



## The Think Inclusive Podcast

### Season 8, Episode 2

#### Shelley Moore | What Is All The Fuss About Baked Potatoes?

##### Shelley Moore (00:00):

Every kid needs a plan A. Some kids need a plan B. The problem was when the plan B becomes the plan A. So plan A is that kids are in a peer grade based cohort, K to 12. They have the same opportunities as everyone. If they're having a day, they need a break, they need to go for a walk -- have a great time. The problem is, is that we don't tell them to come back.

##### Tim Villegas (00:27):

Hello and welcome to season eight, episode two of the Think Inclusive podcast presented by MCIE. I'm your host, Tim Villegas. From everyone at MCIE and Thinking Inclusive, a very happy Thanksgiving to all those listening and celebrating in the United States. As long as everything has gone to plan this episode drops on Thanksgiving morning, perfect for those of you who like to listen to podcasts while cooking. I have fond memories of listening to true crime and music podcasts while I prepped for our Thanksgiving feast last year. Be safe and well everyone.

##### Tim Villegas (01:06):

This podcast features conversations and commentary with thought leaders in inclusive education and community advocacy. Think Inclusive exists to build bridges between parents, educators, and disability rights advocates to promote inclusion for all students. That's right, y'all: all means all. To find out more about who we are and what we do, go to [thinkinclusive.us](http://thinkinclusive.us), the official blog of MCIE and check us out on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

##### Tim Villegas (01:40):

Thank you for joining us for our conversation with Shelley Moore, inclusive education consultant and presenter extraordinaire. We talk about what her path looked like to becoming a special education teacher and why she cares about inclusive education so much. Also, we discuss what the major differences between Canada's educational systems and the United States are regarding special education. And what is all this fuss about baked potatoes and how do they relate to strategic planning for students in the classroom? But before we get to Shelley, when was the last time you visited [thinkinclusive.us](http://thinkinclusive.us)? You might notice that we are no longer using ads on our site, which is fantastic, but it also means that we receive no income. And here's where you can help. Your tax deductible donation will help us expand our reach to people across the United States and the world to promote inclusion for all students. Did you know that just last month we reached over 8,000 page views just from India and the Philippines alone. Go to [bit.ly/mciegive](https://bit.ly/mciegive) to make your donation. Again, that's [bit.ly/mciegive](https://bit.ly/mciegive) to make your donation today. So stick around, after the break, our interview with Shelley Moore.

**Shelley Moore (03:20):**

Hi there. My name is Shelley Moore and you are listening to the Think Inclusive podcast.

**Shelley Moore (03:44):**

All right. Fantastic. So Shelley Moore is from beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia. Shelley is a highly sought after teacher, researcher, speaker, and storyteller that has worked with school districts and community organizations throughout Canada and the United States. Her first book entitled "One Without the Other" was a follow-up to her TedX talk called "Under the Table." She's also the host of the widely popular and beloved Five Moore Minutes video series and companion podcast. Welcome to the Think Inclusive podcast, Shelley.

**Shelley Moore (04:23):**

Thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here.

**Tim Villegas (04:26):**

It's been a long time coming, I feel like.

**Shelley Moore (04:27):**

We have been trying to set this up for years.

**Tim Villegas (04:29):**

I know, I know. Yes. One of the things that I haven't heard, you know, we have seen all of your videos and, you know, I've heard your stories, but one thing that I haven't really heard is your story of how you became a special educator. So I would love to know your path to being a special ed teacher and why you even care about inclusive education.

**Shelley Moore (04:52):**

That's a good one. Okay. Well, to answer that question, we have to go back in time a bit. So let's see here. So I grew up in Alberta, which is above Montana-ish, Idaho. And let's see. So I kind of got to about grade two by just being cute. Do you know what I mean? If you're funny and you're cute and you're nice and you're kind, and, you know, kind of well-behaved, you can kind of like drift through a little bit. But grade three became a little tricky because that's when I had to start like doing a lot of reading and writing, which was very, very difficult for me. So it was grade three that I was diagnosed myself with having a learning disability. And I just, from that point on, was just like, "Schools, like I'm not made for this. I'm not, I'm not made for school." And it just was a struggle, like my poor mother, every single morning, it just was this big struggle. And if I think back, I come just kind of just like: it wasn't, it was like, it's so fascinating too, if I could go back in time and like talk to myself because when I thought about it, it was only school that was the problem.

**Shelley Moore (05:59):**

Like I never felt this way about any other part of my life. I had no problems playing outside. I had no problems with my family and friends, you know, it just was school. I just didn't feel like I fit in. And so I was early pulled out and early recognized how much I hated it. Cause I always felt like it happened during the most fun parts of the day. And it kind of all came to a head in grade seven because in grade seven we go to junior high. It's probably similar, but we'd go from elementary to junior high school. And

so this is the year of that I know that I'm a little disabled. This is the year that I also got a little chubby and the year that I also, you know, realized I was a little gay, it just wasn't the best combination for middle school in a super conservative province.

**Shelley Moore (06:48):**

And so I was just really bullied, really awfully and it kinda just came to a head and I beat up my bully. Like I just was done. Like I was done, I stopped going to school. I was like grade seven dropout. And I remember kind of like being in the principal's office and this is kind of before, like kids were a part of conversations. Right. And I remember sitting in the office and my mom comes out of the principal's office. And so what I hear is, "I just don't think we can meet Shelley's needs in this building." And I always kind of come back to that. And I always think like, "how many parents hear that?" Do you know what I mean? Like, "how many parents hear those words?" And it was devastating for my mom. Like my mom was a single mom. She's like, "well, what am I going to do with her? I mean, she can't just like, I can't homeschool her. She can't just not go to school when she's 12."

**Shelley Moore (07:36):**

And so I was recommended to go to this kind of alternate site school, and I absolutely thrived there. It was cross-grade cohorts. It was the first time that there was any type of inclusive setting. Whereas I didn't feel like it was the only kid with a disability. Right. There were kids with intellectual disabilities there. Everything was inquiry based. Hands-On learning. It just was like all of a sudden you know, it was the first, it was Canada's first Apple technology school. And so it was the first time I had access to technology, which was a game changer for me. And so like all of a sudden I go from absolutely hating school to wanting to be there every single second.

**Shelley Moore (08:16):**

And the reason why I feel like this is part of the story is because I'm now 13 and my mom asks me, she's like, "Shelley," like a few months in she's like, "how do you like your new school?" And I remember like in my 13-year-old brain being like, "Oh, I love it." And she's like, "but you've never liked school. Like, what is it about this school?" And like the 13-year-old self was just like, "I don't know, whatever, it's just the best." But like, I do remember also saying to her, like, "why did I have to go to any other school?" You know? And looking back, I feel like that moment was pretty pivotal for me because if people ask me like, "why does inclusion matter?" And I go back to that moment and I'm just like, yeah, why did I have to go to any other school? But not only that, why did I have to fail so miserably and horribly to finally get to a place where my needs were actually met?

**Shelley Moore (09:03):**

And it kind of like links to this entire like medical model of education where not only did I have to fail in grade seven, I had to like experience crisis and trauma. And when I think about the kids, things that kids are negotiating today, like school cannot also be a place of crisis and trauma. And so when I think about this, and if I think about kind of the big things that made that school meaningful: community, showing my learning in different ways, access to technology, flexibility, choice. And I'm like, why does that have to be an alternate school? And so this became the whole thing. And I'm just like, why isn't that just school for everybody? Like, so why do kids have to fail? Why isn't it the standard status quo what I experienced at this alternate school? And why is that only designed for kids after they have completely dropped out of school?

**Shelley Moore (09:57):**

And I'm just like, it just didn't feel right. And so when I went into special education, I kind of went in with that in mind, that idea of how do I like, like work? I want it to work with kids with my kind of profile. Right? Kind of like those kids that have learning disabilities, some behavior challenges kind of just like that at-risk profile and see if we can meet their needs before they fail. Like, that was kind of my whole thinking and where it kind of turned was this whole, because like, special education, like if you are a trained special educator, you get scooped up pretty fast, you know, in the education field. And so when I first, when I started working I did work with kids with my profile, but it quickly turned into not just kids with my profile, but working with kids with intellectual disabilities.

**Shelley Moore (10:46):**

And that's where my path split into this. Oh, I've been thinking about this all wrong. It isn't the kids who are at risk we need to target, it's the kids with intellectual disabilities that we need to target, because if we can make it work for them, everyone else will fall into place, which is where the bowling metaphor came from. And so it kind of was like this long convoluted journey of me struggling in school and leading into this, wait a second, wait a second... Who are we actually designing for? And that's turned into this incredible career of trying to make this work better for more kids.

**Tim Villegas (11:25):**

What do you think are the major differences between, you know, how y'all do it in BC or Canada and how we do it in the U.S.?

**Shelley Moore (11:35):**

That's a good question, because it is quite local here as well. So like, you guys have your States, we have our provinces and our education is a provincial mandate. I think probably the biggest difference is that we're less standardized, right? And even across Canada in general, BC is the least standardized. And it's interesting because there's a strong correlation between BC also being the most inclusive. And so, you know, in a standardized system, you know, in BC just last year, like we don't need, we don't have any standardized exams K to 12 anymore. So things like this. And so what that allows for is a whole bunch more room and flexibility to focus on growth, as opposed to these kind of like benchmark standards that are actually quite narrow. And so our efforts can be less on "let's achieve standard" to "let's help kids move between a standards based window." Right?

**Shelley Moore (12:34):**

And in the work that I've done across Canada, for sure. It's not like that everywhere, but even in terms of the standardization and this high stakes testing in Canada, even our highest isn't what you guys have to negotiate. And if I think about, you know, like I was interviewed for a magazine for the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, and they said like, "what do you think is one of the biggest barriers to inclusion?" And I said, "you know, a lot of people will say time, money, people, but I actually think it's bigger than that. Like, there's these kind of abelist infrastructures that still exist and in a standardized system where the underlying assumption is that everyone needs to be the same, that goes directly against this idea of valuing and reaching diversity that includes ability." Right. And so I think that there's a piece of that, for sure.

**Shelley Moore (13:26):**

That being said, like, we have a long ways to go. I mean, like there's, there's pockets of brilliance everywhere I've gone, whether that's Canada or America. And that comes from innovation, that comes from creativity, that comes from the vision often of leaders. But at the same time I think that there are, we navigate different barriers, but there's still barriers nonetheless. Does that kinda make sense?

**Tim Villegas (13:51):**

Absolutely. Yeah. That makes sense. And you're right. That isn't a very common answer to that question. It's typically "time, resources, mindset." I hear mindset a lot which are all barriers, of course.

**Shelley Moore (14:08):**

But they're not deal-breakers.

**Tim Villegas (14:08):**

That's true.

**Shelley Moore (14:08):**

Well, you could have like two schools across the street from the other, with the exact same resources, the exact same population, and one can be inclusive and the other one isn't. And so, and this is kind of what I'm trying to communicate, especially now with like the anti-racism movement that's kind of going across North America, which is very good where you realize that, of course there's barriers, right, to anti-racism, but the ultimate barrier is the discrimination and the mindset that no resources can change.

**Tim Villegas (14:42):**

So I just briefly, I wanted to go back to something you said about inclusion, inclusive education, being more flexible than people think. Because I run into this all the time. I'm sure you do too. The assumption that, "Oh, well Shelley believes that everyone should be in general education class, regular classrooms, 100% of the time, no matter what."

**Shelley Moore (15:09):**

Okay. Here's how I'm going to explain this. Okay. Every kid needs a plan A. Some kids need a plan B. The problem was when the plan B becomes the plan A. So plan A is that kids are in a peer grade based cohort, K to 12. They have the same opportunities as everyone. If they're having a day, they need a break, they need to go for a walk -- have a great time. The problem is, is that we don't tell them to come back. The problem isn't that kids leave, it's that they never come back from their walks, from their therapeutic programs, from their reading. They don't come back. And so I'm just like, okay, I can appreciate the kids need breaks. But like, what if we like, this is how I, this is what I tell people.

**Shelley Moore (16:02):**

I'm just like, "if a kid is on your list, you need to start with them, you need to end with them, and you need to know where they're at in the middle. You need to know where they're going, why they're going. And when they're coming back, whether that's for five minutes, whether that's for two days, whether that's for a year." Because I feel like there's this whole, "this kid doesn't fit, we're going to let them go." And then the conversation is over. And so like, I can totally appreciate that kids are going to have an off day. I totally get that. And so what I kind of think is I can understand there might be multiple spaces for

kids to be successful. The problem is that when being enrolled in a classroom with your grade-like peers is not even plan B, it's plan Zed, because we believe this readiness model.

**Shelley Moore (16:45):**

I'm not naive to think that nobody needs time to do something that explicitly meets the needs of a certain area. Whether that's crisis, whether that's regulation. I mean, I hate saying reading, cause I just think it could be met in other way, but I get it. It happens, right? That's not the problem. The problem is that people are just like, "they're not ready. So they can't be there." If they are there and they leave -- nothing. There's no question around why they're leaving. And so then they never go back or that place where they go becomes the place they go to all the time now. Right. And I think about like, this is like a family, like your classroom with your peers is your family. Sometimes we go here. Sometimes we go here. Sometimes we're in groups, sometimes we're over here, but we start together, we end together. Every lesson, every day, every week, every year, because that's where you belong. And where kids home base is is where we're communicating they belong. Are we increasing the places where kids feel like they belong or are we decreasing the places where kids feel like they belong? And is their home base with their cohort? Period. And if they're having a hard time with that cohort, we need to support the cohort, not the individual. Right. And I know people want a black and white answer, but I don't have one.

**Tim Villegas (18:08):**

I'm okay with that

**Shelley Moore (18:10):**

Because it might be different. We have to be responsive. Ugh.

**Tim Villegas (18:15):**

Let's talk about, do you want to talk about bowling and baked potatoes? Or are you done with that?

**Shelley Moore (18:20):**

You know, we can talk about, let's talk about big potatoes. Okay. Cause I think that's a big part of the "how" that people have a question about.

**Tim Villegas (18:27):**

Okay. Let's talk about baked potatoes. So Shelley, tell me about baked potatoes

**Shelley Moore (18:32):**

Really quickly. How I was taught to teach was this. So I was trained secondary trained. And so my kind of like general education class that I taught was math eight. Okay. And this is how I was taught to teach: you, get your curriculum, you make your plan, and then the kids show up and you teach them. But the assumption is that those kids are ready for that plan, but we know not everyone, not everyone is where they should be. And some kids are beyond where they could be and all of these things. And so then we're most like, "Oh man, now I have to adapt and modify for all these kids." But as our classrooms get more diverse, there's this misunderstanding of workload, that every kid who doesn't fit needs an individual plan, right. Which every time someone makes a new plan, the workload of a teacher increases exponentially.

**Shelley Moore (19:24):**

And so, you know, we make this like grade eight math plan, assuming it's the majority of kids, but in actuality it's probably for less than half. Right? And so then the big question is, well, how do we do this in a way that's manageable? And so when we actually look at a grade level plan, then the assumption is, well, then if they're at a grade two level, we need to make a grade two plan and a grade three plan. And I have to reteach K to seven, again, too much work that's too much work. And so what the big potato is, is it's about it's called strategic planning, which is rather than reteaching K to seven, I'm going to make grade eight math accessible and challenging in one plan. Okay. And so what that looks at is it moves away from where kids should be to where kids are and where they could be.

**Shelley Moore (20:12):**

And so rather than looking at the average or where kids should be, you look at the range of where they are, they're going to capture the average within there. But then the assumption you're making is that you have a range instead of making the assumption that everyone is where they should be. Right. And because you're designing for a range, it's, you're creating a scaffold. So more kids can actually move and get to grade level than actually relying on kind of a deficit based retrofit practice of taking things away. So the metaphor that I use to explain this is a baked potato, and so I think, okay, so if we were to plan grade eight, not considering who's there, that's like saying every single one of my students are going to eat a fully loaded baked potato. And I can be really passionate about this. And the students come in and I give them their potato.

**Shelley Moore (20:57):**

And then you realize that half your class aren't eating it because they don't eat meat. And another group of kids aren't eating it because they can't have dairy. And so then we have to get these EAs and support staff to come in and pick off the bacon bits and try and get the melted butter off this hot potato, which is impossible. But in the meantime, people are waiting, they're waiting for these retrofit supports. And in order to realize that the kids need that support, they have to show that they can't eat. Right. And what would kids rather do than show that they can't do something, have challenging behavior. So the potatoes are being thrown around. Okay.

**Shelley Moore (21:33):**

So the first thing I understand with the baked potato is that there's a better way to do it because when you're looking at this, the goal is actually not to eat a fully loaded baked potato. The goal is to eat a baked potato. And if you can kind of zoom back and say, this is the concept, you realize that there's an infinite amount of combinations of baked potatoes that you can design for without designing individual baked potatoes. So then you have to start with not what kids can't do, but start with, well, what can everybody eat in the baked potato? The potato! It's the biggest, it's the most important concept. If that's all kids eat, they're going to be okay, they're getting enough food to move forward, right? It's the most important information. That's going to be enough for some kids, it's minimal, but it's enough. The problem is if we assume that kids already have that A or B, we only serve the potato. Okay.

**Shelley Moore (22:24):**

So now we're going to, everyone's going to get the potato. And now we're going to show everyone the possible combinations of topics. I'm gonna teach everyone about bacon bits. I'm gonna teach everyone about sour cream, teach everyone about butter and chili, all these options, which represent levels of complexity, right? So your potato or your concept is not simple. It's big. Like, "what is change," right?

"Who Am I?" And then your toppings are adding on complexity from the same goal. So it's not differentiation cause you're not choosing, "I'm only eating scallions." Right? Everyone starts with the potato. Some kids might have the potato and butter. Some kids might have the potato, butter, and sour cream. Kids will vary in complexity, but everyone will have enough. Everyone has the essential understanding. They have the big idea enough to carry them forward. And so when I'm working through planning, let's not plan for individual potatoes. Let's look at in your math lesson, what's the most important information. It's still grade level, but it's essential and it's so important.

**Shelley Moore (23:29):**

And they're going to be like, "okay, well, how do we add on complexity from there?" But here's the part that's important. Cause I saw some like ability grouping starting to happen. Like the potatoes are over here and the cheese are over here. No, no, no, no, no. Everyone gets the potato. But everyone also has to learn about all the toppings. So even a kid doesn't eat meat, they still need to learn about bacon bits. And the joke is because they're going to learn that bacon bits have no meat in them. Do you know what I mean? They still need to learn about what's possible because that's the equity piece. That's the high expectations piece. But then the agency pieces, you decide what goes on your potato. As an educator, my job was to show you the options, not make those decisions for you. And so a big part of this inclusive conversation is that we're in charge of the plan, but it's also starting to hand over control for kids to be in charge of their complexity and their goals that they're meeting.

**Tim Villegas (24:15):**

Well, we're almost out of time. Let me sign off. Oh, before I sign off, can you just you know, share with everyone where they can find you and all that stuff?

**Shelley Moore (24:27):**

Yeah. So I'm, I'm very easy to find. I am on all social media, so you can find me on Twitter [@tweetsomemoore](#), you can find me on Instagram [@fivemooreminutes](#). [Fivemooreminutes.com](#) also has links to all the videos, all of the resources. You can search [fivemooreminutes in the YouTube](#) channel to see the videos. What else? I think it's between fivemooreminutes and tweetsomemoore. You're going to, you're going to find me. Very easy, very easy to find. Or just type in "Shelley More Bowling." It will come up.

**Tim Villegas (24:59):**

Yep, yep. Send it to all your friends and buy your book "One Without the Other," which is fantastic.

**Shelley Moore (25:06):**

"One Without the Other." And the next one is coming up in the spring called "All for One."

**Tim Villegas (25:13):**

Perfect. Okay. Well, Shelly Moore, thank you so much for being on the podcast with us today.

**Shelley Moore (25:17):**

Thanks for having me.



**Tim Villegas (25:21):**

If you would like to hear the entire one-hour unedited recording of our conversation with Shelley Moore, it's easy to do. Become a Patreon subscriber. Here's what you missed. We talked about why disabled lives matter, what the real barriers to inclusion are, the difference between scaffolding and differentiation, baby Moore, where she really records those awesome videos, the top three most influential people in her life, and what her special interest is. And spoilers: it is not indie music. Just go to [patreon.com/thinkinclusivepodcast](https://patreon.com/thinkinclusivepodcast) and select the one, five, or \$10 per-month tier. And you will have access to Shelley's interview along with 10 hours of unfiltered interviews from past guests. Subscribe to the Think Inclusive podcast via Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, or on the Anchor app. And while you were there, give us a review, so more people can find us. In fact, it's Thanksgiving, tell your family about us and let them know that they can learn more about inclusive education listening to the Think Inclusive podcast.

**Tim Villegas (26:47):**

Have a question or comment? Email us at [podcast@thinkinclusive.us](mailto:podcast@thinkinclusive.us). We love to know that you're listening. Thank you to patrons, Tori D., Veronica E., and Kathleen T. For their continued support of the podcast, as well as our \$1 and \$5 per-month subscribers. Every little bit helps. This podcast is a production of MCIE, where we envision a society where neighborhood schools welcome all learners and create the foundation for inclusive communities. Learn more at [mcie.org](https://mcie.org). Next month, we will be producing a very special "best of" podcast. I've always wanted to do one of these. So make sure you look out in your podcast feed for that one. Thanks for your time and attention. Until next time.

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