



Pictured left to right: Back row: Kristin Kappelmann, Jaea Conde, Kay Lambert, Vanessa Ross, Rizza Wood
Front row: Teresa Winterstein, Maria Anderson, Danielle Richmond, Brittany Stapley, Liberty Pham. (Not pictured Edén Apilan & Louise Graham)

Concordia's official Watch Party was Saturday, February 4th, for the 2022-2023 Virtual Special Education Network for Inclusion Association (SENIA). SENIA is a vibrant network that connects experts to parents and teachers, to the benefit of students by promoting advocacy, connection and inclusion. Concordia teachers and administrators gathered together to participate in presentations and discussions around many topics including teaching exceptional learners, social emotional regulation, and brain development. This gathering advanced SENIA's purpose of working together to create a world "where every individual is supported, resources are accessible, potential is maximized and action is inspired."

<https://www.seniainternational.org/>

Thoughts from the Attendees

Attendee Brittany Stapley shared, "...inclusion is a big topic. It is very involved and includes a huge range of learners. It is amazing to see these presenters who have dedicated their lives to one small corner of the vast room of inclusion. And yet it seems like we have barely scratched the surface of all there is to know about this topic. I can't want to dig in deeper, listen to some presenters again, listen to new presentations and see how I can even one small strategy back to my classroom. To

start, I think I will start doing Mindset Mondays as that seems like an approachable, actionable start to help my students.”

Attendee Maria Anderson appreciated the experts sharing on how best to support twice exceptional students. In Sam Young’s presentation, "What do Kids Want to Know About Their Brains?" He raised the point that oftentimes we don't even know what we don't know, which, from the title itself, would intrigue most children as they seek to learn more about themselves. The idea that there is a mainstream and "their stream" adds to further understanding of their dual exceptionalities. Clearly, making healthy connections, such as in their interest area, aligns with the thinking of keynote speaker, Temple Grandin. Mr. Young shared a quote, "Human beings are emotional creatures who think, not thinking creatures who emote", which alludes to the idea that we must like what we do, have interest in what we do, and with whom we do it. I was also drawn to the idea of mentoring to support socializing, helping students to understand that they are not alone in the way they think, in the exceptional talents which they possess, nor in the exceptional ways in which they feel and react to things.

Conference attendee Jaea Conde added, “During our weekend watch party, I found great value in understanding the importance of PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS and how we can motivate our students to think and envision a bright future for themselves where they will thrive in the career path they'll choose. At the same time, understanding that times are changing and our students are changing is VERY IMPORTANT. We have to understand the basic principles and skills our students need to thrive in life and at the same time provide them with various opportunities to use these in the modern society/times. We have to be able to explore and update our methods/content in teaching to cater to our great-mind learners in these modern times; without comprising a lot of the basics.

GREAT MINDS ARE NOT ALL THE SAME; BUT GREAT MINDS WHO THINK ALIKE, HANGOUT TOGETHER AND DO GREAT THINGS TOGETHER.

As teachers/guides, what can we do to help great minds achieve great things!”



Experts on a variety of topics held sessions that were recorded and accessible to attendees for several months after the live Zoom session happened. This year, some of our Concordia teachers joined the live Zoom sessions in December, others watched presentations independently, and then the group met together to watch some more of the presentations and share in conversation in order to further strengthen their knowledge and practice.