



Dr. Carly Christensen

Dr. Carly Christensen (she/her) is a Disabled educator and scholar in Critical Disability Studies (CDS) scholar in education committed to rejecting traditional special education frameworks in favour of inclusive education that recognizes disability as a valued identity. She is an Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia, where she teaches in the Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education (ECPS) department, working to shift the field away from deficit-based approaches toward anti-ableist pedagogy.

A graduate of the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education with a focus on perspectives in inclusive education, Carly has worked as a teacher in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. She has taught in urban and rural schools, special education settings, an inner-city all-girls secondary school, an Indigenous adult education program, and First Nations self-governing schools. These diverse experiences have given her firsthand insight into how exclusion and inclusion are perpetuated within educational systems.

Carly is also the co-lead of the Inclusive Education Research Stream at the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship (CIIC), where she works to mobilize disability justice frameworks in inclusive education research, practice, and policy. Her vision is to mobilize disability justice and anti-ableism to empower Disabled students and transform teaching practices. Carly also emphasizes that creating inclusive schools involves acknowledging disability history, dismantling its lingering effects, and ensuring schools become spaces of belonging and healing for Disabled learners.

Carly considers her most meaningful achievement to be parenthood—a journey that holds particular significance as a Disabled mom. When she's not teaching, she loves listening to podcasts and audiobooks, cooking, and family dance parties.

**Anti-Ableism in
Schools**

**Universal Design for
Learning**

**Inclusion Through
Disability Justice**

**Disability-Affirming
Classrooms**

Keynote & Workshop Sessions

Carly offers several keynote and workshop sessions. Keynotes are typically 60, 90 or 120 minutes, while workshops can be adapted to run anywhere from 60 minutes to a full day. Sessions can be stand-alone or can be grouped together based on the needs, interests, and needs of a community.

Explore the sessions listed below, and ask us about options to tailor a session for you!



<https://ecps.educ.ubc.ca/carly-christensen/>

**Proud to be
an outside pin.**

Session Descriptions

Designing for Belonging: The Anti-Ableist Promise of UDL 3.0

The new UDL 3.0 guidelines mark a significant shift in how we think about inclusive education. No longer just a tool for access, UDL 3.0 positions itself as a framework for equity, explicitly confronting bias, systemic barriers, and ableism in schools. This session introduces educators to the key updates in UDL 3.0—including a stronger emphasis on learner variability, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and the recognition of disability as a valued identity.

Participants will explore how the updated framework challenges traditional special education models and offers practical tools to reimagine curriculum, relationships, and school culture. UDL 3.0 helps educators design learning environments where all students—especially those most often marginalized—can belong, participate, and thrive. This session provides a roadmap for putting those commitments into action.

Format: Keynote or Workshop

Audience: Educators, Leaders, Support Staff

Reframing Behaviour: Restorative Approaches in Inclusive Classrooms

What if responding to student behaviour was about cultivating empathy and connection? This session invites educators to reframe behavior through the lens of disability justice, anti-ableism, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 3.0. Drawing on Guideline 9, we explore how restorative practices support student engagement by building trust, emotional safety, and meaningful participation.

Participants will examine how common behavior systems reflect ableist assumptions and learn how restorative approaches can transform these moments into opportunities for inclusion and belonging. This session offers practical tools to create emotionally responsive classrooms that honor difference, support relationships, and align with the inclusive goals of UDL 3.0.

Format: Keynote or Workshop

Audience: All School Staff, Families & Community Members



Turning the Page on Ableism: Using Children's Picture Books to Reimagine Inclusive Classrooms

What messages does our curriculum send about who matters and who belongs? This session invites educators to critically examine how disability is represented—or erased—across school subjects and learning materials. We'll explore how curriculum can either reinforce ableism or serve as a site of resistance, affirmation, and equity.

Grounded in Disability Justice and aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 3.0, this workshop introduces key principles for designing disability-affirming curriculum. We will then apply these principles using children's picture books as a focused case study. Through hands-on analysis, participants will consider how picture books can be used not just as literacy tools, but as transformative curricular resources that reflect and celebrate intersectional disabled lives.

Participants will leave with practical strategies for selecting and adapting materials across subject areas to center disability as part of human diversity—and to build more inclusive classrooms where all students see their identities, experiences, and potential reflected in what they learn.

Format: Keynote or Workshop

Audience: Educators, Service Providers, Leaders, Families

This session can also be adapted for a student audience.

