHD

Figure 1

Trends in Prevalence of Children Ever–Diagnosed with ADHD (2003, 2007, 2011)
Data from National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)
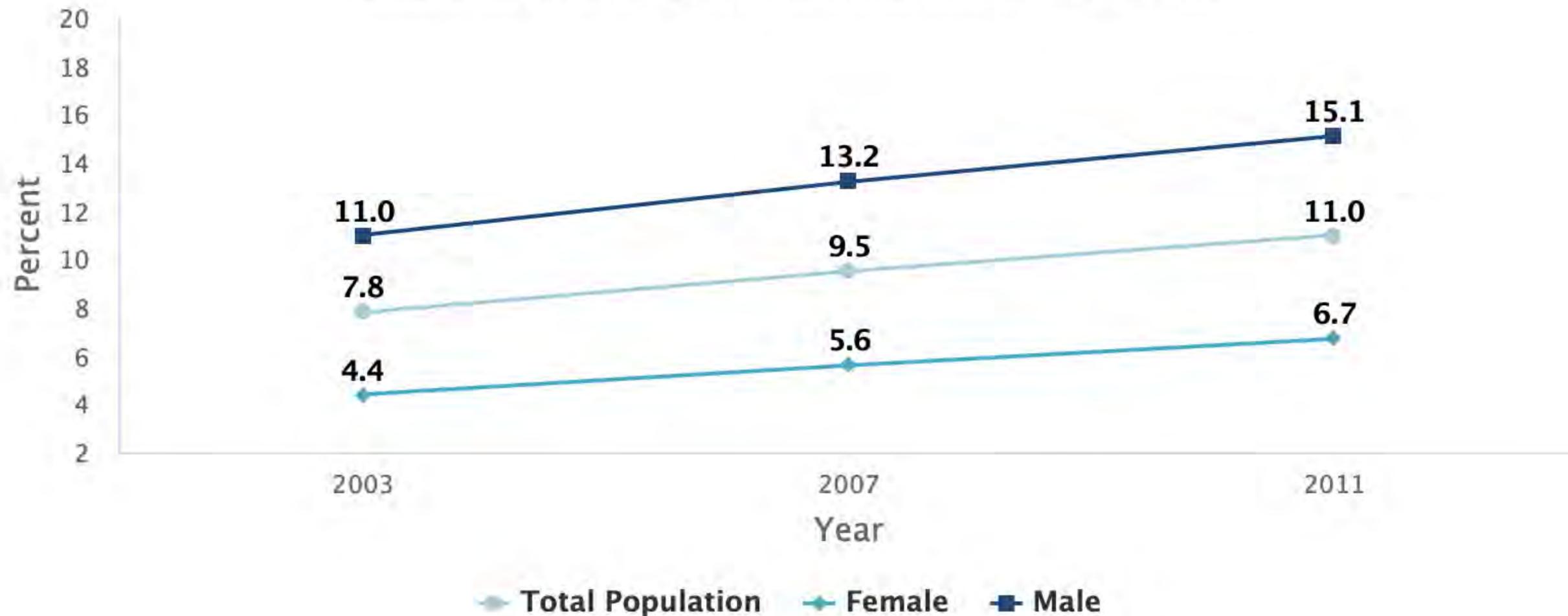
Why are we seeing this upward trend?

As <u>Zablotsky et al., note</u>:

Regarding the increase in ADHD, "this suggests that the increases in diagnosed prevalence could be driven by better identification of children who meet criteria for ADHD, as current estimates of diagnosed prevalence are in line with community-based studies that measure symptoms and impairment against DSM diagnostic criteria (Zabotsky et al., 5).

Regarding the "marked increase" in ASD, "a sizable portion of the ASD prevalence increase is likely explained by improved identification of children with ASD related to increasing parental awareness and changing provider practices, including universal screening by 18–24 months and ongoing monitoring of a child's development as recommended by the AAP in 2007 (5).

Other Reasons for the Increasing Prevalence of NDDs

Better Understanding of ASD in Women

Better Understanding of ADHD in Women
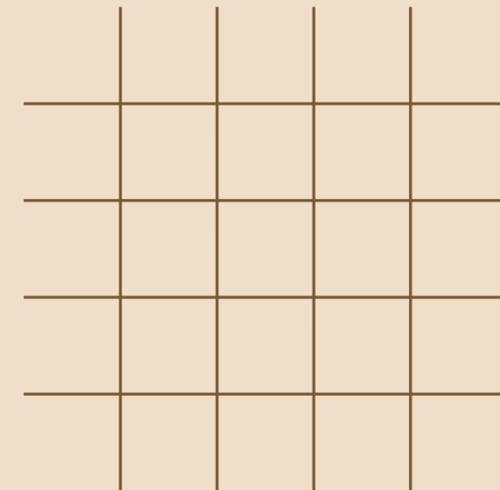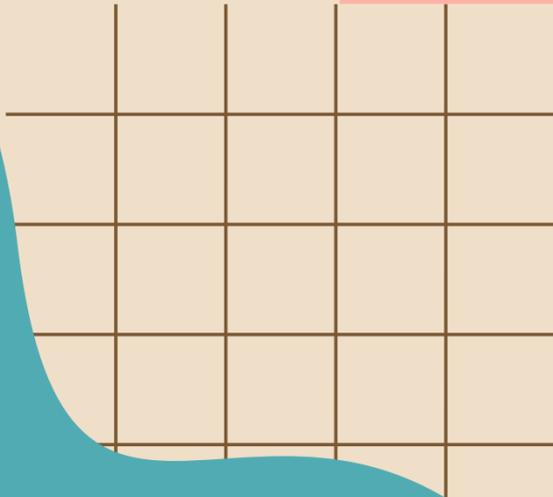
NDD in the classroom

"In the past two decades, there has been a global increase in the number of learners with NDD attending mainstream and public schools (Lanzi et al. 2004:47). The number of learners with autism disorder, for instance, in the USA is considered to be 1 in every 68, whilst the numbers in low- and middle-income countries are considered to be much higher as 90% of children with autism disorder are found in these contexts (Franz et al. 2017)" (Van der Merwe et al., 3).

The rise in NDDs and other learning differences impacts many aspects of the classroom, including behaviors.

Sometimes teachers believe that "bad" or challenging behaviors occur because students are purposefully misbehaving, defying them, or acting other. **This could not be further from the truth.**

As educational researcher Dr. Mona Delahooke writes, "Behavior is the observable response to our internal and external experiences." She continues, "Too often, though, we build our recommendations, treatment plans, and techniques built on what we see without adequately considering what lies beneath. Instead we should consider another approach [....] That is to think of behaviors as the tip of the iceberg--that part of the individual that we readily see and know" (Delahooke, 15).

Delahooke reminds us, "As we look beneath the iceberg's tip we can also shift the assumption of something wrong with the child by asking another question: *'What is this child experiencing at this moment in body and mind?'*" (Delahooke, 18).

Behavior is a form of communication! Teachers must try to figure out what is causing that behavior.

Mona Delahooke. *Beyond behaviors : using brain science and compassion to understand and solve children's behavioral challenges.* (PESI Publishing & Media, Eau Claire, WI, 2019). Kindle Edition.

Behaviors might be caused by...

Sensory processing sensitivity: "Sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) is defined as a personal disposition to being sensitive to subtle stimuli and being easily over-aroused by external stimuli [1]. It has recently been proposed as a human neurobiological trait found to be significantly higher in 10–20% of the population [2]."

Dr. Mona Delahooke points to Dr. Stephen Porges theory of polyvagal theory. She writes, "Neuroception is the brain's ability to detect danger. It's how we distinguish whether situations or people are safe or threatening. **Porges believes that "faulty" neuroception is at the root of many psychiatric disorders, including ODD. In this case, faulty doesn't mean something is wrong with the child. It simply means that for many vulnerable children, their neuroception is biased towards detecting danger when there is no real danger. As a result, the nervous system shifts the child involuntarily into a defensive position, resulting in a variety of challenging behaviors.** This can result from a host of causes (but not limited to) constitutional; genetic or brain wiring differences; biomedical issues; environmental stress; or sensory processing differences, which cause individuals to perceive ordinary sensations as threatening."

CDC Study on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Adults

An estimated 5,437,988 (2.21%) adults in the United States have ASD.

Consistent with estimates of ASD in US school-aged children, prevalence was found to be higher in men than in women.

ASD is a lifelong condition, and many adults with ASD need ongoing services and supports.

Learners of all ages in our institutions have diverse learning needs, whether due to NDDs, giftedness, other learning differences, or simply because they think and learn in a unique way!

We ought to be able to serve those diverse needs in Jewish Spaces.

Room 3:

# Inclusion:

What it is and why it's important

bell hooks writes:
"To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn."

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, 13.
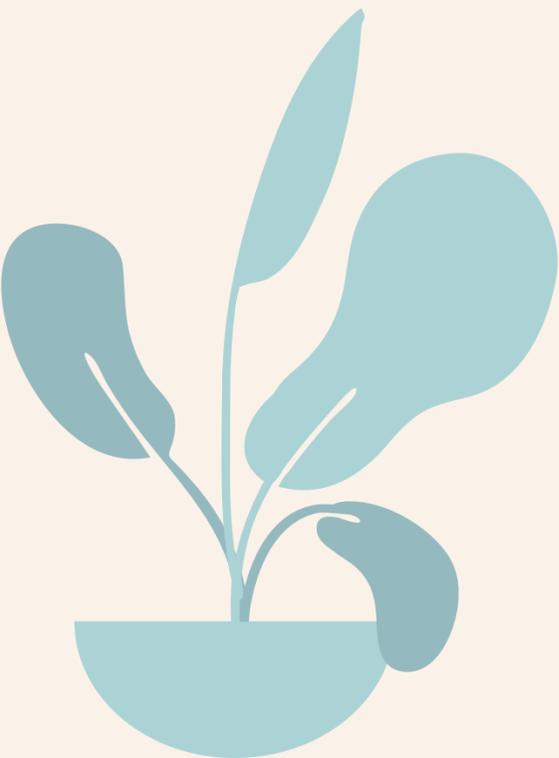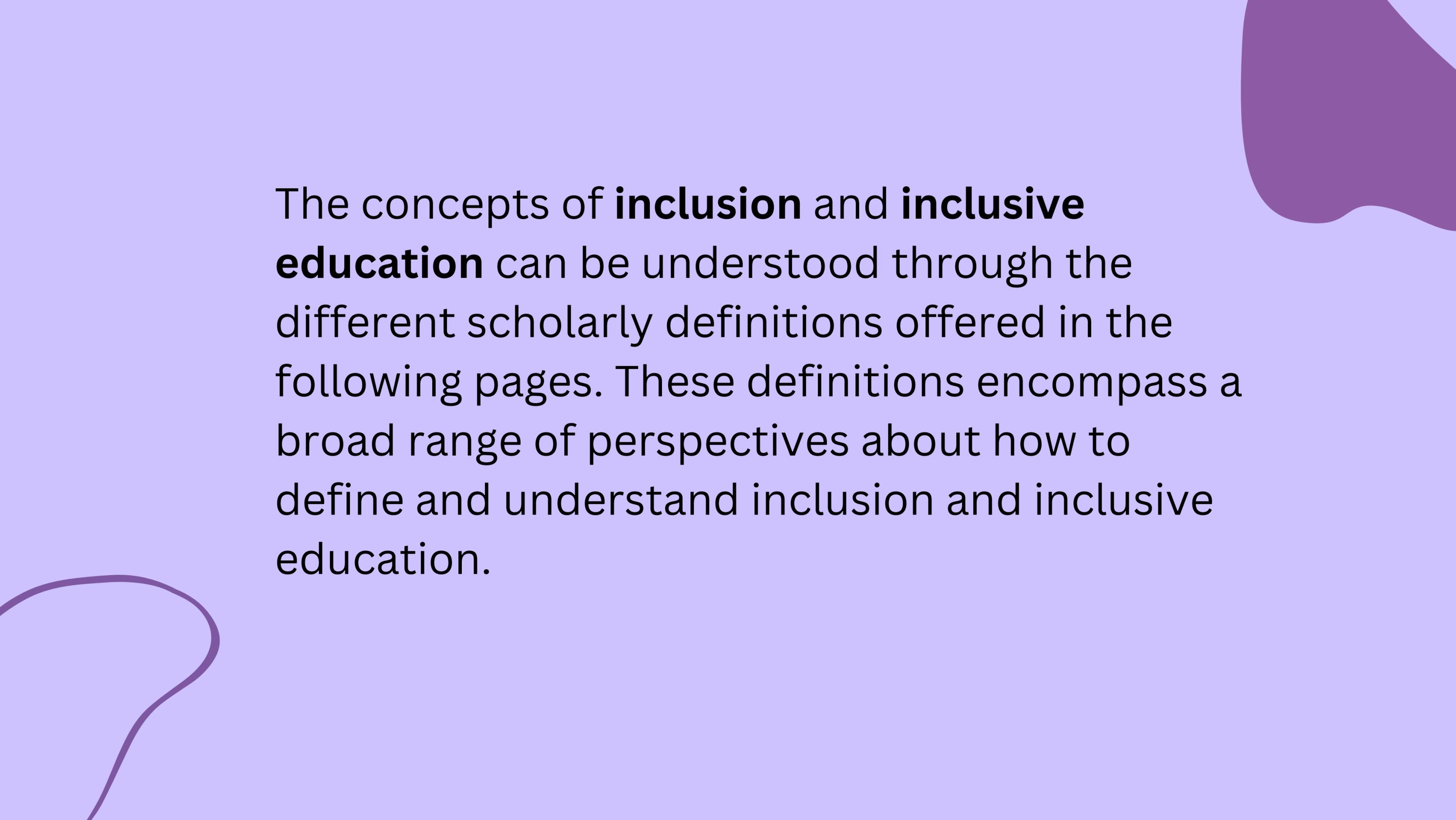
The concepts of **inclusion** and **inclusive education** can be understood through the different scholarly definitions offered in the following pages. These definitions encompass a broad range of perspectives about how to define and understand inclusion and inclusive education.

The terms inclusion and inclusive education are used interchangeably.In these pages, you will find different definitions of inclusion and inclusive education.

There is a third term, **differentiated instruction,** that will appear, as well.

Stanford University's Center for Learning and Teaching defines **differentiated instruction** as, "fundamentally the attempt to teach differently to different students, rather than maintain a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction."

Pearl Subban describes it as "an effective means to address learner variance, [which] avoids the pitfalls of the one-size-fits-all curriculum, incorporates current research into the workings of the human brain while supporting multiple intelligences and varying learning styles" (Subban, 940).

Inclusive education brings stakeholders in a community together to foster belonging:

Al-Shammari et al. define inclusive education as follows:

"Inclusive education determines appropriate educational practices used in general education schools by offering a variety of educational services to help all students with special needs best learn according to their abilities and needs […].

Al-Shammari et al. offer another definition: "inclusive education as a philosophy that brings stakeholders together to create a school environment based on acceptance and belonging within the school community" (Al-Shammari et al., 409).

Al-Shammari, Zaid and Faulkner, Paula E. and Forlin, Chris, Theories-based Inclusive Education Practices (June 17, 2019). Education Quarterly Reviews, Vol.2 No.2, 2019, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3415247

Al-Shammari on constructivism:

Constructivism: "involves a person understanding the importance of the social dimension during the learning process through observation, treatment, interpretation, and adaptation of information of building a cognitive structure."

"Constructivism equates to learning that involves constructing, creating, and inventing, basically for individuals to develop their own knowledge and meaning."

"Teachers are essentially considered facilitators, providing essential information, and organizing activities for students to discover their own learning."

(Al-Shammari et al., 411)

An important concept of inclusive education is **constructivism.**

SUNY at Buffalo defines constructivism as: "the theory that says [that] learners construct knowledge rather than just passively take in information. As people experience the world and reflect upon those experiences, they build their own representations and incorporate new information into their pre-existing knowledge (schemas)."

The following pages will describe major contributors to the theory of constructivism: **Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky**.

Their work is important because constructivism is a major component of inclusive education.

Jean Piaget

According to <u>Beverly Ebo</u>, Jean Piaget "was the first psychologist to make a systematic study of cognitive development."

"According to Piaget (1936), children are born with a very basic mental structure (genetically inherited and evolved) on which all subsequent learning and knowledge is based. Piaget's belief was that individuals learned through the construction of one logical structure after another. He also concluded that the logic of children and the way they think are completely different from those of adults. The implications of this theory and how Piaget applied them have shaped the foundation for constructivist education."

"Piaget also stressed the importance of students moving forward in achievement whereby students are in charge of sequencing their own learnings, largely on an individual basis."

Piaget suggests that each learner's lived experience impacts the way they build knowledge.

Lev Vygotsky

According to <u>Beverly Ebo</u>, Lev Vygotsky "proposed a theory of cognitive development that emphasized the underlying process rather than the ultimate stage of development. He examined the relationship between the cognitive process and the subject's social activities and is well known for his sociocultural theory of development that focuses on the "zone of proximal development (ZPD)."

Vygotsky argues that "social interaction is the basis for cognitive growth." In his view, students need to be in communities where there are surrounded by more knowledgeable people who can help them work through learning new material.

Ebo BA. *Constructivism or Behaviorism: What is the Best Method to Teach Special Needs Students?* J Healthc Sci Humanit. 2018 Fall;8(2):45-56. PMID: 36818401; PMCID: PMC9930485.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

ZAD	ZPD	ZDD
unproductive activity (routine → boredom)	educative activity (mediated participation → engagement)	unproductive activity (futile → frustration)

increase support through scaffolding

increase challenge of activity

The most productive learning activities take place in the ZPD (After Taber, 2020, figure 19.2)

Professor Keith Taber, University of Cambridge
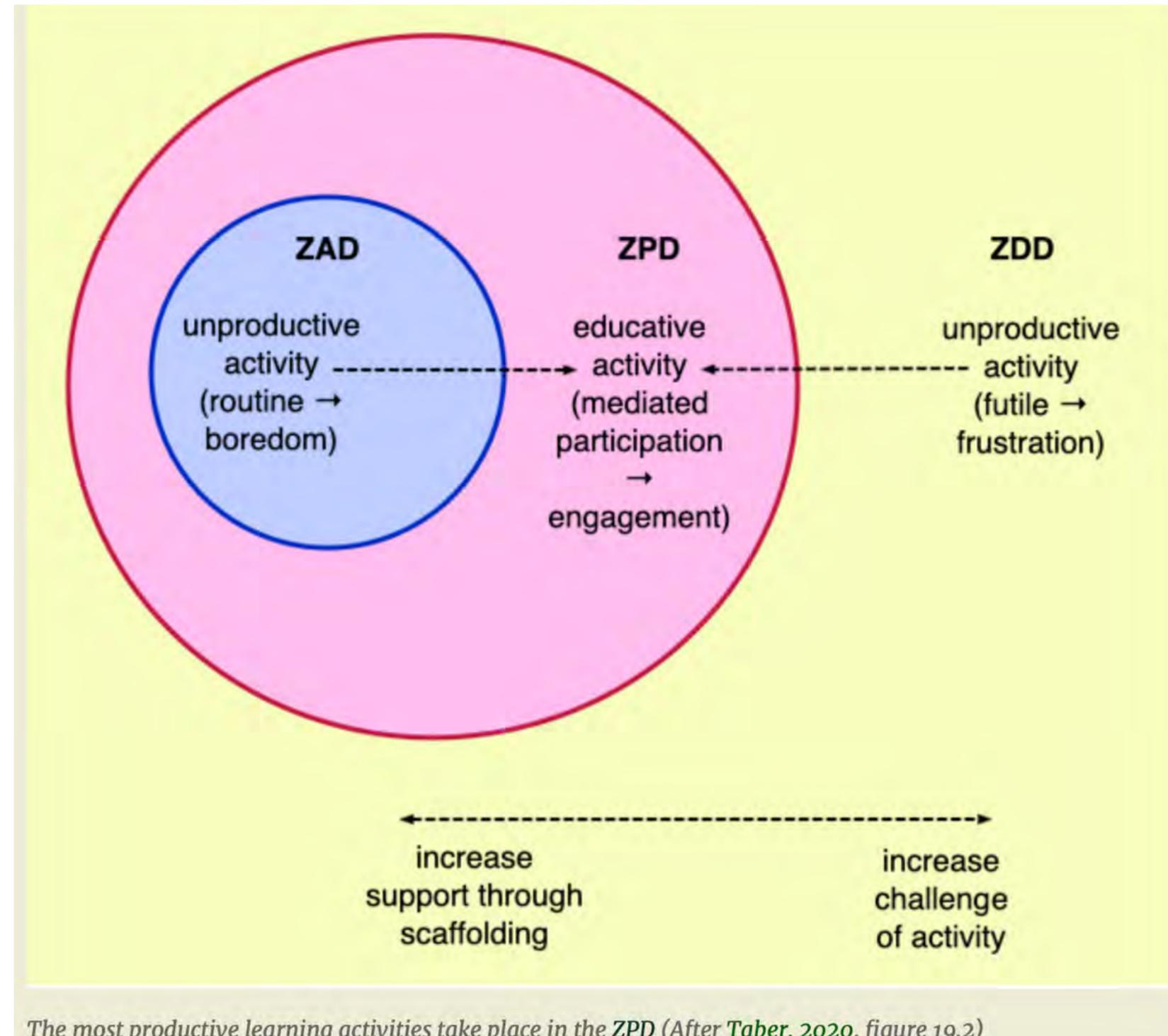
The Guiding Principles of Constructivism are:

1) learning is searching for meaning;

2) meaning requires the understanding of the whole as well as the individual parts;

3) teachers should have an understanding of the mental models that learners use to perceive their world and assumptions that they make in order to support their models; and

4) the purpose of learning is that an individual constructs their own meaning and does not include simply memorizing information for the correct answers or repeating merely what someone else has stated.

(Al-Shammrari et al., 411)
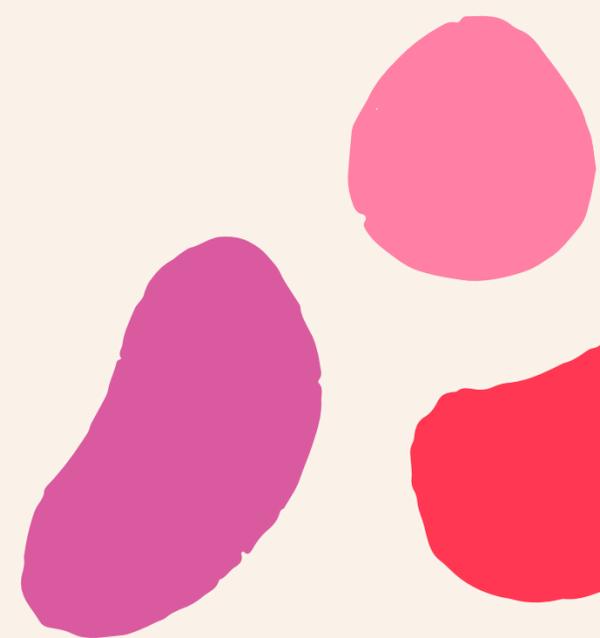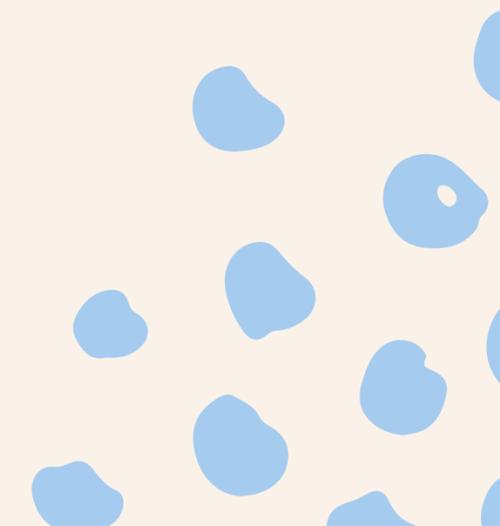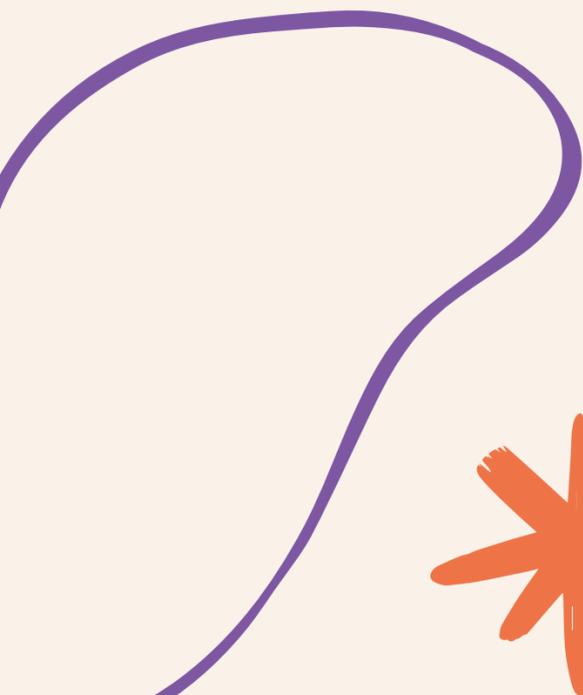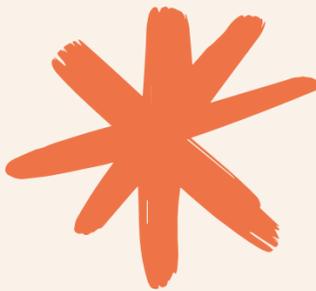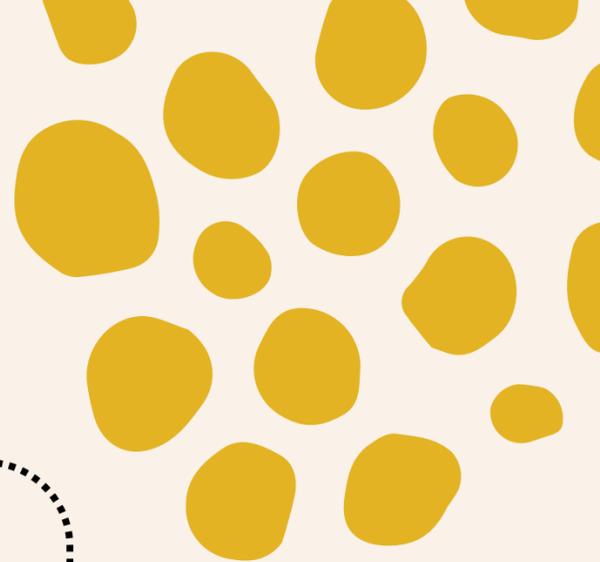
Constructivism is a crucial part of inclusive education. In order to ensure that all learners' needs are being met, educators ought to consider the ways in which individual learners are able to create and construct meaning for themselves in the classroom.

Inclusion is a methodology that ensures that all students have access to quality education:

"[Inclusion] is a process of facilitating an educational environment that provides access to high quality education for all students (Lambert, et al, 2003). Related to the disabilities issue, inclusion is premised on the notion that all children learning together in the same school and the same classroom, with services and supports necessary so that they can succeed, is critical." (Glanz, 4)

Glanz, J. (2008). The ethics of exclusion: Pedagogical, curricular, leadership, and moral imperatives for inclusive practice in Jewish schools [Monograph]. The Azrieli Papers: Yeshiva University

Inclusion requires teachers to consider each learners' social and cultural context…

As Subban writes, "Vygotsky has been crucial for classroom change and redevelopment" (Subban, 936).

"Vygotsky wrote about sociocultural theory, which "has significant implications for teaching, school and education. This theory is based on the premise that the individual learner must be studied within a particular social and cultural context. Such situatedness is necessary for the development of higher order functions, and such functions can only be acquired and cultivated following social interaction. Social interaction is therefore fundamental to the development of cognition" (Subban 936).

Subban, Pearl. "Differentiated instruction: A research basis."
International education journal 7, no. 7 (2006): 935-947.
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ854351.pdf

Research regularly supports the idea that not all children learn in the same way.

— Pearl Subban

Therefore...

It is crucial for teachers to determine the learning styles of their students.

Subban notes that, "Identifying learning styles enables a teacher to capitalize on a student's strengths and to become familiar with concepts they may find challenging" (939). This allows for students to learn in that sweet spot of the ZPD.

This strategy allows teachers to create lessons that meet the needs of individual learners, which in turn creates a more inclusive classroom.

Inclusion supports learners' basic rights to be seen an understood as individuals...

Pauline Zelaieta says that, "Inclusion relates to the principles and processes that are involved in increasing a school's capacity to respond to pupil diversity and promote greater participation for all pupils" (Zelaieta, 37).

Furthermore she notes that, "Inclusion within the education system must not only support every pupil's basic human right to education but also ensure that each pupil feels that education is accessible and relevant to them and their cultural and linguistic identity is valued" (77).

Zelaieta, Pauline. "Chapter 3: From confusion to collaboration: can special schools contribute to developing inclusive practices in mainstream schools?" In, Armstrong, F. (2004). Action research for inclusive education: Changing places, changing practices, changing minds. London: Routledge Falmer.

[Teachers] recognized that in order to provide effective education and respond to pupil diversity, there would sometimes be a need to implement particular teaching approaches with specific children at various times.

— Pauline Zelaieta

Inclusion supports equal opportunities for all learners...

There are **two parallel goals** in education:

1. Excellent teaching which results in student achievement.
2. Equal opportunity for all children (3).

The practice of inclusion must involve much more than shifting of physical environments from a segregated class to the general education class. Instead it must address the needs of the student being included, as well as the impacts on the greater learning environment (3).

Kochhar, C. A., West, L. L., & Taymans, J. M. (2000). *Successful inclusion: Practical strategies for a shared responsibility*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
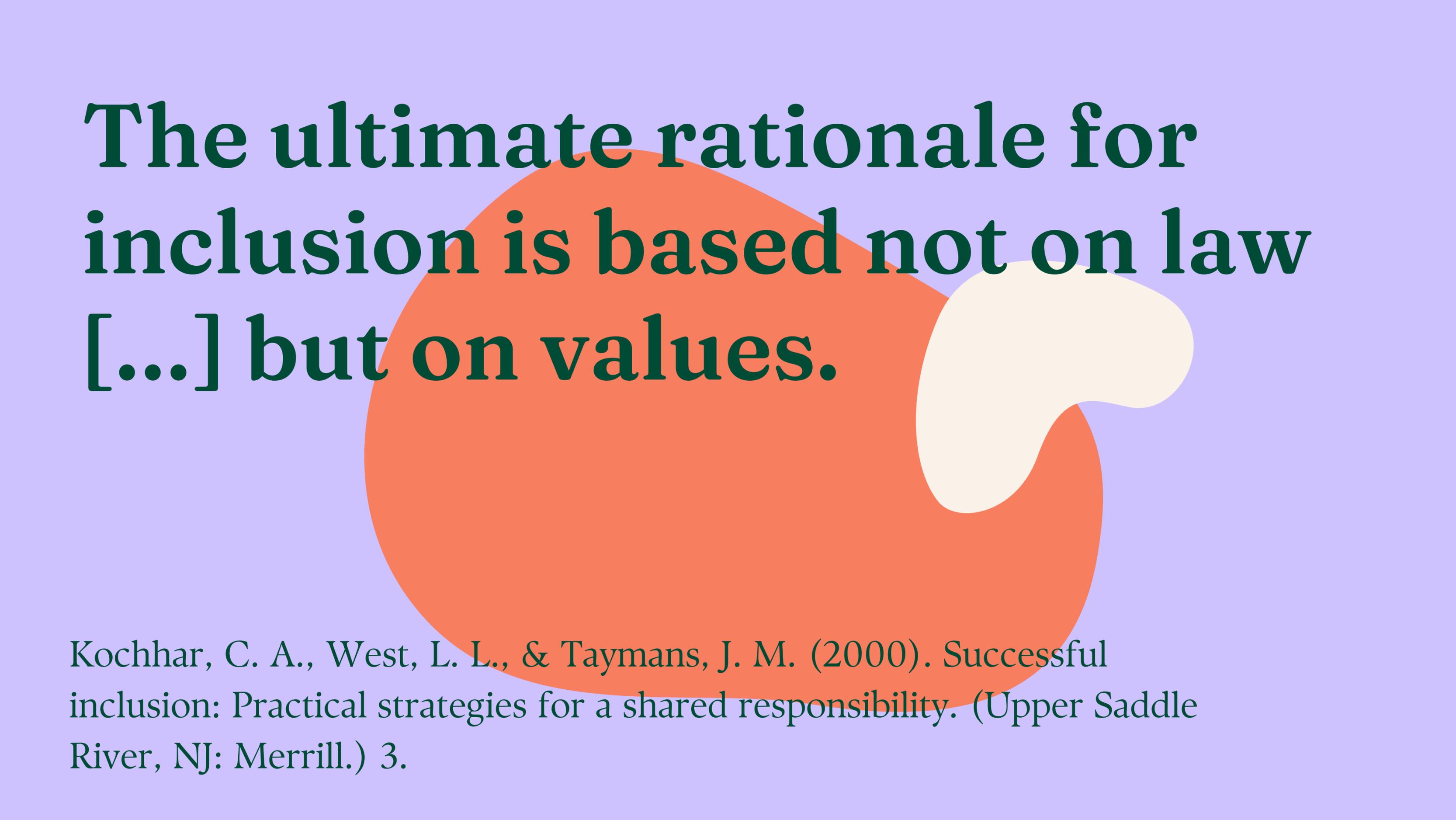
The ultimate rationale for inclusion is based not on law [...] but on values.

Kochhar, C. A., West, L. L., & Taymans, J. M. (2000). Successful inclusion: Practical strategies for a shared responsibility. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.) 3.

Inclusion is:

"All children learning together in the same classrooms, with the services and supports necessary so that they can be successful there. Children learning side by side though they may have different educational goals. A focus on what the child can rather than cannot do. Providing the planning, support, and services necessary for meaningful and successful participation of students with disabilities in general educational programs. Having all people on the staff understand and support the notion that students with disabilities can be served appropriately in general educational classes and that this sometimes requires the staff to meet learning needs that differ from those of most students. Teaching all children to understand and accept individual differences" (Kochhar et al., 8).

Inclusion is NOT:

"Dumping all children with disabilities into general education classes without the supports and services they need to be successful. Ignoring each child's unique needs. Sacrificing the education of typical children so that children with disabilities can be included" (Kochhar et al., 8).

"It takes a whole school to work toward successful inclusion" (Kochhar et al., 20).

That is, it takes parents, students, general education teachers, and specialist teachers to make inclusion work!

"Benefits of inclusion far out-weigh the difficulties" (Kochhar et al., 37).

Inclusion is not confined to one area of the school. "Rather it is a transformation in the way we think about structuring educational environments for all the children in all of the activities and opportunities a school has to offer" (Kochhar et al., 20).

"Instead of concentrating on students' weaknesses, successful inclusion teachers identify the strengths that many students with disabilities possess and are using to compensate for their difficulties. Thus, instruction and curriculum modifications can be built around existing strengths and special skills of these children" (Kochhar et al., 67).

Inclusion is a belief system...

"Inclusion is more than a service delivery model, it is a belief system (Stainback & Stainback, 2000) and a process of facilitating an educational environment that provides access to high-quality education for all (Lambert et al., 2003) (Milch Novick and Glanz, 1025)."

Novick, R.M., Glanz, J. (2011). Special Education: "And You Shall Do That Which Is Right and Good ..." Jewish Special Education in North America: From Exclusion to Inclusion. In: Miller, H., Grant, L., Pomson, A. (eds) International Handbook of Jewish Education. International Handbooks of Religion and Education, vol 5. Springer, Dordrecht.

Many factors impact how students learn:

Disabilities, different native languages, emotional difficulties, giftedness, gender, culture, aptitudes, interests, and experiences.

Brain based instruction is key, as is a differentiated approach.

Three concepts are needed for differentiated approach: the learning environment should be safe and non-threatening; students must be appropriately challenged and they should be comfortable enough to accept the challenge; the student must be able to make meaning of the ideas and skills presented through significant association (Subban, 939).

Teachers must learn about their students to provide inclusive instruction.

When activities, discussions, and instruction are based around students' interests, skills, concerns, and life experiences, material becomes more meaningful to students.

Inclusion benefits all students.

Salend and Garrick (1999) found "increases in academic achievement, increased peer acceptance and richer friendship networks, higher self-esteem, avoidance of stigma attached to pull-out programs, and possible lifetime benefits" (as cited in Wiebe Berry, 2006, p. 490). Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, and Hughes (1998) have cited positive social outcomes for students with and without disabilities" (Milch Novik and Glanz, 1028).
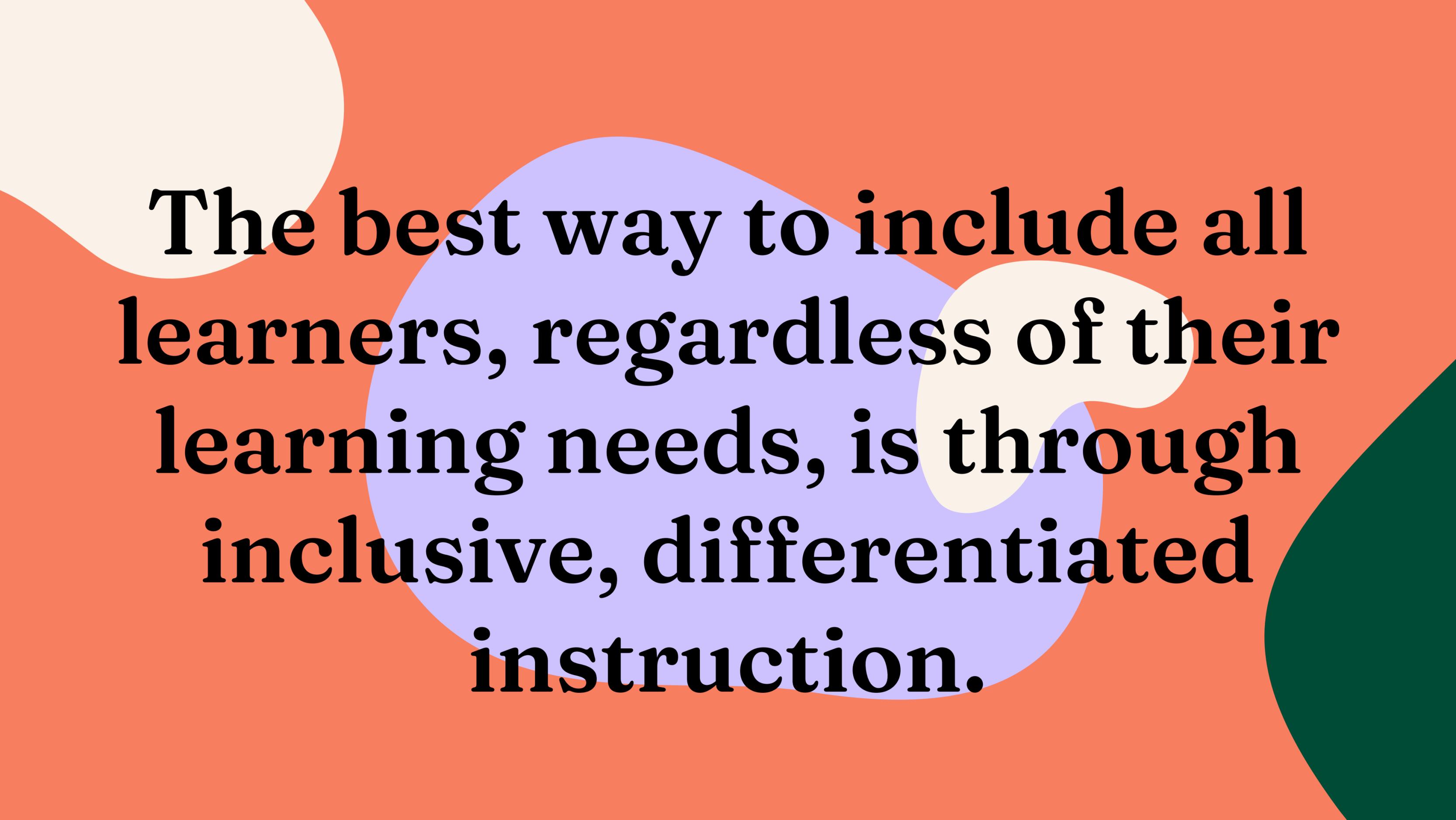
The best way to include all learners, regardless of their learning needs, is through inclusive, differentiated instruction.

# How to create an inclusive classroom

Institutions need buy-in from teachers and staff.

Inclusive strategies can be time-consuming; it takes time and energy to get to know the needs and skills of each learner.

Jewish institutions ought to educate teachers and staff about the Jewish value of inclusion and the educational benefits for all learners of inclusive education.

The following pages offer different methods for creating inclusive classrooms.
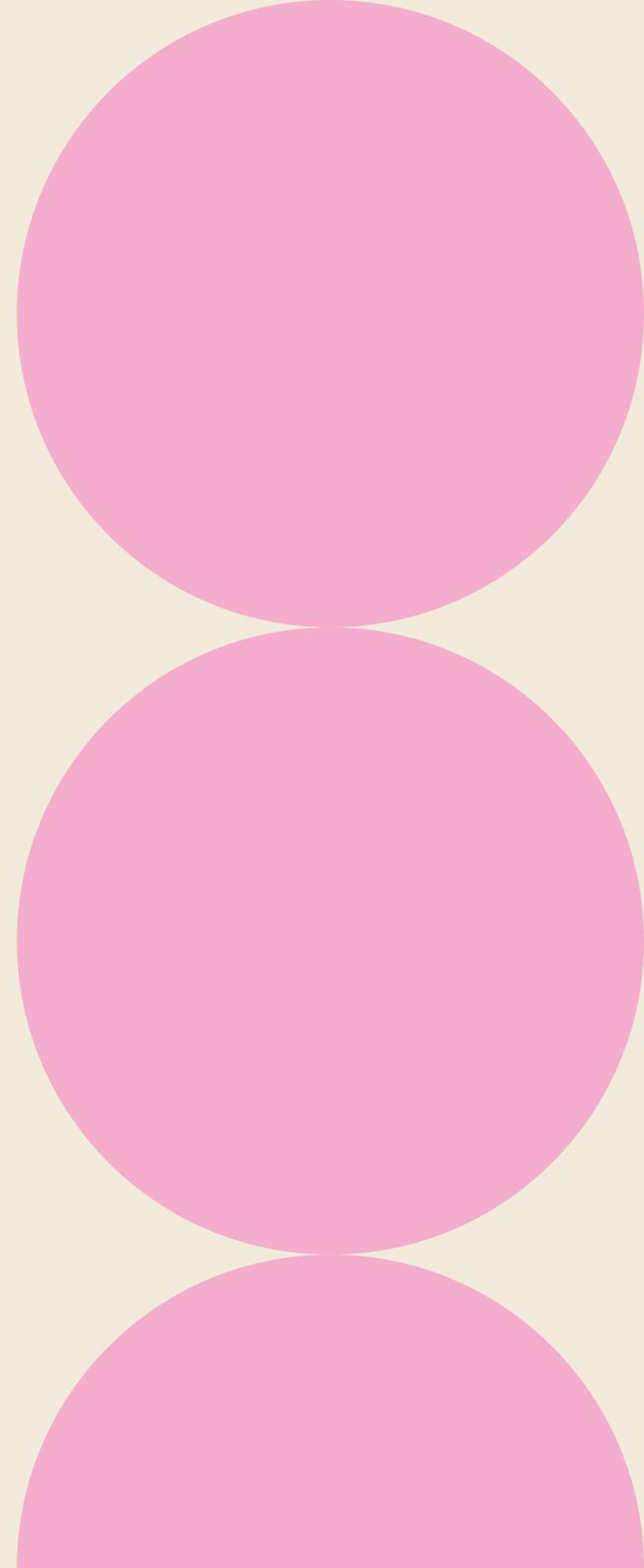
To create an inclusive classroom, teachers should...

Assess students' skills before and after teaching new content.

Engage in direct and explicit instruction.

Provide feedback to students.

Evaluate student learning and understanding.

Teachers can use formative assessment, evaluation, and feedback to examine gaps where remediation or enrichment is needed. Teachers should track student progress and behaviors throughout each lesson and over the course of the year.

Teachers can use exit slips that asks students to answer questions like "things I learned, things I found interesting, or questions I still have" before they leave the classroom.

Teachers can use cognitive theories to increase inclusion in the classroom:

Cognitive theories "[focus] on the mental activities of the learner that influence responses and acknowledge the processes of mental planning, goal-setting, and organizational strategies."

"Cognitive theories [also] place emphasis on making knowledge meaningful and helping learners be more organized and able to relate new information to existing knowledge stored" (Al-Shammari et al., 410).

It is assumed that the learner will take an active role in the learning process.

Examples of pedagogical techniques that reflect cognitive theories include: note-taking, underlining, summarizing, writing to learn, outlining, and mapping.

"Teachers are essentially considered facilitators, providing essential information, and organizing activities for students to discover their own learning."

Al-Shammari et al. on the role of the teacher in a constructivist learning environment (411).

In a constructivist model:

"Learning should include learner-centred, task-based, hands-on and minds-on activities (Shi, 2013) while also being meaningful and closely related to practical and real-life experiences (Lenjani, 2016).

In addition, constructivist-based classroom activities should provide internal and external scaffolding strategies for all learners, which is essential for students with special educational needs (Shi, 2013)" (Al-Shammari et al., 411).

Other tools in a constructivist classroom:

Peer Tutoring

Van de Merwe et al. write, "Peering strong learners with weaker learners was reported as a successful support strategy which encouraged active engagement and participation especially during class activities" (7).

Cooperative Learning Groups

Formal groups: may be organized by student ability or interest

Informal groups: may be spontaneous within which students are asked to pair and brainstorm on topics

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A model for inclusive lesson planning

Cornell University's Center for Teaching Innovation states that UDL is…

"Universal design for learning (UDL) is a teaching approach that works to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners and eliminates unnecessary hurdles in the learning process. This means developing a flexible learning environment in which information is presented in multiple ways, students engage in learning in a variety of ways, and students are provided options when demonstrating their learning."
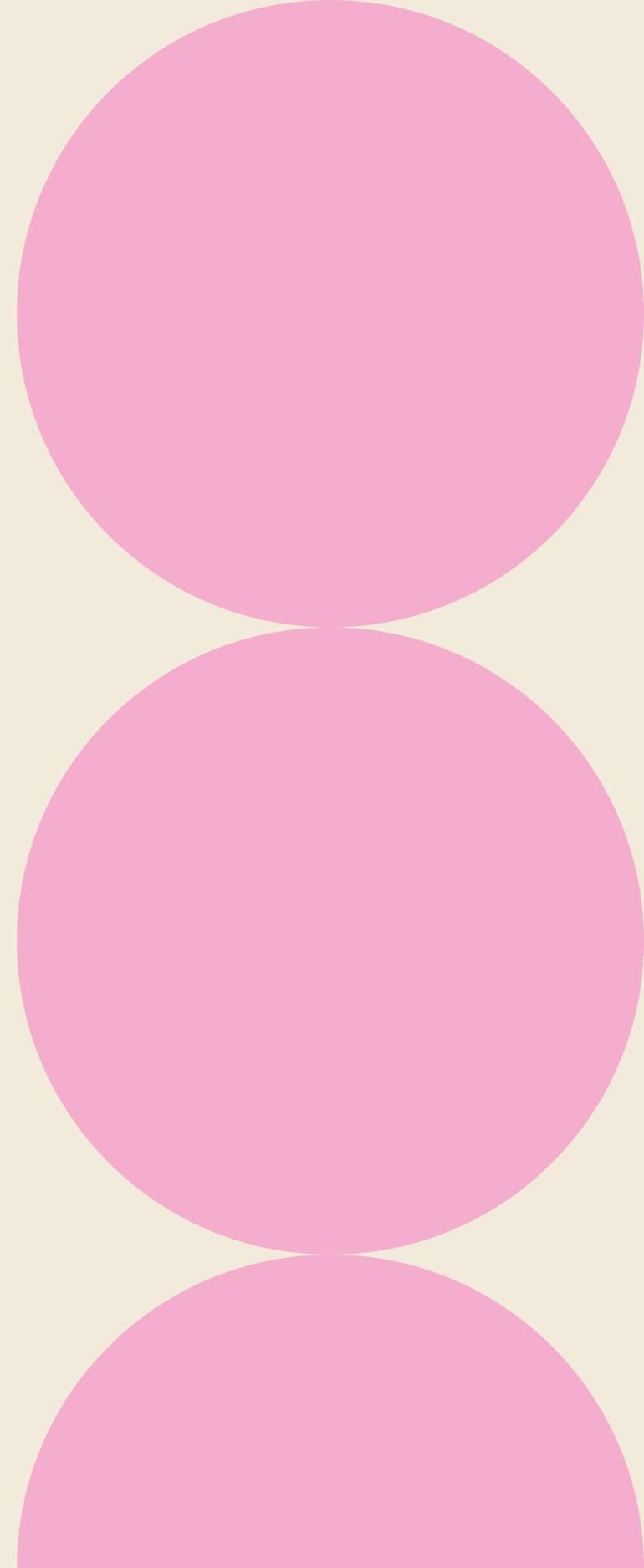
CAST, a non-profit education research and development group, explains the principles of UDL here:

[Click here to watch.](#)

According to the UDL Project, in a UDL lesson, teachers must:

Provide multiple means of
Engagement →
Affective Networks
The "WHY" of learning
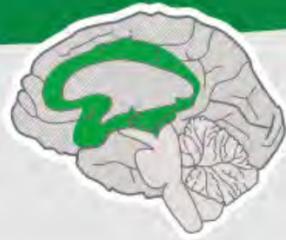
Provide multiple means of
Representation →
Recognition Networks
The "WHAT" of learning

Provide multiple means of
Action & Expression →
Strategic Networks
The "HOW" of learning
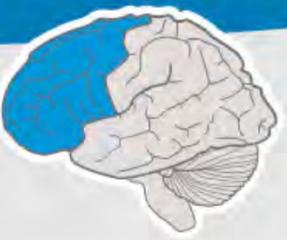
To tap students' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn

Present ideas and information multiple ways (text, graphics, videos, audio, etc)

Provide students with multiple ways to express their comprehension and mastery of a topic

"The use of one-size-fits-all curriculum *no longer* meets the needs of the majority of learners."

--Pearl Subban (938)
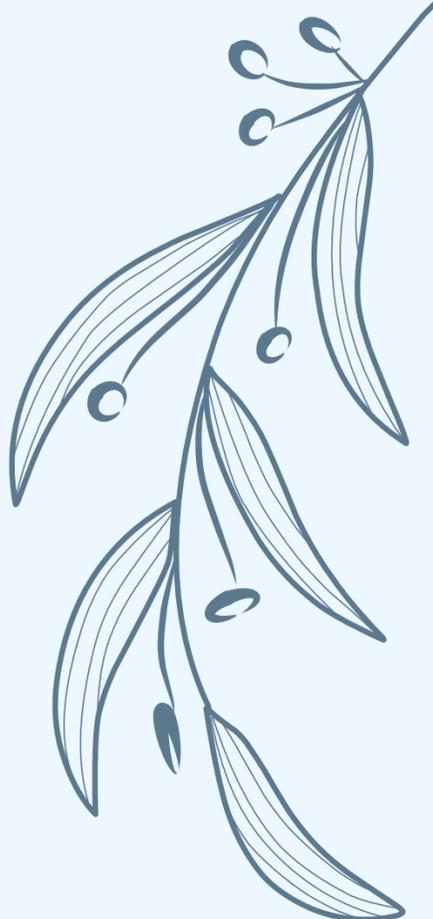
Room 5

Interviews

The following room showcases interviews conducted with a diverse set of people who are Jewish educators, clergy, health practitioners, and educational consultants. They offer wisdom and insight into the current inclusion efforts in Jewish educational spaces as well as offer suggestions for how Jewish clergy and educators can improve those spaces for all learners.

A heartfelt thank you to...

- Rabbi Simcha Weinstein, The Jewish Autism Network
- Rabbanit Dr. Liz Shayne
- Meredith Polsky, Matan Kids
- Abby Fisch, Education Modified
- Leah Hiller, MA OTR/L
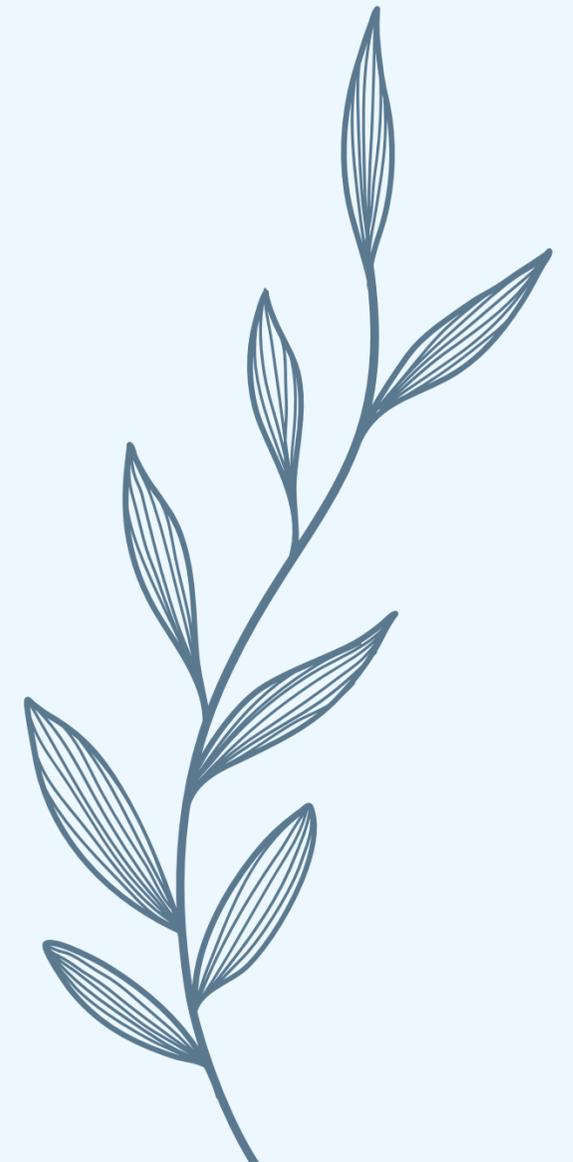
How to explore this section:

1 The first slide contains the name and biography of each interviewee. To learn even more about the interviewer, click on their name. A blue hyperlink will appear.

2 To access each interview, please click on the hyperlink embedded in the phrase "To read the interview, click here." This may appear on the slide with the interviewee's biography or on the next page.
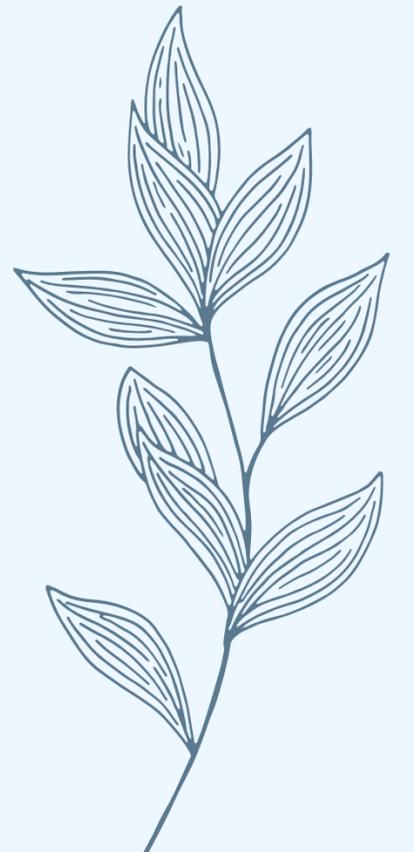
Reminder: click on any underlined text to see the hyperlink for more information! A blue link will appear.

Rabbi Simcha Weinstein

Rabbi Simcha Weinstein is the co-creator of the Jewish Autism Network. He is a bestselling author who was voted New York's Hippest Rabbi by PBS Channel 13. He chairs the Religious Affairs Committee at Pratt Institute and resides in Brooklyn, New York.

To read the interview with Rabbi Weinstein, click here.

Rabbanit Dr. Liz Shayne

Rabbanit Dr. Liz Shayne is the Director of Academic Affairs at Yeshivat Maharat as well as a recent alumna. She came to Maharat after completing her PhD from University of California, Santa Barbara, where she studied the past, present, and future of digital reading. She loves old books in new forms, analyzes how halakha and technology can work together, and is a teacher committed to the idea that studying Torah can and must be for everyone. During her time at Maharat, she worked with Sefaria on the Sefaria & Maharat Women Scholar's Writing Fellowship and interned at Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob and the Hebrew Institute of White Plains. She writes and teaches about everything from how the Talmud is like the internet to the future of robots in halakha. Rabbanit Liz lives in Riverdale with her husband and two children.

[To read the interview with Rabbi Dr. Shayne, please click here.](#)

Meredith Polsky

Meredith Englander Polsky co-founded Matan in 2000 and currently serves as Matan's Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships. In 2001, Meredith was one of eight national recipients of the inaugural fellowship awarded by Joshua Venture: A Fellowship for Jewish Social Entrepreneurs. Meredith has published articles in various print and online publications, including The Washington Jewish Week, The Institute for Southern Jewish Life and eJewishPhilanthropy.

Meredith is a nationally sought-after speaker on Jewish Special Education and is often called upon as an expert voice in the field. She teaches courses in Jewish Special Education at Gratz College and is a 2017 Covenant Award recipient. From 2014-2021 she served as the part-time inclusion specialist at Gan Ami, a Jewish early childhood program in Rockville, MD. She is a clinical social worker at Arbit Counseling, specializing in Selective Mutism.

[To read the interview with Meredith Polsky, please click here.](#)

Abby Fisch

Abby works in EdTech and Special Education Consulting. She has experience with Special Education Advocacy and is a former Award-Winning Special Education Teacher. Abby's background is in special education and she started her educational experience working as a Jewish camp counselor.

To read the interview with Abby Fisch, please click here.
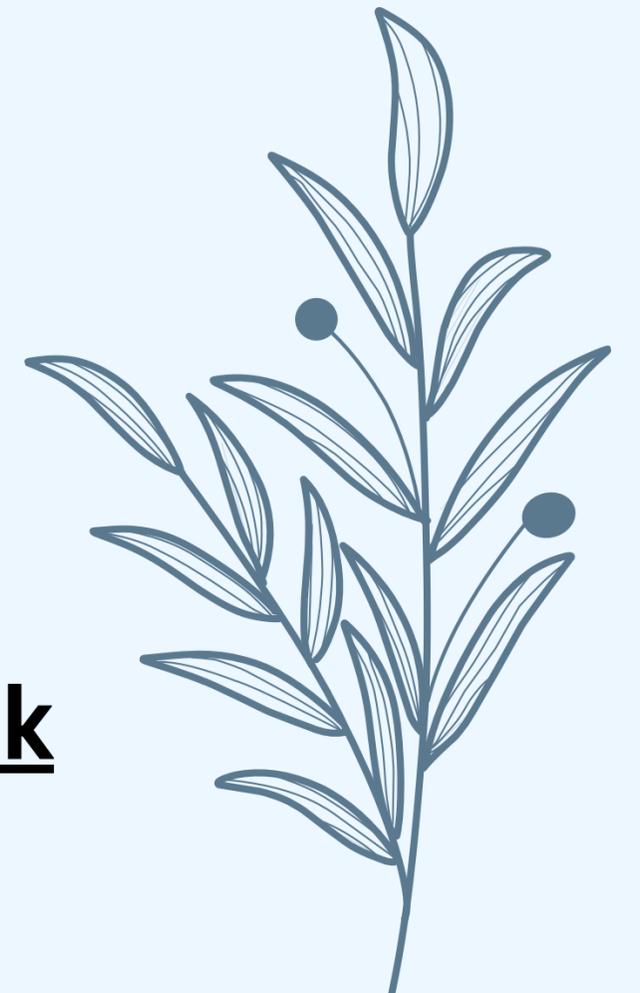
Leah Hiller, MA, OTR/L

As Leah's biography states, "Long before launching my outdoor pediatric OT practice, Leah Hiller Therapy, helping children and their families engage fully in life's many occupations was her priority. After a wonderful decade as an elementary school teacher, she left the classroom for the Master's program in Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California. While at USC, she engaged in research to answer essential questions about the social phenotype and unique sensory processing profile of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Leah's years of classroom experience, her graduate studies, her work in a school-based Occupational Therapy program, and being a mom to two daughters informs her OT practice. Leah lives in Los Angeles with her family."
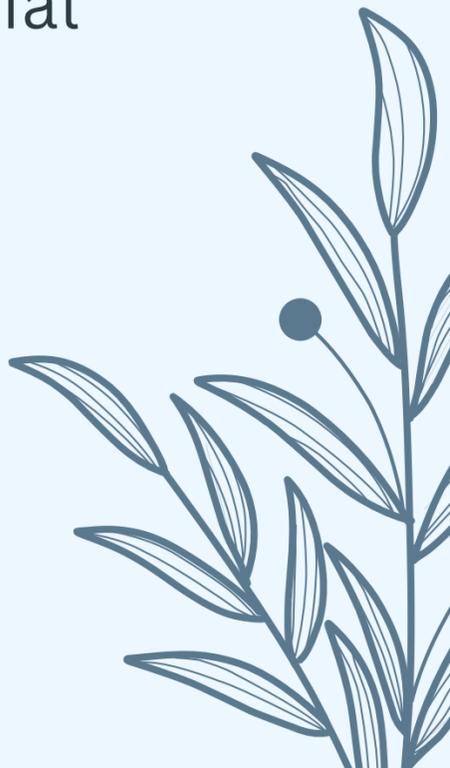
[To read the interview with Leah Hiller, please click here.](#)

Room 6:

THE ARTS:

HOW DO THE ARTS FIT INTO CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING SPACES?

ART AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSION

THIS SECTION...

Discusses the cognitive benefits that incorporating the arts brings for all learners.

Shows how art can be used as a tool for better teaching.

ERICA HALVERSON'S "HOW THE ARTS CAN SAVE EDUCATION"

The next few pages will dive into Erica Halverson's book *How the Arts Can Save Education* and illustrate her argument about the importance of art in learning spaces.

Halverson, Erica. *How the Arts Can Save Education.* Teachers College Press, New York. 2021.

"The arts open your heart and mind to possibilities that are limitless. They are pathways that touch upon our brains and emotions and bring sustenance to imagination. Human beings' greatest form of communication, they walk in tandem with science and play, and best describe what it is to be human."

-- JACQUES D'AMBOISE, FORMER NEW YORK CITY BALLET PRINCIPAL DANCER

WHY THE ARTS?

"Arts practices where people learn to make things serve as a bridge across all these big ideas in education research— cognitive science, the new literacies, and culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies" (Halverson, 4).
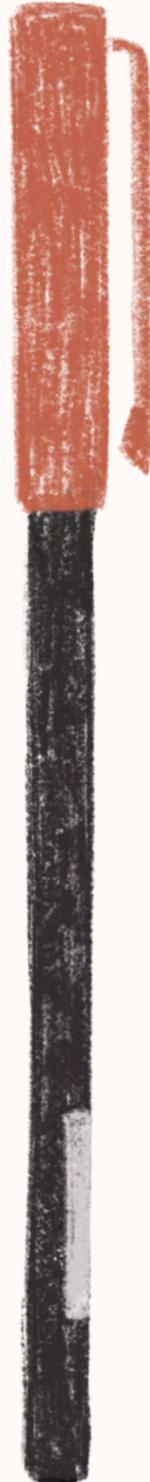
In other words, the arts act as a bridge between cognitive science, educational theories, and the culturally relevant ways we talk about building identity and allowing learners to bring their whole selves to the classroom. All of these are needed for good teaching and for inclusive education.

The arts allow teachers to help their students learn how to **create drafts as they work, allow others to assess their work and provide feedback (and give others feedback), and teach students how to take the risks needed to learn and grow.**

The next few slides will discuss these **three topics bolded above** in more depth, as well as discuss other reasons that the arts can improve teaching and help create inclusive classrooms.

HALVERSON SAYS:

"One of the beautiful features of artmaking is that assessment is naturally embedded in both the process and the product. [...]

Assessment is an authentic part of the production cycle and includes both formative (ongoing) and summative (final) components" (94-95).

Assessment is an important part of any classroom, particularly **authentic assessment.**

According to the University of Illinois, Chicago, "**authentic assessments** involve the application of knowledge and skills in real-world situations, scenarios, or problems. Authentic assessments create a student-centered learning experience by providing students opportunities to problem-solve, inquire, and create new knowledge and meaning."

This type of meaning making and application of real-world experiences and problems is essential in an constructivist classroom.

As Halverson says, assessments are baked into the art-making process. Art, then, becomes a perfect tool for authentic assessment.

Risk Taking is Key

Halverson argues that honoring risk-taking is a core feature of teaching and learning.

She writes, "Educators must take time and space to scaffold risk for all members of the learning community. […] No one is prepared to learn, much less engage in the production cycle of conceiving, representing, and sharing, without a willingness to take risks" (9).

YES
YES
YES

"Learners should say "yes" to themselves. "'Yes!' to themselves, to their own instincts and ideas, to the ideas of others, and to what can come out of taking our collective ideas to create something new and magical and strange. [...]" (18).

Yes, and...

"'Yes, and...' on the other hand, gives us permission to build on each other's ideas, to take what someone is giving, and make a collective new thing. Saying 'yes, and' is also the primary move for good teaching; it is the way to create a classroom where kids can share what they know, take risks, and learn new things. 'Yes, and' builds on what we know about how people learn, and it is how the arts can show the way for incorporating creativity through teaching practice" (18).

CONSTRUCTIVISM, AS DEFINED BY HALVERSON

"Constructivism is the idea that all new knowledge is built on already existing knowledge, so that any new thing you are told, or experience, is filtered through your already-existing knowledge structures. This is in opposition to the 'empty vessel' model" (30-31).

CONSTRUCTIONSIM:

Halverson says that **constructionism** "with an 'n' speaks more directly to the role that cognitive science plays in an arts-based foundation for education" (31).

"Constructionism shifts the metaphor slightly from the constructivist 'learning-by-doing' to constructionist, 'learning-by-making,' the literal construction of artifacts that become public displays of knowledge" (31).

"With this metaphor, learning happens when thinking is worked out through the making of external artifacts."

There is a growing "theoretical understanding that the more students construct external artifacts, the more they seem to learn" (32).

CONSTRUCTIONISM CONTINUNED :

"One of the key features of a constructionist theory is the importance of 'making things' in both a learning process and as a product of what people learn. Cognitive science developed the idea of mental representations for how a person recreates a model of events of objects in the world. Constructionism builds on this idea with the concept of 'external representations.'"

"The representation part refers to the creation of a model or an image that highlights certain features of a phenomenon or an experience in order to share a perspective. The external part is that the representation actually exists as an artifact in the world outside of the mind of its creator" (32).

"An example of an external representation is a map. Maps are an "external representation for helping people navigate the world more easily, given the goals that they have for their navigation. Not all maps are the same, even maps that cover the same territory" (32).

"Educational researchers have described the capacity to construct an external representation of a complex idea as a marker of mastery."

"The simplest form of representation is the move from thought to speech to conversation" (33).

"Art-making, and the skills it builds, trains students to produce external representations of their knowledge. When learners are able to externally represent their understanding through art-marking, it is clear that they have internalized the learning."

External representations play an important role in knowledge and learning. Halverson then asks the question: where do knowledge and learning live?

She writes, "Constructivism establishes that knowledge builds over time, Constructionism tells us that building knowledge is accomplished when people making things and external representations are the result of making things that feature ideas. [...] **How do you find the learning in and through the arts that has happened?"** (34)

DISTRIBUTED COGNITION IS HALVERSON'S ANSWER:

She writes, "Distributed cognition emphasizes how the thinking process is 'stretched across' actors and external representations in social and cultural situations, as opposed to representations contained in the minds of thinkers.

Ed Hutchins once said that knowledge of how to pilot a ship isn't contained in one person; rather it is stretched across people and tools in the environment. [...] We think of the learning environment as more than just the room where school happens; it's a set of resources for learners that includes artifacts, tools, and people" (34).

Learning takes place in community. Halverson reminds us of Ann Brown's term, "a community of learners." This is a model of "distributed expertise where knowledge is co-constructed among the teacher, the students, and the tools they use, including curricula, technologies, and assessments. In communities of learners, learning and knowledge are situated in interactions among people and tools. **No one person owns knowledge, and learning happens as people work together**" (34).

ART ALSO GIVES US THE PRACTICE OF CRITIQUE

Critique is an important part of creating and learning.

The arts can reshape learning through the practice and use of critique.

Critique helps students learn how to collaborate and allows their work to become a part of themselves and their identity.

As Erica Halverson writes:

"PEOPLE WHO MAKE ART LEARN TO CREATE, SHARE, AND CRITIQUE REPRESENTATIONS, WHICH IS THE FOUNDATIONAL PROCESS FOR BEING A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT. ARTMAKING FLOWS FROM AND DEVELOPS IDENTITY AS A PROCESS OF EXPERIMENTING WITH AND BECOMING AND AS A PRODUCT OF CREATING, DOING, AND ENACTING. IN THE ARTS, COLLABORATION IS AN OUTCOME. PEOPLE LEARN TO COLLABORATE THROUGH PARTICIPATING IN ARTS PROCESSES" (48-49).

IMPROV AS GOOD TEACHING

## HALVERSON SUGGESTS THAT IMPROV ALLOWS FOR RISK-TAKING AND CAN BE USED TO BECOME A BETTER TEACHER

What is improv? Keith Sawyer says, "Improvisation is generally defined as a performance (music, theater, or dance), in which performers are not following a script or core, but are spontaneously creating their material as it is performed (69).

"If we reimagine teaching through the lens of improv, we can 'age up' play, and bring joy back to all learning environments. In short, improv is: collaborative, emergent, and connected to identity" (70).

'Yes and' signals to the people you are improvising with that you are listening." Lisa Barker and Hilda Borko call this "presence" and show how it is a good way to describe improv and teaching. **Good improv and good teaching can be described through three features: "connection to themselves, attunement to others, and knowledge of subject matter"** (72).
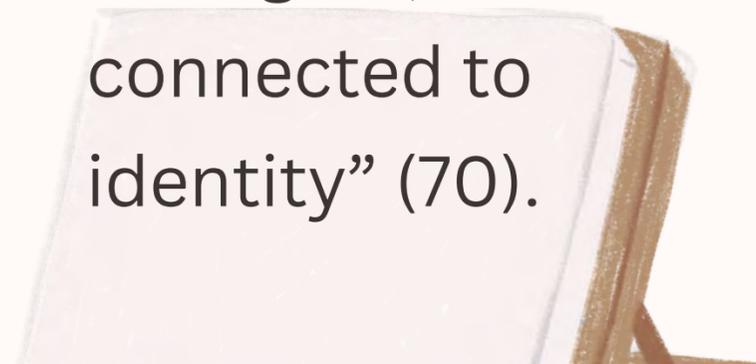
WHAT DOES TEACHING AS IMPROV LOOK LIKE?

"The key to all good teaching […] is to scaffold risk-taking for everyone involved" (77).

"The exact same thing is true about teaching and learning. One of the main reasons that people don't volunteer ideas in a group setting is that they are afraid of being wrong. Many classrooms are dominated by s a small group of voices who take all the risks and are always heard" (78).

"Without scaffolding, risk-taking becomes very expensive." Improv is intimidating because it is difficult to put ourselves out there.

"But it's not just students who have to learn to take risks in the classroom. Teachers also have to learn to take risks."

TEACHERS
MUST
TAKE RISKS, TOO!

"It is terrifying to stand up in front of a group of people who expect you to be the expert on something they probably do not want to learn anyway, and to find yourself saying, 'I don't know' let's see if we can figure that out together.' But students need to learn how to take the risk of trying out new ideas, and saying, 'I don't know,' so teachers need to lead the way. **Risk-taking thrives on trusting relationships**" (78-79).

"NO ONE CAN LEARN IF THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO BE WRONG, AND YOU WON'T BE WILLING TO BE WRONG IF YOU DON'T TAKE A RISK."

"NEVER ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO DO SOMETHING THAT YOU WOULD NEVER DO YOURSELF."

--ERICA HALVERSON

"And when we think about risk-taking in terms of improv, as Beth Graue and colleagues remind us, 'Using the lens of improv to study teacher-child interactions shifts the focus away from what the teacher is doing and towards what the teacher and children are doing together.'

When we think about teaching and learning as improv, producing knowledge becomes a joint task rather than a scary, individual, isolated act. In education we call it 'joint-knowledge construction'" (80)

An example: "My co-teaching artist Luke asked the 12- to 14-year-olds for some character suggestions. A kid shouted something. Luke paused, thoughtfully, and said, 'I heard pimp…I'll shop around.' In one breath, Luke validated the kid's contribution, didn't make fun of it, didn't punish him, and yet managed to convey that this is not the kind of suggestion that we are likely to use."

"Emergent, informal learning environments challenge the zeitgeist of desks, textbooks, and exams as core features of schools and open up possibilities for progressive design. Henry Jenkins and his colleagues have described a version of arts-based designed learning environments that they call **participatory cultures:** 'A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations [....] A participatory culture is one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another.' Artistic expression is learning" (87).

THREE RULES OF EFFECTIVE LESSON DESIGN:

Learners must conceive, represent, and share in the lesson.

THE LESSON OUGHT TO HAVE…

Authentic, embedded, and constant assessment.

LEARNERS MUST PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND ENGAGE IN CRITIQUE

The people at Harvard Project Zero call this —"thinking routines." "These are practical suggestions for how to have conversations with people around work and work processes" (96).

Ask students: What do you notice? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel? What do you want to know more about?"

"STUDENTS' NEEDS DICTATE WHAT IS TAUGHT, AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND" (99).

HALVERSON RECOMMENDS:

"First, arts practices should serve as the foundation for how we design all of our learning environments. We should engage learners in cycles of conceiving, representing, and sharing all the time. We should assess learning early and often through practices like critique and documentation, and we should lean into what students want to learn by offering just-in-time lessons on particular skills or tools as they're needed" (99).

HALVERSON GOES ON TO RECOMMEND:

"Second, and equally important, instruction must be more like design than like implementation of curriculum. I want teachers to think life chefs, not cooks. Following a recipe almost always ends up with the food tasting not quite as good as it would if it was made by the person who wrote the recipe. Chefs understand why the ingredients are in the recipe and can adapt the ingredients to suit the needs of diners. Good instruction is about thinking like a designer in a space where curricula provide a rich set of resources for customizing learning to the needs and interests of learners."

THIS IS WHY THE ARTS LEAD TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The arts allow for a variety of different modes of instruction and ways for learners to express their understanding--teachers and students can present visuals, auditory information, graphics, videos, etc in their teaching and in their work.

The arts allow for authentic assessment and student expression. Research shows that authentic assessment is the best way for learners to integrate and understand materials.

Because the arts allow for authentic expression and allow students to bring their whole selves, their whole identities to their work, students of all learning needs can bring themselves fully to the classroom.

UDL Lesson Plans

Here you'll find two lesson plans that utilize inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design Learning. They are intended to be used with religious school teachers in professional development sessions.

Lesson 1: Jewish Texts on Diverse Learners and the Importance of Inclusion in Jewish Spaces

Click here to access the lesson plan.

Lesson 2: How to Use Art to Create Inclusive Learning Spaces

Click here to access the lesson plan.

When I created this piece, I followed Prompt #1 from *Lesson 2: How to Use Art to Create Inclusive Learning Spaces*. The prompt reads as follows:

Show, in whatever medium you wish (collage, painting, drawing, writing a song or poem or story), what your experience has felt like as a learner in Jewish spaces–how have you felt sitting in classes, how have teachers and clergy made you feel, and what emotions arise for you when you consider your Jewish education? What does your Jewish educational experience look and feel like to you? If you are neurodivergent, have other learning differences, or have experienced anything in your life that has contributed to your learning needs, you might wish to incorporate those experiences into your art. Your artistic creation can represent your experience as a learner in a particular space or time in your life, or represent your larger journey as a learner in Jewish spaces.

I used canvas and fabric scraps to illustrate my own journey as a learner in Jewish spaces. I chose fabric because I often like to think of Judaism as a tapestry of many generations, places, and traditions. I liked the idea of using fabric, a material that is both strong and soft, to illustrate my experiences as a learner in Jewish spaces.

Although I encountered difficulties in Jewish spaces, particularly as a child in religious school, the grounding and foundation of my experience is that of growth. I chose to represent growth with multiple floral motifs. Overall, I look back on my early Jewish learning experiences with fondness and connection. I love flowers because they represent renewal, creation, and hope to me; after a long winter, flowers will bloom again. I also chose to use green vines on white fabric to represent the connections and sense of identity that I gained in Jewish learning spaces.

In multiple places, I used darker fabric that feels chaotic. These darker fabrics represent the challenges I faced in religious school, particularly between the ages of 10-13. I was identified as highly gifted in elementary school, but I was not diagnosed with ADHD until I was an adult. Because I was both highly gifted and had ADHD (known as Twice Exceptional*), school and academics were often difficult for me, even though I process information quickly and am very bright and motivated. y learning differences and particular neurotype made learning Hebrew particularly difficult. I often remember sitting and sweating, waiting to be called on in conversational Hebrew in 6th grade, not knowing what was going on or even what question we were on. I never felt empowered to ask for help in religious school nor did I have any teachers who recognized that I was struggling. These struggles, both academically and socially, in the religious school space made me resent being Jewish and not want to participate in Jewish life.

Despite those early struggles, I always, deep-down, loved Judaism and when the time was right I found my way back to Jewish learning. I chose the words for this collage, "Self love;" "love;" and "You are stronger than you think" because they reminded me that the struggles I faced in Jewish learning spaces when I was younger were not permanent. In college and in rabbinical school, I have excelled and loved learning in Jewish spaces. It took me many years of learning how to have better executive functioning skills to excel in these spaces, but now that I'm here, I feel that same sense of connection, identity, and love that I did when I was much younger.

*To learn more about Twice Exceptional, or 2E, learners please read this guide.

THIS ROOM PROVIDES ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL RESOURCES TO HELP JEWISH LEADERS BUILD MORE INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SPACES.
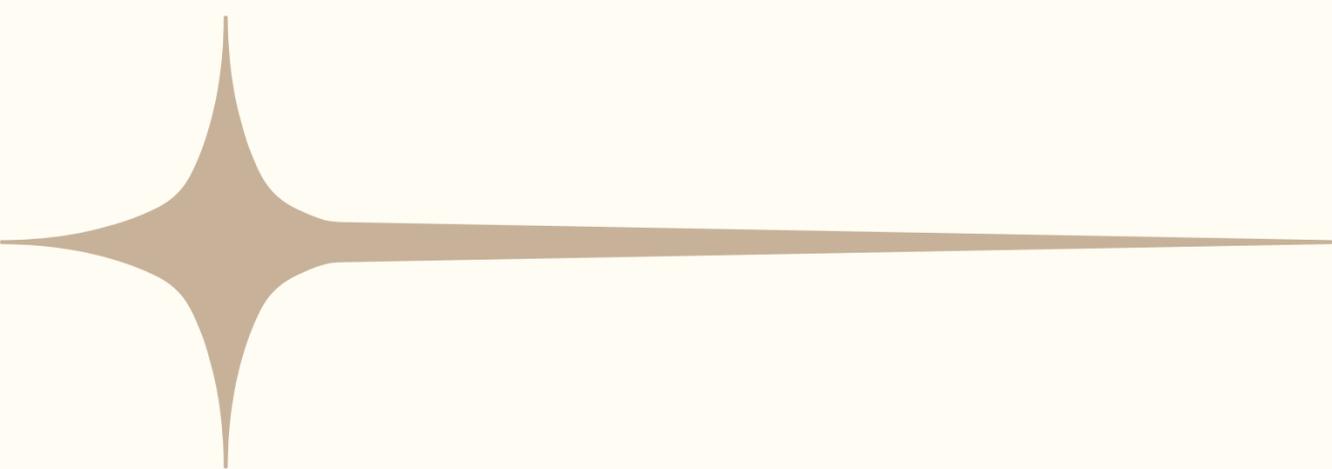
ONLINE RESOURCES

- Gifted Education:
  - Hoagie's Gifted
  - Rainforest Mind
  - National Association for Gifted Children
  - 2E, Twice Exceptional Learners

- Learning Differences:
  - National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
  - Learning Disabilities Association of America

- Sensory Sensitivities:
  - (See next slide)

SENSORY SENSITIVITIES:

- **Research**
  - The Spiral Foundation: www.thespiralfoundation.org
  - Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation: www.spdnetwork.org
  - SI Global Network: www.siglobalnetwork.org
- **Tools & Equipment**
  - Abilitations www.abilitations.com (Owned by School Smart)
  - Southpaw www.southpaw.com/sensory-integration
  - Therapy Shoppe www.therapyshoppe.com
- **Blogs**
  - Inspired Treehouse www.theinspiredtreehouse.com
  - The Sensory Spectrum www.thesensoryspectrum.com
  - Mama OT www.mamaot.com

Compiled by Leah Hiller, MA-OTR/L

Organizations:

Matan Kids: Matan Kids "focuses on professional development and mentorship of current of future Jewish leaders and educators, has received accolades by participants, press and leaders throughout the field of Jewish education." Matan Kids provides professional development and training for Jewish educators, clergy, and teachers in addition to their consulting work.

Gateways: Gateways provides high quality special education services, expertise and support to enable students with diverse learning needs to succeed in Jewish educational settings and participate meaningfully in Jewish life." Gateways provides support and resources for students and families and Jewish educators to help create more inclusive Jewish educational spaces.

The Jewish Autism Network: This organization was started by Rabbi Simcha Weinstein and his wife. They provide advocacy resources for Jewish autistic people and their loved ones.

Pedagogy/Activities:

CAROL A KOCHHAR-BRYANT, JULIANA M. TAYMANS, AND LYNDA L. WEST SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING 12 STEPS TO MAKE CURRICULUM MORE INCLUSIVE (94-95):

Note: The suggestions on the following two slides are primarily aimed at secular teachers and curriculums, however, many of these can be incorporated when building religious school curriculum.

Kochhar, C. A., West, L. L., & Taymans, J. M. (2000). Successful inclusion: Practical strategies for a shared responsibility. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

1. Expectations for schools must be raised by students, parents, teachers, educational administrators, and the community. accomplishment and progress should be expected for all students—everybody counts.

2. Learners need a systematically integrated curriculum, not a fragmented one, with greater emphasis on coherence and more interrelationships and connections between subjects and disciplines.

3. Curriculum decisions should not be focused not only on what to cover, but also on how the material foster the ability of the learner to use and apply knowledge resourcefully.

4. Learning must be placed into real world contexts (contextualized) so the material makes sense in the world of the learner.

5. Though not all learners think alike, learn alike, or are alike all still need to be directed toward common general standards of achievement in using knowledge.

6. Evaluation of the learner should include nontraditional evaluations of performance, through strategies such as exhibitions, which call for the resourceful application of new knowledge more than just its display.

7. Learners need the opportunity to be engaged in advanced academic work to prepare them for college placement.. Teachers need to become facilitators of learning, and learners need to become active doers and thinkers in the classroom, rather than passive recipients of information.

8. Each learner needs an advisor, advocate, or coordinator with whom the learner plans an academic program.

9. Current technology must be integrated into the curriculum and all learners brought to proficiency in the use of computers for communication, computation, and research.

10. Current technology must be integrated into the curriculum and all learners brought to proficiency in the use of computers for communication, computation, and research.

11. Learners who elect to concentrate their studies in vocational education should have the opportunity to engage in advanced study through structured apprenticeships that are patterned after work-study arrangements in either traditional occupational fields or new ones. These advanced occupational opportunities serve as a bridge between secondary school and college or employment, and they provide for an organized transition into occupations.

12. The critical transition to college or work after graduation requires additional planning and supports for the learner.

Erica Havlerson's "Three Things Game" to build a participatory, inclusive culture.

Erica Halverson explains that she plays the game that follows on the next page. This game embodies her three design principles.

Those principles are that, while learning, learners ought to:

1. Conceive
2. Represent
3. Share

"One of my all-time favorite warm-up games is called 'Three things!' Everyone stands in a circle, and the first person asks the person to their right to name three things from the category of their choice. It can be simple: 'Three best ice cream flavors,' or, 'Three people living or dead you would invite to dinner,' or 'Three animals you would like to ride.' It goes like this:

You: Hey, Erica!
Me: Yes, friend!
You: Give me three animals you would like to ride.
Me: A narwhal!
Everyone else: One!
Me: A mini-horse!
Everyone else: Two!
Me: One of the pigs from Animal Farm!
Everyone else: Three things!
Then, I get to ask the person to my right for three new things. And on and on, until we get around the whole circle.

Easy to play, very affirming, and there are no wrong answers. The best kind of game (95)."

Halverson reminds us that it is crucial to take time in a lesson to build trust and relationships with students.

This game allows students to be in community with their peers and their teacher.

It also allows them to conceive of their own ideas, represent those ideas with their own (in this case) words, and share their thoughts. This allows them to bring their whole selves to the classroom.

It would be a great beginning or ending ritual for a class or for an ice breaker.

Call to Action:

Jewish tradition asks us to consider the different types of learners we might encounter as Jewish leaders. The Rabbis understood that there are different ways for educators to construct their lessons so that anyone can learn about Judaism. As Jewish people, our tradition implores us to study and learn so that we may become Jewish people who act to help and heal the world around us.

Modern research validates the need to honor the identities, abilities, skills, and passions of every student. Research and education best-practices urge educators to utilize inclusive pedagogy and ensure that each student in a classroom has the support they need to be successful. Jewish values compliment this research and demand that Jewish leaders create spaces where every Jewish person can learn and participate in the holy act of study.

Inclusive education had become even more essential in our times as the number of students with neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD, ASD, dyslexia, etc.) and other learning differences (giftedness, different executive functioning needs, etc.) continues to rise.

The need for inclusive education and curriculum design that serves the needs of all learners is especially crucial in the religious school setting; there are always learners with differing needs within any one religious school classroom. Jewish clergy and educators must understand the importance of inclusion and gain a better understanding of how to implement inclusive pedagogies in their classrooms so that they can honor the needs of their students and help them grow into curious, creative, and engaged Jewish people.

The arts, as we've seen, can be an important to tool to create and foster inclusive environments. The arts allow for student expression and act as a means by which students can bring their whole selves to the classroom. The arts also easily allow teachers to offer a variety of different modalities of expression and creativity (such as writing, singing, painting, collaging, acting, etc.). Furthermore, the arts teach students important skills such as critical thinking, drafting ideas, collaboration, and how to give and receive feedback, which are valuable skills for appreciating the complexities of the world around them.

As Leah Hiller said in our interview, Jewish institutions need to: "Be creative! Be flexible! Be ok making mistakes and having to try again!" We might not get inclusion right the first time, but we have a responsibility as Jewish people, leaders, and educators to keep trying and to keep striving to create spaces where all Jewish people feel safe, supported, and able to participate in Jewish life and learning.

Thank you for visiting the exhibit.

Thank you to my mentors and teachers over the years, to those who helped me create this exhibit, and to all of my students over the years for inspiring me to want to educate my colleagues about the importance of inclusion in Jewish spaces.

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