The University of British Columbia

Transforming inclusive education for students with intellectual disabilities in secondary academic classrooms: a multiple & exploratory case study
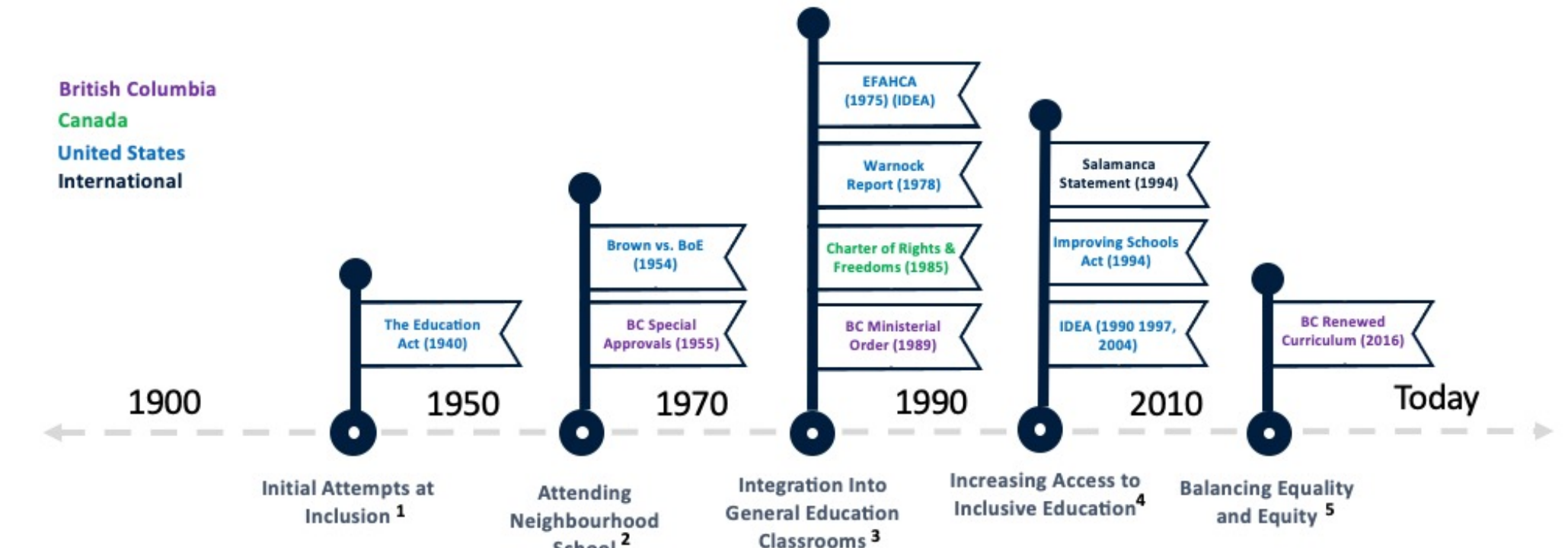
Moore, S., Butler, D., & Schnellert, L. (2023)

Purpose of the Study

Understand how **professional development** (PD) that engages with **inclusive curriculum design approaches** can support **secondary educators** to build inclusive practices that consider **students with intellectual disabilities** (SwIDs) in **academic classrooms**
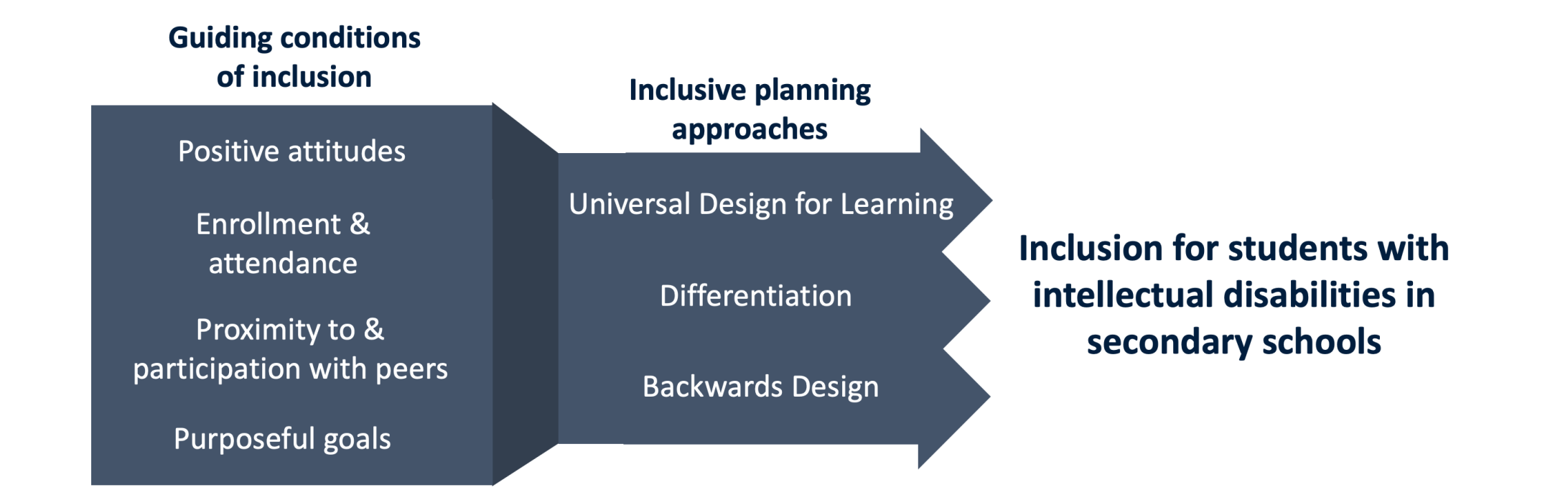
Explore how these design approaches were **experienced by students**

The History & Evolution of Inclusion for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

British Columbia
Canada
United States
International

1900 — 1950 — 1970 — 1990 — 2010 — Today

Initial Attempts at Inclusion [1]
Attending Neighbourhood School [2]
Integration into General Education Classrooms [3]
Increasing Access to Inclusive Education [4]
Balancing Equality and Equity [5]

Theoretical Framework

What does research & literature say about what teachers need to **know** and **do** to foster inclusion for students with intellectual disabilities in secondary schools?

Guiding conditions of inclusion
- Positive attitudes
- Enrollment & attendance
- Proximity to & participation with peers
- Purposeful goals

Inclusive planning approaches
- Universal Design for Learning
- Differentiation
- Backwards Design

Inclusion for students with intellectual disabilities in secondary schools

What does research & literature say about **how** teachers can be supported to shift practices towards inclusion?

Professional development that is
- **Collaborative** Ainscow, 2005; Butler et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Erickson, Minnes et al., 2005; Schnellert & Butler, 2021; Wenger, 1998
- **Situated & on-going** Ainscow, 2005; Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017; Palincsar, 1999; Schnellert & Butler, 2014
- **Inquiry-oriented** Ainscow, 1999; Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Palincsar, 1999; Schnellert & Butler, 2014; Timperley, Halbert & Kaser, 2014
- **Specific to inclusion** Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009; Carter, Sisco, Melekoglu, & Kurkowski, 2007; Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Harrower, 1999, Thousand and Villa, 1995, 2017

Research Questions

Within an inclusion focused, situated, collaborative, and inquiry-oriented PD initiative:

1. How were teachers in secondary academic classrooms aligned to and/or moving towards some *guiding conditions of inclusion* that increase opportunities for SwIDs to be included?

2. In this context, how were teachers moving *towards planning for and enacting practices* for all students in secondary academic classrooms?

3. What are the *experiences of students*, both with and without disabilities in secondary academic classrooms, when teachers were moving towards more inclusive practices?

## Methodology

Instrumental Case Study
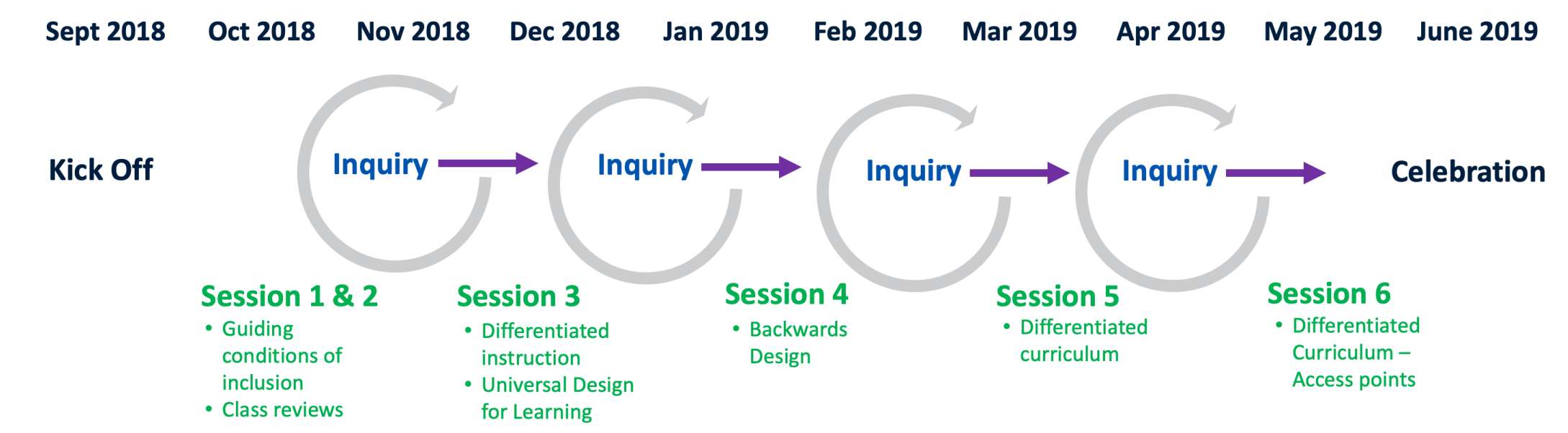(Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014)

Context
Suburban school district in British Columbia with stablished district professional development (PD) focused on inclusive practices and already showing some alignment to guiding conditions of inclusion

Case Studies

- CT & ST both part of the PD
- CT taught a grade level, academic class that included at least one SwID
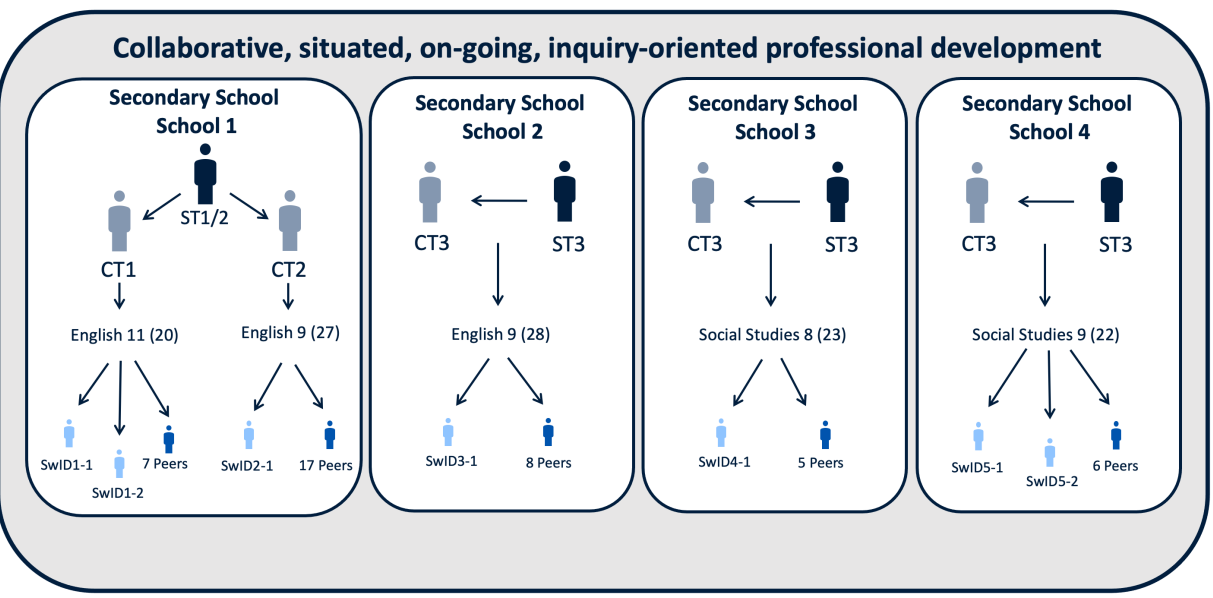
Professional Development Activities

Sept 2018 — Oct 2018 — Nov 2018 — Dec 2018 — Jan 2019 — Feb 2019 — Mar 2019 — Apr 2019 — May 2019 — June 2019

Kick Off — Inquiry — Inquiry — Inquiry — Inquiry — Celebration

- **Session 1 & 2** • Guiding conditions of inclusion • Class reviews
- **Session 3** • Differentiated instruction • Universal Design for Learning
- **Session 4** • Backwards Design
- **Session 5** • Differentiated curriculum
- **Session 6** • Differentiated Curriculum – Access points

Data Collection

Interviews | Observations | Documents | Multimedia

Oct 2018 — Nov 2018 — Dec 2018 — Jan 2019 — Feb 2019 — Mar 2019 — Apr 2019 — May 2019 — June 2019

1. How were teachers in secondary academic classrooms aligned to and/or moving towards some *guiding conditions of inclusion* that increase opportunities for SwIDs to be included?

Teacher attitudes — Exit slips | Individual & team reflection | Post interviews, Exit slips
Student enrollment — Exit slips | Attendance, anecdotal records | Researcher field notes & observations
Student proximity & participation — Seating plans | Photographs | Researcher field notes & observations
Purposeful student goals — IEPs | Individual & team reflection | Curriculum & lesson planning artifacts | Researcher field notes & observations | IEPs

2. How were teachers moving towards *planning for and enacting practices* for all students in secondary academic classrooms?

Teacher practices — Individual & team reflection | Curriculum & lesson planning artifacts | Student artifacts | Post interviews

3. What are the *experiences of students*, both with and without disabilities in secondary academic classrooms, when teachers were moving towards more inclusive practices?

Student experiences — Student artifacts | Student interviews | Researcher field notes & observations
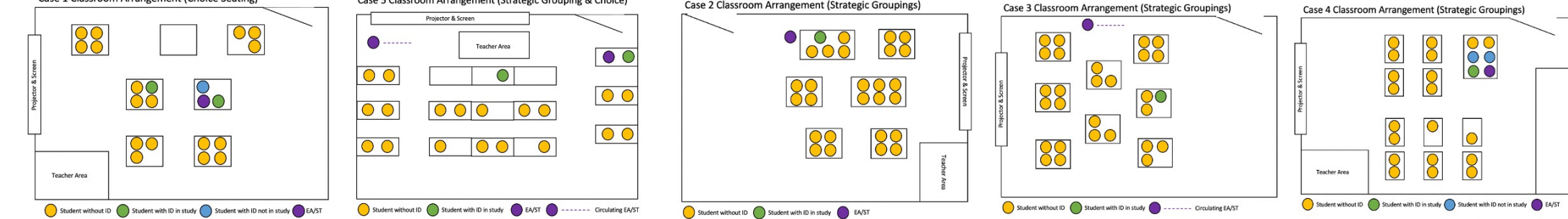
Findings: Q1

Teacher Attitudes

Case	Role	Recognized abilities of SwIDs	Provided opportunities to SwIDs that were similar to peers	Challenged assumptions in themselves and others about SwIDs	Recognized the need for SwIDs to feel a sense of belonging and pride
1	CT1	•	•		•
2	ST1/2	•*	•*		•
	CT2	•	•		•
3	CT3	•	•		•
	ST3	•	•		•
4	CT4	•	•		•
	ST4	•*	•*		•
5	CT5	•	•	•	•
	ST5	•	•		•

Student Enrollment & Attendance

Case	Role	Enrollment based on grade of SwID (elective)	Enrollment based on grade of SwID (academic)	Enrollment based on strengths and/or interest of SwID	Enrollment based on readiness/ capability of SwID
1/2	ST1/2				
3	ST3				
4	ST4	•*	•*		
5	ST5	•*	•*		

Case	Individual need	Arbitrary routine	Competing activities	Lesson complexity
1	•			•
2	•			•
3		•		
4	•	•		•
5	•		•	

Student Proximity to Peers

Peer Participation

		Participation in learning opportunities				Participation in social opportunities		
Case	Role	SwID participated with peers in modified learning activities	SwIDs participated with peers in accessibly designed learning activities	SwIDs participated when receiving learning support from peers	SwIDs participated with peers in shared supports and strategies	SwIDs participated in activities when receiving behavioural/ social support form peers	SwIDs participated in social peer invitations/ peer-initiated activities	SwIDs and peers participated in activities outside of class
1	SwID1-1		•					
	SwID1-2	•	•	•	•		•	•
2	SwID2-1	•	•	•	•		•	•
3	SwID3-1	•	•	•	•		•	•
4	SwID4-1	•	•	•	•		•	•
5	SwID5-1	•	•	•	•		•	•
	SwID5-2							

Purposeful Goals

Finding: There were purposeful goals areas that were targeted by all three sources: Communication skills, peer connections and working together

"It's about teaching students to work together with one another and make contributions to society in the ways that they can." CT3

Finding: Many of the skills targeted for SwIDs, which could be applied class wide – were not. Resulted in many of the IEP goals and objectives being disconnected from the class

"[SwID] will 100% of the time be able to express when he is agitated by a quick glimpse of his schedule to a familiar adult in the Life Skills room by June 2019." SwID5-2

Finding: There were no IEP goals or objectives that addressed the curriculum of the course that SwIDs were enrolled

Findings: Q2

Teachers started to move away from retrofitting planning and practice for individual students

Number of Teachers: 9, 5, 4, 3, 0, 4, 4, 8, 1

Nov — Dec — Apr — June

– Retrofitting Practices   – Inclusive Planning Approaches
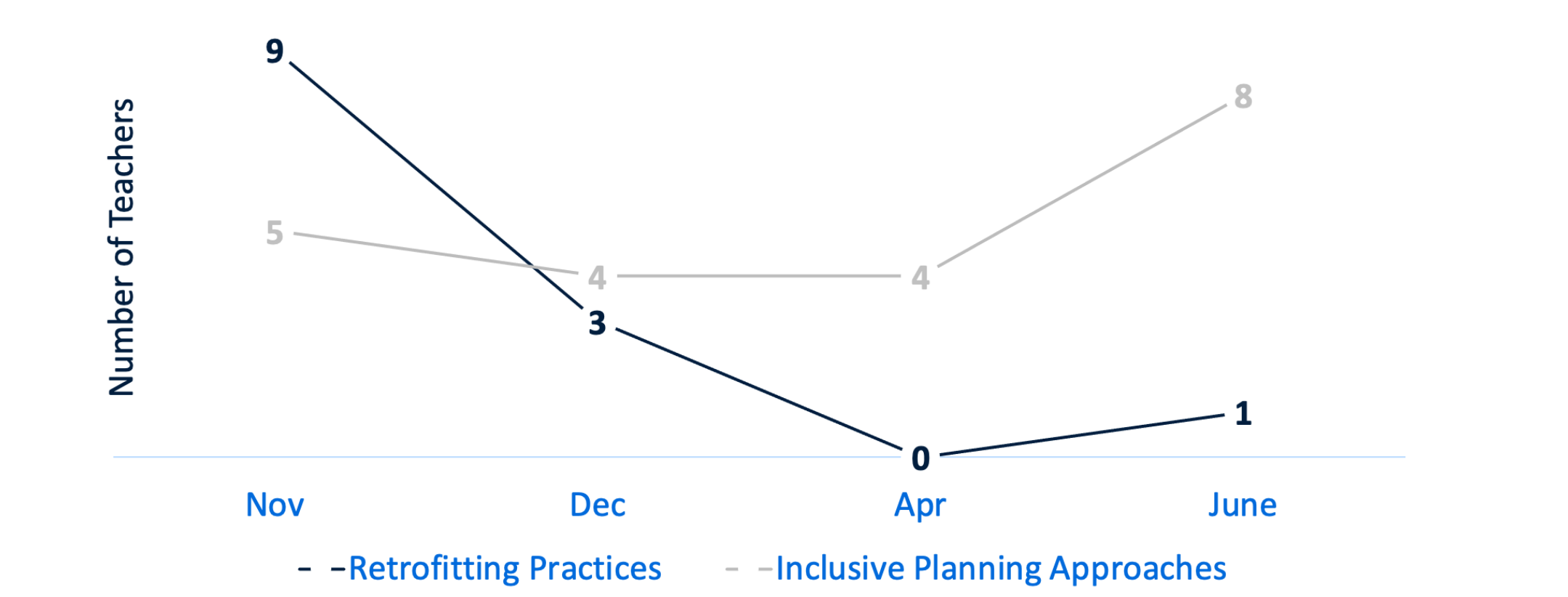
Teachers developed inclusive understandings and practices through collaboration

Findings: Q3

Student Perceptions of Inclusion

SwID *6/6   Peers *29/38   SwD *2/5

Finding: Most students felt included or that their class was inclusive

When I asked SwID2-1 if he liked his class, for example, he squealed and flapped his arms. P2-4, who sat beside him in response said, "that's usually his way of saying that he's happy and excited." — SwID2-1

"If anything, I think [SwID2-1] makes [the class] better. For me, when I see him in the classroom, it makes me happy because it's like, he's being included." — Peers2-1

"it's like you're very self-conscious of your every action, every word. So, I'm very self-aware and I try to act as normal as possible." — P3-1

Finding: Students who shared that they didn't feel included, were also students who had no positive evidence of being supported by, or of peers

"it's like you're very self-conscious of your every action, every word. So, I'm very self-aware and I try to act as normal as possible." — P3-1 Peers

"most of the time, no." — Peer3-5

Case	Student	Total	Equality	Belonging	Competence	Contribution
1	SwID	1/1	1	0	1	1
	Peers	2/2	2	2	2	1
2	SwID	1/1	1	1	0	1
	Peers	17/17	15	15	14	13
3	SwID	1/1	0	0	0	0
	Peers	7/7	6	4	5	5
4	SwID	1/1	0	1	1	1
	Peers	5/5	4	4	3	2
5	SwID	2/2	0	1	1	1
	Peers	5/5	5	4	4	4

Student Experiences of Inclusion
Students found it helpful when instructional practices were accessible

	Making learning relevant	Offering choice and allowing multiple ways to understand and show learning
SwIDs	7/7	7/7
Peers	21/43	29/43

Students found it helpful when learning expectations were clear

	Knowing what to do: Providing examples and explanations	Knowing how to do it: Modelling and scaffolding
SwIDs	6/7	6/7
Peers	24/43	11/43

Implications for the Field

- The promise of PD Structure & Content
- The need to include SwIDs in secondary academic classrooms
- The power of collaboration
- The need to evolve IEPs
- The role of Educational Assistants