Building Adult Capacity to Support Executive Functioning: A Universal Design for Learning Approach — A Literature Review

Krista L. Bryson[1], Synthia MacEachern[1], Terri Jackson[1], and Cinthya Guzman[2]
[1]Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island
[2]Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Prince Edward Island

Abstract: This literature review examines how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can inform capacity-building initiatives that strengthen adults' understanding of executive functioning (EF) in neurodiverse populations. Drawing from current research in neuroscience, education, and adult learning, this paper explores EF development across the lifespan and its connection to academic success, mental health, and well-being. The review identifies four key stakeholder groups—educators, neurodiverse adults, parents and caregivers of neurodiverse children, and pre-service teachers—and synthesizes strategies that foster reflection, self-regulation, and skill transfer within each group. Integrating UDL principles with evidence-based adult learning and community engagement frameworks, such as Communities of Practice (CoPs), provides an inclusive model for developing EF capacity across diverse learners. This synthesis offers a foundation for an ongoing three-year study "Building Capacity for Executive Functioning Support in Neurodiverse Communities," and highlights opportunities to translate research into accessible, strengths-based practice.

Keywords: Executive Functioning, Neurodiversity, Universal Design for Learning, Adult Education, Capacity Building, Community of Practice

Introduction

This project explores how adults build the capacity to understand and support executive functioning (EF) skills—an area of growing importance across educational, family, and community contexts. To capture the complexity of this work, the study brings together four stakeholder groups: parents and caregivers of children with executive functioning challenges (e.g., children with learning disabilities), neurodiverse adults, educators, and pre-service teachers. Their diverse experiences highlight the need for capacity-building approaches that are responsive, flexible, and grounded in adult-learning principles. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) offers a promising pathway, as it provides a structure that can accommodate varied learner profiles while promoting agency, accessibility, and inclusion (CAST, 2024).

While lectures remain a prevalent method of delivering instructional content to adults, such passive approaches are often misaligned with adult learning theory (Palis & Quiros, 2014). Adult learners benefit most from instructional experiences that are relevant, goal-oriented, interactive, and connected to their prior knowledge and lived experiences. Adult learners are motivated when they can exercise autonomy and when learning addresses immediate, real-world problems (Will, 2020). Within this framework, the educator's role shifts from knowledge transmitter to facilitator supporting learners in constructing meaning, promoting reflection, and practically applying new knowledge.

In K–12 education, UDL is widely recognized as a framework to support responsive instruction to diverse learners, integrating the principles of neuroscience and speaking to a design that offers multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression. Each design dimension considers access, support, and executive function, aiming to foster agency in ways that are purposeful and reflective, resourceful and authentic, and grounded in strategic, action-oriented learning (CAST, 2024). Importantly, UDL does not replace the need for individualized support (Novak, 2023); rather, it provides a flexible framework through which the design of working, learning, living, and social environments support as many individuals as possible. In this project, embedding UDL principles means creating a foundation that supports broad accessibility while recognizing that some differentiation will still be necessary.

Situated in Prince Edward Island, Canada, this study is part of a broader collaboration between the Learning Disabilities Association of PEI, ADHD PEI, and the University of Prince Edward Island. While the research is locally grounded, the intersection of adult learning, executive functioning, and UDL frameworks positions its findings to contribute meaningfully to international conversations about inclusive education and lifelong learning.

The Neuroscience of Executive Functions

Defining Executive Functioning

Executive functions are a set of higher-order cognitive skills essential for goal-directed behaviour (D'Intino, 2023; Wijbenga, 2024). These include, but are not limited to, planning and organizing, sustaining attention, working memory, and flexible thinking, which form the foundation for learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and self-regulation (D'Intino, 2023). Creating goals, controlling impulses, and demonstrating resilience are critical components that make EF skills strong predictors of success as children progress through the PreK-12 educational system (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2017; D'Intino, 2023).

Developmental Context and Neuroscience Foundation

EF development begins in utero and continues throughout childhood, with significant growth in early life (up to age six), during adolescence, and again in young adulthood (D'Intino, 2023; Low et al., 2021). The Brain Story curriculum, developed jointly by the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative and the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, synthesizes decades of interdisciplinary research showing how early experiences shape brain architecture and the neural circuits that underlie self-regulation and higher-order thinking (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2017). The framework centers on the serve-and-return model of responsive interactions between child and caregiver that provides scaffolding for healthy cognitive, emotional, and social development.

The Brain Story curriculum also distinguishes between positive or tolerable stress, which can be buffered by supportive relationships, and toxic stress, where unmitigated adversity disrupts developing EF circuits and undermines long-term well-being (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2017). To promote resilience, the framework recommends three evidence-based strategies, including reducing exposure to toxic stress, strengthening responsive caregiving, and cultivating core life skills through scaffolded activities.

Real-World Educational Impact

Developmental differences shaped by positive, tolerable, and toxic stress often become visible when children enter school. For example, children with strong EF skills tend to show resilience, creativity, collaboration, self-regulation, and focus, which helps them navigate daily learning effectively (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2021; Low et al., 2021). In contrast, a child whose caregiver struggles with organization or self-regulation may experience an intergenerational cycle where they arrive at school lacking foundational EF skills. Without intervention, this can lead to ongoing struggles with building and sustaining relationships, learning, and behaviour (D'Intino, 2023; Low et al., 2021).

Academic and Social Outcomes

Underdeveloped executive functioning skills create measurable consequences across educational and social systems. Research consistently shows that children and youth with poor EF skills often demonstrate reduced resilience, increased impulsivity, and difficulties with emotional regulation (Low et al., 2021; Wijbenga et al., 2024). For example, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of youth aged 10–18 reveal that lower EF performance predicts poorer academic achievement and higher rates of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms, which can persist into adulthood (Wijbenga et al., 2024). When EF skills are underdeveloped, adolescents may struggle to manage interpersonal relationships and make sound decisions, resulting in patterns such as verbal or physical aggression, unsafe driving, substance experimentation, and other forms of excessive risk-taking that compromise health and well-being. Over time, lower self-control and limited emotional regulation often leads to increased substance use, more conflict with authority, and diminished life satisfaction.

The *Emotional Problems and Academic Performance* study, conducted among over 2,500 undergraduate students in the Netherlands, demonstrated that EF skills, specifically cognitive inhibition, planning, sustained attention, task initiation, and time management mediate the relationship between emotional problems and academic outcomes. Despite the study's strong sample size and robust mediation analysis, its cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and its university-aged population suggests that these difficulties extend beyond childhood, reinforcing the long-term impact of EF deficits (Wijbenga et al., 2024).

Similarly, findings from New Zealand and international contexts indicate that early EF development (particularly within the first six years of life) plays a critical role in later cognitive flexibility, learning capacity, and self-control (Hood & Macann, 2024). The *Searching for Utopia* report highlights how increasing mental health challenges, socio-economic inequities, and early exposure to screen time are linked to poorer EF, weaker oral language development, and reduced readiness for formal learning among children aged three and under. While most research to date has focused on Western educational contexts, these patterns are consistently observed across diverse cultural and socio-economic settings, suggesting that the relationship between EF skills and well-being has broad, cross-contextual relevance.

Collectively, this body of work converges on the view that EF skills are foundational for learning, mental health, and life outcomes: early-development research emphasizes how stress and caregiver relationships shape brain architecture and self-regulation (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, 2017; Low et al., 2021), while longitudinal and cross-sectional studies in adolescence and young adulthood highlight EF as a key mechanism linking emotional difficulties to academic performance and well-being (Hood & Macann, 2024; Wijbenga et al., 2024). At the same time, these studies differ in age focus, methodology, and the extent to which they address cultural and socio-economic context, resulting in a fragmented picture of how EF is actually built and supported over time. This fragmentation reveals a critical gap: we still know relatively little about longitudinal, culturally responsive, and neurodiversity-affirming approaches that intentionally develop EF capacity across the lifespan, particularly with and for adult learners.

Although this study focuses on adult learners, understanding EF development in adolescence provides essential context. *Adult learners* are typically defined as individuals aged 18 and older who engage in formal or informal learning beyond secondary education (Knowles et al., 2015). This broad category includes *emerging adults* (roughly ages 18-29), who are transitioning into independent roles, as well as older adults re-engaging with learning for professional or personal development. Adult learning theory distinguishes adult learners from children and adolescents through a greater capacity for self-direction, goal orientation, and integration of prior life experiences into new learning (Knowles et al., 2015; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Understanding EF during adolescence remains vital because many neurodivergent individuals first experience significant EF challenges during this period, when academic expectations, social relationships grow more intense, and identity development intensifies (Beck Wells, 2022; Fitzgerald et al., 2022). These struggles are frequently misinterpreted or mischaracterized as laziness, oppositional behaviour, or lack of motivation, rather than as manifestations of ongoing cognitive development and environmental mismatch (Hinshaw & Scheffler, 2014; McCormack et al., 2023). Such misinterpretations can create enduring internal narratives of inadequacy or failure that persist into adulthood, undermining agency, mental health, and self-regulation (Beck Wells, 2022; Fitzgerald et al., 2022).

Recent scholarship has increasingly shifted from deficit-based interpretations of adolescent and adult EF challenges toward more nuanced, strength-oriented understandings of neurodiversity and lifelong executive functioning. This reflects broader developments in neurodiversity studies emphasizing social context and agency (Novak, 2023; Ravinchandren & Cavaye, 2021; Rosqvist, Chown, & Stenning, 2020). By examining this formative developmental period, adult learners can reflect on the continuity between adolescent and adult experiences: neurodiverse adults can identify patterns in their own EF development, while parents and educators gain insight into the lived experiences of neurodiverse teens. Understanding the developmental and social dynamics of EF in adolescence is therefore foundational to adult learners' capacity to affirm, scaffold, and support EF across the lifespan.

These developmental insights carry directly into the postsecondary years, where many individuals encounter heightened EF demands amid increasing mental health pressure. Mental health challenges among undergraduate students have risen sharply over the past decade, both globally and within Canada, creating significant barriers to academic success. Recent studies estimate that nearly one in three university students worldwide experience symptoms of anxiety or depression, with similar rates in Canadian postsecondary institutions (Sheldon et al., 2021; CASA, 2022). In this paper, *mental health* refers to a state of well-being in which individuals can realize their abilities, cope with normal stresses, work productively, and contribute to their communities (World Health Organization, 2022). Within higher education, student mental health is shaped by the interplay of personal resilience, social connection, and the institutional environment (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Sheldon et al., 2015). Here, academic success encompasses

achievement, persistence, engagement, and overall well-being, rather than grades alone (York et al., 2015). Emotional difficulties impair EF skills, cognitive processes that are fundamental to learning and self-regulation (Wijbenga, 2024). This produces a destructive cycle: as mental health deteriorates, EFs weaken, which further undermines academic functioning and exacerbates emotional distress. Understanding this reciprocal relationship, and identifying interventions that disrupt it, remains a crucial area for future research.

Current Educational Challenges

While awareness of EF's importance has grown, the literature reveals persistent gaps between research and practice. Grammer and Ahmed (2023) argue that EF research remains dominated by laboratory-based tasks that fail to reflect the dynamic, socially embedded nature of classrooms. Their critique aligns with D'Intino (2023), who similarly notes that EF supports must be integrated into everyday learning environments rather than treated as isolated skill drills. Both call for approaches that position teachers as partners in research, yet few studies meaningfully incorporate educators' perspectives or co-develop tools that reflect real-world pedagogy.

At the same time, scholars diverge in how they conceptualize EF support. Some emphasize measurement and developmental trajectories, while others foreground instructional design, environmental scaffolding, or social–emotional context. This fragmentation has produced a landscape rich in insights but lacking cohesion, particularly regarding how EF skills can be cultivated across the lifespan, not only in early childhood or adolescence.

Together, these tensions point to a clear gap: existing research rarely examines EF development through culturally responsive, adult-learning frameworks, nor does it explore how adults themselves can build EF capacity through community-based, experiential, and strengths-focused approaches. This study responds directly to that gap by centering adult learners' experiences and identifying design principles that support EF growth across diverse stakeholder groups.

Differentiating Supports

This project aims to support a diverse community of adult learners, including neurodiverse adults, the parents and caregivers of neurodiverse children, educators, and pre-service teachers, embedding the principles of UDL as a foundational structure for access (CAST, 2024). At the same time, differentiation remains essential to ensure accessibility for all learners. The following subsections outline strategies for each stakeholder group.

Neurodiverse Adults

Addressing key EF components such as working memory, planning, and self-regulation extends UDL's benefits to neurodiverse adults (Beck Wells, 2022). Strengths-based approaches that focus on self-awareness, adaptive strategy use, and environmental scaffolding have been shown to improve self-regulation and daily functioning in adults with ADHD and learning disabilities. Such approaches translate effectively into practice through targeted skill instruction. Examples include explicit instruction in goal setting, cognitive reframing, and metacognitive reflection, as well as psychosocial or psychoeducational programs that combine skill instruction with emotional support (Ross-Gordon, 2024). Ravinchandren and Cavaye (2021) emphasize that life-skills-based education, rooted in practical, interactive, and evidence-informed strategies, can foster EF growth by embedding learning in meaningful, real-world contexts.

Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in supporting children's development and learning (Yang et al., 2021). Effective capacity-building initiatives provide practical strategies that strengthen parent-child interactions and help build emotional regulation (Steinbrenner et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2015). Importantly, these initiatives must be sensitive to family diversity and the realities of caregiving, recognizing that not all children are supported by parents alone. Facilitators should prioritize flexibility, positivity, and sustainability, avoiding overwhelming families with complex or impractical content (Grandisson et al., 2023). Coaching models that allow caregivers to practice skills in real-life settings enhance self-efficacy and help build mutually supportive relationships among families (Brown et al., 2025; Charlop et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2022; Fragasso & Pomey, 2021; Proctor et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021).

Educators

For the purposes of this study, the term *educators* encompasses all individuals working with students within the K–12 education system, including school administrators (e.g., principals and vice principals), classroom teachers, and support personnel such as educational assistants, youth service workers, and other non-teaching professionals. To

reduce the knowledge–doing gap, capacity-building for educators should prioritize job-embedded, collaborative professional learning—such as peer observation, coaching cycles, and co-teaching—that strengthen teacher self-efficacy and improve student outcomes (EdWeek, 2022; Hamsho et al., 2024; McKeown, 2005). For educators working with neurodiverse adolescents, this includes learning to identify how EF challenges manifest in behaviour and designing supports aligned with developmental trajectories and individual strengths (Hinshaw & Scheffler, 2014). A UDL-based professional learning framework promotes an iterative approach, allowing educators to co-design, test, and refine inclusive practices that foster sustainable systemic change (Grant, 2018; Jackson, 2025).

Pre-Service Teachers

Teacher preparation programs must cultivate both confidence and competence in inclusive instruction, which are capacities that cannot be meaningfully developed through one-off workshops or short orientation sessions. While brief professional learning may enhance technical understanding, research consistently shows it has limited impact on long-term pedagogical change or teacher self-efficacy (Lee & Vega, 2005; Maushak et al., 2000). A recent scoping review of pre-service teachers' beliefs about UDL revealed that practice-based engagement with the framework helps foster adaptive, equitable, and flexible pedagogy, pointing to UDL's value in shaping inclusive teaching orientations from the outset of teacher development (Han & Lei, 2025). Embedding UDL principles into coursework and field experiences, supported by guided reflections, coursework, and opportunities for iterative lesson design builds pre-service teachers' ability to anticipate learner variability rather than respond reactively (Barahona et al., 2023; Jackson et al., 2025). UDL's flexible, reflective, and evidence-based design makes it an effective capacity-building framework that helps pre-service teachers connect theory to practice, develop adaptive expertise, and cultivate the confidence needed to support diverse learners.

Communities of Practice as a Universally Designed Capacity-Building Structure

Research consistently indicates that communities of practice (CoPs) are an effective model for professional learning, wherein "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and can deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2022, p. 4). CoPs foster growth through practice (learning by doing), community (belonging), meaning (experience), and identity (becoming) (Wenger, 1998). These qualities make CoPs an ideal structure for this project, aligning naturally with UDL and adult learning theory through shared emphasis on autonomy, collaboration, and relevance (Guskey, 2002; Quillinan et al., 2018). Building successful CoPs requires time and trust, and their benefits make them an ideal framework for this project (Bouchamma et al., 2018; Kerno, 2008). For the purposes of this project, a CoP supports a UDL approach to capacity building.

Limitations and Future Directions

As the Learning Disability Association of Prince Edward Island, ADHD PEI, and the University of Prince Edward Island Faculty of Education prepare for their three-year journey into adult capacity-building, a CoP can help meet their diverse needs. Facilitators should ensure sessions include practice, collaboration, and mentoring opportunities among stakeholder groups, emphasizing real-world application. The planning team should consider structuring sessions to foster collaboration among stakeholder groups, ensuring each has an aligned mentor they can connect with between sessions for coaching and implementation support, and ensuring sessions are focused on real-world application for each stakeholder group. Facilitators must also consider the limitations of the existing neurodiversity research, including variability across populations and systemic barriers that impact lived experience. However, these challenges should be approached from an asset-oriented perspective highlighting resilience and capability. In creating sessions that speak to each of the four stakeholder groups, the project facilitation team must ground its capacity-building approaches in neuroscience, UDL, and adult learning principles. This review outlines a framework for building inclusive EF capacity among diverse adult learnings.

REFERENCES

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, & Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (n.d.). *The Brain Story narrative*. Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/what-we-know/the-brain-story/

Beck Wells, M. (2022). Supporting higher education students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder through Universal Design for Learning. *College Teaching*, *72*(3), 227–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2022.2160959

Brown, L. E., Tallon, M., Kendall, G., Boyes, M., & Myers, B. (2025). A novel ADHD parenting program to improve parent-child attachment: A mixed methods feasibility study. *Neurodiversity*, 3, Article 1340443. https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330251340443

Max, A. & Water, R. (2018). *Breaking down barriers: Mental health and Canadian post-secondary students* [Policy brief]. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. https://www.casa-acae.com/

D'Intino, J. (2023). Evaluating the rationale and evidence supporting executive functions skills instruction in the classroom: A critical review. *Psychology in the Schools, 60*(5), 1125–1148. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22825

Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E., & Hunt, J. B. (2009). Mental health and academic success in college. *The BE Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy, 9*(1). https://doi.org/10.2202/1935-1682.2191

Fitzgerald, C., Hebron, J., & Male, D. (2022). Hope in neurodiverse adolescents: Disparities and correlates. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2022.2051081

Grammer, J. K., & Ahmed, S. F. (2023). Informing the development of school-based strategies to promote children's executive function skills: Considerations, challenges, and future directions. *Mind, Brain, and Education, 17*(4), 383-390. https://doi.org/10.1111/mbe.12362

Grandisson, M., Martin-Roy, S., Marcotte, J., Milot, É., Girard, R., Jasmin, E., Fauteux, C., & Bergeron, J. (2023). Building families' capacities: Community forums with parents and cccupational therapists. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy. Revue canadienne d'ergotherapie, 90*(2), 197–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/00084174231160972

Hamsho, N., Eisenhower, A., Galligan, M., Collier-Meek, M. A., Bolourian, Y., Levinson, S., & Blacher, J. (2024). Drawing on key partner perspectives of an autism-focused professional development program: A conceptual framework for coaching. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 34*(1), 14–43. https://doi/10.1080/10474412.2023.2262450

Han, C., & Lei, J. (2024). Teachers' and students' beliefs towards Universal Design for Learning framework: A scoping review. *Sage Open, 14*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241272032

Hart, N. (2025). *Pause… breathe & stretch: Creating an evidence-based yoga resource for mainstream schools* [Master's thesis, The University of Edinburgh]. Moray House PhD Thesis Collection. https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/43332

Jackson, T. (2025). The implementation of the Ontario Language Curriculum 2023: Educator initial impressions. *Language and Literacy, 27*(2), 39–61. https://doi.org/10.20360/langandlit29737

Knowles, M. (2020, February 22). Six principles of andragogy. *Brilliant Learning Systems.* https://brilliantlearningsystems.com/six-principles-of-andragogy-malcolm-knowles/

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., III, & Swanson, R. A. (2015*). The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Novak, K. (2023). *UDL now! A teacher's guide to applying universal design for learning in today's classrooms* (3rd ed.). CAST Professional Publishing.

Low, F., Gluckman, P., & Poulton, R. (2021). Executive functions: A crucial but overlooked factor for lifelong wellbeing. *Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures*. https://informedfutures.org

McKeown, L. (2005). Bridging the knowing-doing gap: Action learning for teacher professional learning that leads to changed practice. *Action Learning and Action Research Journal, 10*(2), 84–90.

Merriam, S. B., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2020). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Quigley, E., & Gallagher, T. (2025). Neurodiversity and higher education: Double masking by neurodivergent students. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 1–17. https://doi/10.1080/08856257.2025.2511369

Palis, A. G., & Quiros, P. A. (2014). Adult learning principles and presentation pearls. Middle East African journal of ophthalmology, 21(2), 114–122. https://doi.org/10.4103/0974-9233.129748

Proctor, K., Patel, M., Krishna, D., Venkatachalapathy, N., Brien, M., & Langlois, S. (2024). A capacity-building intervention for parents of children with disabilities in rural South India. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 150*, 104766. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2024.104766

Ravichandren, N., & Cavaye, A. (2021). Benefits of life skill-based education for neurodiverse adults: An integrative review and analysis. *World Journal of Educational Research. 8*, 21. 10.22158/wjer.v8n4p21

Rosqvist, H. B., Chown, N., & Stenning, A. (Eds.). (2020*). Neurodiversity studies: A new critical paradigm.* Routledge.

Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2024). Learning disabilities and the adult learner. *Update on Adult Learning Theory, 2024*(184), 46-55. https://doi-org/10.1002/ace.20542

Sheldon E., Simmonds-Buckley M., Bone C., Mascarenhas T., Chan N., Wincott M., Gleeson H., Sow K., Hind D.,

& Barkham M. (2021). Prevalence and risk factors for mental health problems in university undergraduate students: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 287*, 282-292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.03.054

Wijbenga, L., van der Velde, J., Korevaar, E. L., Reijneveld, S. A., Hofstra, J., & de Winter, A. F. (2024). Emotional problems and academic performance: The role of executive functioning skills in undergraduate students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 48*(2), 196–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2023.2300393

Wong, F.K.C., Leung, V.W.Y., Chong, W.W.Y., Hung, J.H.C., Wong, F., Leung, C., & Tsang, A.K.T. (2024). Capacity-building program for parents of children with SEN: A randomized controlled trial. *Research on Social Work Practice, 35*(4), 358-371. https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315241237210

World Health Organization. (2022). *World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all*. WHO. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338

Yang, H.-W., Meadan, H., & Ostrosky, M. M. (2021). A parent-implemented gross motor intervention for young children with disabilities. *Journal of Early Intervention, 43*(3), 275-290. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815121993570

York, T. T., Gibson, C., & Rankin, S. (2015). Defining and measuring academic success. Practical Assessment, *Research & Evaluation, 20*(5), 1–20.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Krista Bryson: Krista Bryson is a PhD student in Educational Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island and a research assistant on a multi-year study examining capacity building and executive functioning among neurodiverse adults, parents, and educators. Her own doctoral research investigates how agency, equity, creativity, and social justice can be cultivated through inclusive and community-driven approaches to secondary music education. In addition to her work as an educator and curriculum developer, she presents workshops for educators on neurodiversity and advocates for creative, socially-just approaches that promote equity and agency in education.

Synthia MacEachern: Synthia MacEachern is a PhD student in Educational Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, where she researches the embodiment of global citizenship education through the Orff Schulwerk approach and serves as a research assistant on a study exploring the development of executive functioning in neurodiverse adults. As a sessional lecturer at UPEI, she teaches courses in global education, arts and social transformation, and music education while supervising teaching internships. A published author with F Flat Publishing, MacEachern has created educational resources including the "Just Orffin' Around" recorder series, and her scholarly work has appeared in the Canadian Music Educator Journal, Education in the North, and the Canadian Journal of Education. She has presented at national and international conferences, served as President of the Prince Edward Island Music Educators Association (2021-2023), and founded and directs the St. Francis Youth Ensemble, demonstrating her commitment to bridging academic research with community music education.

Terri Jackson: Dr. Terri Jackson is an assistant professor at the University of Prince Edward Island. Terri has over two decades of experience in education, much of which is in the field of inclusive education. Her research interests include inclusive education, neurodiversity, teacher education, and capacity-building.

Cinthya Guzman: Cinthya Guzman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at the University of Prince Edward Island, where she teaches courses in sociological theory, qualitative methods, and introductory sociology. She completed her PhD in Sociology at the University of Toronto (2025), where her dissertation examined the sociology of emotions with a focus on boredom in settled and unsettled times. Her research explores the intersections of emotions, mental health, and social life, investigating how feelings like boredom shape identity, meaning-making, and wellbeing in contemporary society. Her scholarly work has been published in the *European Journal of Sociology*, *The American Sociologist*, and *Canadian Review of Sociology*, and she has written for public audiences on topics such as routine disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. She serves as a Council Member of the American Sociological Association's Teaching & Learning Section (2024-2027).