

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Hello, hello everyone! Welcome to the Assembling Inclusion podcast. I'm here today with a slightly different format than typical for our show. Next week is the ISTE conference! If you haven't heard of ISTE, it stands for International Society for Technology in Education. Every year they have a huge conference. It's one of the world's most comprehensive edtech events. If we go off of last year's conference statistics, there were over 16,000 participants who came in-person, over 82 countries in attendance, over 1500 sessions and over 1000 expo hall booths-- just for some perspective as to just how big this conference is in the world of education. This year, the conference is held in Denver, Colorado.

ISTE is hands down my favorite conference of the year. And while I will not be attending in-person this year-- I'll only be presenting and attending sessions virtually from my home-- I wanted to do a little celebration in honor of the conference. You might be wondering what this has to do with disability inclusion. Well, there are special education, assistive technology, adaptive technology, inclusion, and Universal Design for Learning session strands within the conference program. I wanted to take a moment and highlight some of these sessions and the presenters that will be facilitating them.

We are talking with four presenters who are presenting a variety of sessions, all with supporting all learners at their center. These are not the only sessions about special education and inclusion. If you're using the Program Search, you can filter to find other sessions that also address these topics. But as you're creating your session schedule, which I know is the hardest part of attending because there are so many amazing sessions, I wanted to spotlight a few sessions that might be of interest to you.

I'm also doing a session on artificial intelligence and the Universal Design for Learning framework. I'm presenting virtually on Sunday morning at 8:00 AM Mountain Time. We're going to be going over how to use generative AI tools like Google Gemini, ChatGPT, and Microsoft CoPilot to help plan units and lessons that support all learners.

The four presenters we're featuring today are helping to lead the charge to make education and learning accessible for all students. So, let's jump right in to hear from those presenters. First up is Katie Fielding.

[Music]

Katie Fielding:

Hi, I'm Katie Fielding and I am just new to the Book Creator team, but I'm a long time educator of 20 years. I was just my district STEM coach. And so I'm really excited to be going to ISTE this year and sharing a lot of accessibility content. I'll be doing an Ignite session on accessibility, as well as working in the accessibility playground. So, I'm really excited for those two sessions, as well as a session I'm doing on Universal Design for Learning and Book Creator.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Awesome, so you're gonna have a lot of different, you know inclusion focused sessions, which I'm really excited about. Can you tell us a little bit about each of those sessions and kind of what you're hoping that participants will get out of them?

Katie Fielding:

So, the Ignite session-- if you've never been to an Ignite, it is 20 slides, 15 seconds, very fast paced-- so, I am really just hoping to get people to be aware of the need for accessibility in their classroom, for the need of the awareness of the variability of students and the needs that they might have in their classroom, and three quick takeaways of something they can do. In my a little bit longer session at the playground, the accessibility playground, which is on Tuesday of ISTE, I'll be kind of doing a similar presentation, but much longer-- not 15 seconds a slide-- going definitely more in depth into some of those concepts that I'll be talking about at the Ignite. And then in my session on UDL and Book Creator, I'll be showing just how great Book Creator is to support UDL implementation in your classroom.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And now I'm really upset that I'm not going to be on site because I would love to check out each of those sessions. The ignites are so much fun, very high pressure, but so important that you're gonna be getting that information out there to so many people all at once.

Katie Fielding:

Yeah, I'm really excited about it. I am definitely practicing, practicing, practicing. That timing...

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That timing is critical, but I like that you're doing the longer session, too, so you can really get more in depth with what people need to know about accessibility.

Katie Fielding:

Yeah, and I'm excited for the accessibility playground in general. Jason Trinh is running that and definitely something to check out. It's going to be lots of good speakers there in that space.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That's always a good time. The accessibility playground is always-- I always walk away with something new. It's a good space to be in. So, getting more on a personal level, I guess, what was your inspiration behind wanting to propose and develop these sessions for ISTE this year?

Katie Fielding:

Yeah, I've been doing disability advocacy basically my whole life. So, I was born with cystic fibrosis, which is a lung disease, a genetic disease. And I've been so fortunate to have been able to make a career. Many people with CF, you know, don't live as long as I have, or don't have as much capability of having a career because you're balancing so much with your medical care. And fortunately, our communities had, like, a great miracle in the past 5 years of this medicine called Trikafta-- changed the game for a lot of us. And so now that, like, all that time that I was really investing in advocating for my personal, like, disabled community, I've now

transferred to advocating for all disabled students in classrooms to try and make those spaces just more acceptable for everyone.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I love the connection between your personal life experience and the work you're doing and then bringing it back into students, as well. I just think the takeaways you're going to be sharing are so important and every teacher-- really any educator in general-- really needs to have an understanding of how to support everybody in their classroom.

Katie Fielding:

Yeah, I really hope so. From, like, tech leaders and making sure they're picking the right tools that are accessible for all students to the classroom teacher and just understanding all the features that might benefit some students. Everyone definitely has a role to play in the accessibility game. And so, just like amplifying the message of making sure accessibility is something that every educator is thinking about is really important to me.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Definitely. I hope that everybody takes that away from the session too, because I always have the same thing. People always said, "Well, I'm not a special education teacher." And it's like, "Well, you're educating students. Are you not?"

Katie Fielding:

Everyone has a role to play in this. Everyone for sure. I agree.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I know you mentioned that you're having a couple of key takeaways from the ignite and you're going to expand in your longer session, but what's something that you really hope the participants will walk away fully understanding once your session is finished?

Katie Fielding:

I mean, I hope they walk away with empathy if they didn't have it before. That's, like, ultimately the key to making change is to make sure that people feel empathy for every... I like to think it's maybe not great to say, but I think of, like, our students as users, right? We are designing experiences that they're using to learn. And so, when I want to think about it, I want our teachers to be empathetic to their students, their users, for the learning experiences they're designing and make sure they're designing with everyone in mind. That's really what I hope that their takeaway is-- is that they're designing because that's what teachers are. We're designers. We're making experiences and just like any product designer or any artist. You want the biggest audience to buy your work, right? And so, if we're thinking of, like, our students, their engagement is their purchase of our work. Like, the more accessible we make it, the more students are going to be engaged. And then the more success we are supporting in all of those students. So, that's really what I think about, like, and I hope they take away.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And I hope so, as well. Cause I think that that makes a lot of sense to think of them as users within that experience. You know, you want to make sure that all of your users are considered when you're designing. I mean, in the same way that a company would, when you're designing a product, same way for a classroom. You don't want it to just fit a target number of students. You want to open it up to everybody.

Katie Fielding:

Yeah, I think teachers can learn a lot from like UX designers, you know, your user experience designers and thinking about all the ways that someone can experience that lesson that they are creating.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

In addition to your sessions, because I know we talked about this before a little bit, but since I'm not going to be at ISTE Live in person, I still like to talk about it anyway. What are you most looking forward to with attending this year?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Oh, well, my biggest, like, personality trait, or if you do those kind of tests, is learner. Like, I'm always just looking to learn more from my peers. And so, those small conversations in the hallway, where I'm getting to see people and catch up, and just hearing about the latest and greatest things that are happening in their classrooms and their learning spaces, that's what I'm looking forward to the most.

Katie Fielding:

That's always the best time. The conversations in the hallway are just... I feel like those are always the best experiences.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Yes. Yes. The sessions are great too. But then I think the follow up questions and follow up conversations can be really a great way to carry the conference outside the conference, because that's the point, right? We're not just supposed to go there and keep everything there. We're supposed to take it back with us. And I think, for me as a learner, like, I process through teaching. And so in a conversation with someone else and learning and having that dialogue back and forth, like, that's embedding that learning for me personally to make it something I take action on when I get home.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I connect with that so much. That is exactly how I feel when I learned something new. That's how I best understand it is by either further discussing it with somebody else and then bringing it back into my own practice. That's perfect. And, as a whole, as like my last question for you, just as, like, you know, a wrap up, if our listeners want to learn more about you and your work that you're doing, how can they get in touch with you and learn more?

Katie Fielding:

Yeah, I am at Katie K-A-T-I-E-F on X. And you can find me by searching my name on LinkedIn. And those are probably good things to get in touch with me.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And remind me, if our listeners are attending ISTE Live in person, do you remember what days and times your sessions are?

Katie Fielding:

The playground is on Tuesday evening and my Ignite and my Book Creator session are both on Wednesday morning. And if you just want to stop by, you also find me at the Book Creator session or the Book Creator booth. And I'll also be working the ISTE certification room because I'm ISTE certified trainer. And so, I'll be supporting that room all day Tuesday, as well. So, if you're in there, you'll see me.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Awesome. Thank you so much, Katie, for just sharing a little bit about your session with us. And I'm excited to hear how it goes.

Katie Fielding:

Thanks so much for having me. It's been great.

[Music]

Next up, we're talking to Susan Aplin (App-lin). Susan is the District Instructional Specialist in Lexington Richland 5 and will be presenting a session called "UDL in Action in the K-12 Classroom" at ISTE this year.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

So, can you tell us a little bit about the session that you're going to be presenting at ISTE this year?

Susan Aplin:

It's really going to be a brief overview of the UDL guidelines. So, if someone's new, they'll kind of get a glimpse at it, and if they're familiar, it'll be a refresher, hopefully. And then I'm including examples of UDL from classrooms across my district, so that people can see and talk about what it really looks like when you're using it in the classroom. And my presentation is going to be delivered via Lumio by SMART. So, it's intended to be interactive and very engaging.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I appreciate that you're going to do just the brief overview first of UDL, because even as somebody who uses it so frequently, it's always nice to get that refresher. And those examples I'm sure are going to be fantastic because I can't get enough of anytime somebody shows me a real life example of something. It's a perfect way to get people to start bringing it to their classroom.

Susan Aplin:

Yeah, because that's one of the questions I have a lot of times when I work with UDL people, they're like, "what does it look like? Like, I get the concepts, but what does this mean in practice?" So, I'm excited to bring that to more people.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Do you have a specific inspiration that led you to propose and develop this session?

Susan Aplin:

I really just love, love, love Universal Design for Learning. And in my district, I've kind of become the unofficial, like, UDL expert. It's not in my title anywhere, but I've developed and taught graduate classes and I do a lot of PD and I coach teachers and I do observations and like, it's just become a lens through which I think instruction and what goes on in a classroom, you can really make a difference and I just love it. So, the more times I can talk about it, the happier I am.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I love that. I'm a big fan of UDL, as well. I don't get to bring it into my role as often as I would like, but I appreciate anytime somebody has as much enthusiasm for it as I do. So, I'm really grateful that you're sharing about it. Do you have a specific target audience in mind, like, thinking about who might be attending the session or who the session might be good for? I know you mentioned before, you know, that it could be anybody of varying levels of understanding of UDL, but are there specific targeted roles in mind?

Susan Aplin:

I feel like it seems a little bit like cheating to say anyone, but part of what I hope to do is personalize the session a little bit, depending on who's in the audience. And that's one of the reasons I use the interactive pieces, because I kind of want to know who's there, so I can cater that. I think an actual classroom teacher could kind of get some examples, but I also think a coach could see, "Hey, if I'm trying to help someone else, this is what this looks like." And then I also feel like administrators, if they're there, helping them kind of bridge that gap between maybe professional development they're doing for their schools on this and then what they want to see when they walk in classrooms and seeing it live in class. If you're a super, super big expert, this might be a little more, you know, beginning for you, but maybe some of the examples would still be something you hadn't seen. So, I welcome anyone who wants to come.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

No, and I think that's great to be able to say it's open to anybody. You know, there are some sessions that are so targeted for specific roles, but I like anytime that it's got that broad overarching reach, which UDL so often does, because it really does touch every single role in, you know, an education system. So, from the teachers to the coaches, the administrators, to the coordinators, to the directors, you know, every role in some way can be impacted by UDL. So, I think that's great that you have that broad outreach for your session.

Susan Aplin:

It's not focused on any particular, like, tool or platform, then. That means it's open to, you know, like, if you work in a Microsoft district or you're a Google or you're whatever-- it really doesn't matter because we're talking kind of about what this looks like, the tool you use is what you bring on to make it happen, but we're going to look at how we make it happen.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That's really important because I think that's one of my sticking points sometimes with technology sessions. And I, you know, I've fallen into that trap sometimes where it becomes overly reliant on, like, "I'm a Google school and this is what it looks like in a Google district," but I like that it's the concept, not the tool. I think that's going to be really impactful for everybody. And speaking of impact, what do you hope that your attendees will take away when they leave your session?

Susan Aplin:

I really would hope that they could walk away with at least one practical idea that they could decide to potentially implement. And I'd love for them to have a better understanding of UDL. I will talk integrated-- obviously, of course, into it is a little bit about ed tech tools. So maybe thinking about how the tools that they have could support this approach. It might not be the ones that I happen to talk about, but I think that practical idea paired with how is the technology that's available to me in my school or my district going to help me support this new... or might not be new for everyone-- it might just be, like, recommitting to it or revisiting it, but how could my technology help with that?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Even if they are already thinking about UDL, it's always great to have that, you know, kind of refresher in your mind of like, "You know what? You're right, I've gotten away from this and I need to bring my practice back to UDL centered." So, leading into that, are there any specific overall outcomes or impacts that you hope that your session will have on a larger scale?

Susan Aplin:

I really think-- one of the struggles that some people have, I think, with UDL or when you're first getting into it is that it seems so big, like there's so many pieces to it, there's so many resources and there's so much out there. And so what I hope is that maybe the people that come and the discussions that get sparked from it is that it really is about it being a mindset. And the key things that I talk about a lot are addressing barriers, and being more flexible. So, if you could take that philosophy and just when you're looking and you're designing your instruction, or you're coaching a teacher into designing a lesson, like, just having those small things that I think makes such a big impact, how are you addressing barriers? How are we meeting the needs of all the students that are in the room? And how are we maybe being a little more flexible in what we're doing?

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That's a nice way to sum it up, too, because I do think that-- I love UDL, but like, when you're presenting, you know, multiple means of action and expression, multiple means of representation, people get really overwhelmed by the process. So, I like that you broke it into barriers and flexibility. It's an easy entryway into it, but it's still beneficial for students at the same time. So, in addition to your sessions, what are you most looking forward to this year?

Susan Aplin:

This will be my second in person ISTE, and, coincidentally, the last one I attended was in Denver, in 2016. So, to me, that's what ISTE represents, it's in Denver, but really, the people. Again, sort of as cheesy as that sound, making the connections. People that I know locally who will be going, it'll be great to kind of see them in a different environment and make connections, but, I have learned so much from people online, mainly through Twitter or X that, you know, that's my main connection that I've met so many people virtually, and I love being able to then get to see them in person and learn from them. And then I really think I also appreciate getting to see the vendors and get updates on some of the tools that we use in my district to be able to have some training. I like how so many of them in the booths, they bring in educators to do training as well as the people who work from the companies that you get that nice mix of the how to, but the application piece. So, I think those are the two things I'm really looking forward to.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

The vendor space in ISTE is so amazing, and I appreciate that connection between the employee of the company, then bringing in the teacher who's actually using it. It's a great way to kind of have a better understanding. How can listeners learn more about you and the work that you're doing?

Susan Aplin:

Like I said, I'm pretty active on-- I still call it Twitter. My handle is AplinEdu, A-P-L-I-N-E-D-U. And that's really the main way to connect with me. Like, if I write a blog post for a company or I do something, like, that's where I put it all out there. So, that's really the best way.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And I'll make sure to link your profile in the show notes for our listeners. I still call it Twitter, too. Can you remind us the date and the time for your session for our listeners who are attending, in person.

Susan Aplin:

My session is Monday morning. First thing, 8:30 in the morning. And I think that's a good spot. I hope everyone will get up and get at it, and I hope to see them then.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Love a good morning session. Morning sessions are always great. I'm so energized in the morning. So I'm sure it'll be a great one.

Susan Aplin:

...raring and ready to go.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Well, thank you so much, Susan, for sharing a little bit about your session and we're excited to see how it goes at ISTE.

Susan Aplin:

Thank you so much for having me and I appreciate you pulling these different sessions together under this umbrella of assistive technology.

[Music]

Next up, we're talking to Doris Nhan (Nahn).

Doris Nhan:

My name is Doris Nhan, and I am the K 12 Academic Technology Specialist at McLean School. The name of my session is "Leveraging Technology and Choice to Reach Students with Learning Differences."

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Can you tell us a little bit about the session you're going to be presenting at ISTE this year?

Doris Nhan:

My session is really focusing on how educators can use technology mindfully and choice to reach students who have learning differences or learning challenges, as we like to say. Those include things like students with ADHD, students on the spectrum, students who have executive functioning disorders, dyslexia, dyscalculia, students who have anxiety. So, anybody who learns differently often benefits from a different approach to using technology and introducing choice in the classroom. So, that's really the crux of the presentation is how do we incorporate all those things into the classroom in a way that's meaningful for those kids, but also reaches other kids, as well.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

So, there's a wide range of different, you know, people who could benefit from learning about your session. then. Was there a specific inspiration that led you to want to propose and develop this session for the conference?

Doris Nhan:

So, McLean School serves this particular population. Our bread and butter is really students who have challenges in the classroom, often mild to moderate. So, the students who could use a little bit of extra help, or maybe get lost in the fray because they don't need as much help as other kids, but they still need more help than maybe your neurotypical students, those are the kids that our school serves. And so, this is sort of an area where I've worked my entire career at

McLean. It's sort of a niche in the sense that the way we teach and the way that our best practices are, they've evolved to accommodate these kinds of kids. And a lot of conversations that I've had with educators who are in different classrooms that are different populations than ours, often struggle with how to differentiate themselves in ways that are meaningful. My inspiration really came from finding ways to make it easy for teachers to reach students, to save them time, but also make them more effective as educators.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I love that because that's where my heart is. I taught that population of students for the most part. I mean, year to year it varied, but for the most part, it was my students who tended to fall through the cracks, and they didn't realize until later on that they needed more support, and then I was trying to support them in an inclusion classroom. So, I love the inspiration and I'm excited for, you know, the different strategies that you're going to be sharing. Is there a specific audience that you have in mind? Is there a specific, you know, grade level or role in a school district that you think would be important? Or is it kind of like everybody can benefit from this session?

Doris Nhan:

I think the way that I targeted the session was really for classroom teachers, particularly for general education teachers. The idea is that you can take some of these strategies and some of these ideas and implement them into your classroom tomorrow. I guess my intention was for classroom teachers to benefit, although I think anybody could probably benefit from it. I taught 6th grade for a long time, taught 5th grade, too. So, my expertise is in the middle grades, though I've taught K through 12 at this point. So, I think a lot of them can be extrapolated for any grade level, although like I said, my expertise is in the middle grades. But I do think that some of these strategies can easily be adapted to any grade.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I was a middle grade teacher, too. That makes me so happy.

Doris Nhan:

Special population, those kiddos.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

They were the best. Sixth grade. Love it so much. I really think the middle grade examples are always nice and I do the same exact thing where I always tend to stay in that zone because that's where I spent the most time in my career. But you can scale up or scale back to the lower elementary, too. That's kind of a nice spot because you really can adjust strategies to fit any grade level at that point.

Doris Nhan:

Yeah, in my role, I'm the K 12 academic technologist, so our school is K 12. So, if anybody has questions about how they could differentiate it or scaffold it for the little ones versus the older students, I'm happy to discuss it, too.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I know you have a lot of different strategies you're probably going to be sharing. Is there a specific key takeaway or a couple key takeaways that you're hoping that the audience will take away from attending your session?

Doris Nhan:

My session is a poster session. So, I won't be doing a full presentation, like, from beginning to end. The intention is that, I'm hoping that people will come with questions or have a specific goal in mind to answer. My presentation focuses on how to implement choice and then also, tips and strategies to implement technology. So, my biggest takeaway is then, as I'm hoping people will get is just ways to make technology accessible for students with learning challenges, and then also how to effectively create that flexibility in order to have choice and let students kind of make those choices, which can be kind of scary. It's a different way of thinking. If you're really used to that direct instruction, and so I hope that just teachers will leave with just one or two strategies of how they can make it more student centered than perhaps what their classroom is right now.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I think the poster session really lends itself well for taking away those key strategies. I spend the most time at ISTE at the posters usually because it's just so easy to be able to grab what you need and to take away things that you could apply right, like you said, right to your classroom right away. So, I think that's gonna be a really nice format for this type of session. I'm excited that more teachers are gonna be learning about choice, too. Because I feel like that is scary for a lot of people. So, hopefully they come away with some positive feelings toward it.

Doris Nhan:

Yes

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

So, in addition to your session, what are you most excited about for ISTE this year?

Doris Nhan:

I'm excited to connect with other educators, and other people in my similar role. I feel like teaching is such a bubble sometimes. You're spending 8 hours with kids and then maybe a few hours here and there with your colleagues. Even then you're sort of in this little bubble of, like, your grade level or the people that are next to you. And so I find going to places, going to conferences like ISTE is like taking a breath of fresh air and realizing that you're not in it alone, and to find that kind of camaraderie and the sense of community amongst educators. So, I'm excited to get that energy back and get started for the new year.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That is always a nice feeling-- the connection with people. And I think that is the biggest piece. I mean, especially if you are-- like there's one of me in my district, like as a tech coordinator. It's nice to be able to connect to people in similar positions who are experiencing similar issues or

have worked through similar issues . That's definitely the best part about attending and there's so many people to be able to connect with too, which is great.

Doris Nhan:

Right, yeah.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

So, how can listeners learn more about you and the work that you're doing? Do you have, like, any social feeds or anything or just how can they learn more about your work?

Doris Nhan:

I do not have social media related to my work. Mostly just for time. It's one of those things, right? You have to choose as an educator. You have to choose what to create boundaries with, and so I fully admire and use teachers who are on social media, but that's just not something that I have. But teachers are more than welcome to shoot me an email, set up time to talk if they want to follow up more with my experiences and my work at McLean School. I think my email address is-- it's on my presentation, but I think it's on, like, the ISTE directory, too. People are more than welcome to email me and reach out if they ever need to connect. and I'm happy to have conversations that way.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I think you're right. There is in the app. I feel like there's a directory of everybody who's attending. So, that's a great way to connect.

Doris Nhan:

Come to my session and then you can have a conversation.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Even better. See, there's nothing better than that face to face connection. And as somebody who's professional Instagram is non-existent-- there's like three posts. So, I totally understand. Like I just, there's just no time to get... Twitter, I was a little bit better, but this year has like really fully fall into the wayside. So, I understand.

Doris Nhan:

And I'm the kind of person that, like, it needs to be either really good or nothing, you know. Like, so I can't invest that time. It's just not in the wheel for me.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

It's like a full time job by itself.

Doris Nhan:

I fully admire those educators that can do it.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Me too, me too. So, for our listeners who are like, "Yes, I want to connect and talk about this in person," can you remind us what day your poster session is and what is the block of time for your poster?

Doris Nhan:

My poster session is scheduled for Sunday, June 23rd, from 2 to 3:30 PM. and apparently I am at table 26. Don't quote me on that, but that's where I should be.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And I will put that in the show notes for our listeners in case you want a reminder. And thank you so much for sharing with us about your session. And I'm really excited to, you know, I won't be there in person to hear it and see it, but it sounds like it's going to be a really impactful conversation for everybody who stops by to see the poster.

Doris Nhan:

Yeah, thank you for having me.

[Music]

Finally, we're talking to Devon Caldwell

Devon Caldwell:

My name is Devon Caldwell, and the title of my session at ISTE is "Tech Tools Sprint for Inclusive Classrooms," and I'm presenting that on Monday, June 24th at 2:30 p. m. My current role in education is I'm a kindergarten teacher, but in the past I've also worked as a resource teacher, so primarily early years and resource. I also teach sessionally at a couple of universities in the teacher education programs, as well.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And can you tell us a little bit about the session that you're going to be presenting this year at ISTE?

Devon Caldwell:

Well, as the name would imply, Tech Tools Sprint. It's kind of a fast run through a number of useful tools and approaches that I've integrated in my practice as both a resource teacher and a classroom teacher, and then things that I like to share with pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. So, it's a lot of information in a short amount of time, but my idea with the session is so that people know about it, and they think, "Oh, that would work for me or would work with a student I support." As long as people have an awareness about it, then they have the information to dive a little deeper in.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

I love the idea of a sprint. I am all about the "let's go through a lot of ideas and a quick amount of time," especially at a conference like ISTE. Was there any specific inspiration that led you-- I

know you said you were a resource teacher at one point in time, now you're a kindergarten teacher-- but is there any inspiration that led you to say, "Hey, I want to do this at ISTE."

Devon Caldwell:

Over the years I've learned a lot about how technology can support me in my role as a resource teacher, as a classroom teacher. I've seen the difference that it can make for all learners. And I just wanted to kind of take, like, you know, 20 years of what I've learned in practice and share it with other educators so that that can hopefully impact other teachers and the students they support. So, that was my inspiration for putting it together. And just kind of looking at my session content. It starts off with kind of the tools I've used for productivity as a resource teacher, because we know there's so much case management and meetings and all of those kinds of things that it goes into the tools that I use to support learners. And I'm coming from a Universal Design for Learning lens because I firmly believe that what's good for one student with exceptionalities really should be made available to everyone. Because if that tool is helpful for one, it's often helpful for everyone.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That's great advice. And I wish that's something that more people would kind of absorb into their practice. You know, we've come a long way, but I think there's still a little bit of a disconnect where people think just doing something to support your students with exceptionalities in the classroom, but it's good for everybody. If you bring in a tool, anybody could use it. So, you know, why not bring it in? And is there a specific audience that you have in mind for the session?

Devon Caldwell:

My specific audience would be kindergarten to grade 12 teachers, as well as resource teachers. And I think people who work in teacher education programs would also find it useful. Because regardless of what you're teaching in a teacher education program, especially if it's a methods course, I always like to talk about, "Okay, and how can we support students with exceptionality? How will we make this accessible to everyone?" Something that is like a lens that I use to frame this session, and I already referred to it before, about how if it's good for one student, it's generally good for everyone. But even taking, like the example of Microsoft Immersive Reader, or Google Read & Write, and teachers will often think like, "Oh no, that's just for that one student who is struggling with literacy." But I always talk to teachers about "Well, think about how you learn and how you consume information. Like you might listen to a podcast because you're walking, maybe you choose an audio book because you're driving," and we get to choose the formats that we consume information in, so I think we need to make those formats accessible to everyone. So, that's kind of the lens that is framing my presentation.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That's a great point. You know, it's a great way to bring it to the teachers to help them understand. Cause you're right. I mean, we do, you know, as people in general, go through different avenues to access our learning. We're not all learning the same way. So it's a great perspective to say like, "Look, you do it for yourself. You could also do it for your students." I like

that there's such a wide audience that could benefit from attending your session. Are there any specific-- I know we talked about a couple of different ideas-- but are there any other key takeaways that you hope the audience will walk away with after attending your session?

Devon Caldwell:

I think the big one is just that Universal Design for Learning lens. I think that's really an important message. And also I think it's about trial and error. Like we know that there are a ton of tools out there. And it's deciding on which tools are the best fit for our classroom practice and the learners we support and what tools might be most engaging and interesting for our learners. So, for example, I might not use a lot of podcasts in kindergarten, but perhaps, with middle years or high school students, I might see that. Yeah, like they love using their air pods. They like to use their devices. So maybe if they're able to access content through a podcast or share their learning by creating a podcast, that might be a really good fit for this group. So, I think just the broad awareness of the range of possibilities out there, and then teachers using their own critical thinking skills and knowledge of the students that they support to make decisions about what they might like to try. It can get really overwhelming, but I think if teachers leave my session with one or two ideas they might be interested in implementing next year in their classroom, I'll feel like that's a real win.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

And that's what's kind of really nice about your session overall, is that you're going to be sharing so many different things, allowing teachers to pick and choose what works for them. Because there's nothing I, like, get more frustrated with than having to sit through a session that I'm like, "they showed two things and I knew those two things already." So, even though, you know, there's a lot of options that might be overwhelming, I think it's great that you're going to be showing a wide variety and then teachers can kind of say, "Oh, you know, I didn't think about this. I'm going to take this and bring it into my practice." So it's nice that you're going to be sharing so much information with them.

Devon Caldwell:

Well, I think what's really great about ISTE is lots of the tools I'm talking about are exhibitors at ISTE. So, if something captures your interest, you can go find the Diffit booth or the Lumio booth and ask someone more knowledgeable than me about all the ins and outs of it and really get a plan for how you might implement it in your practice.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

That's a great point. That Expo Hall is amazing. And it's so great to be able to hear about something in a session and be like, "Let me quickly go get a demo, so I can try it out with my teachers or my students." So, that's a great point. And, you know, speaking of great things about attending ISTE, what are you most looking forward to aside from presenting and sharing during your session?

Devon Caldwell:

Oh, well, I'm excited about the expo hall. That is always a big highlight. This year I get to present at the Lumio booth. So, I'm really looking forward to that. And I just think that's going to give me such an opportunity to connect with so many teachers from all over the world. It's all about the connections for me. I love meeting people at conferences. I love, like, finding new collaborative partners for projects. And you're never going to find me at home on a conference night because I fully take in all the social events. They are so much fun. So, I'm, like, really excited for EdTech Karaoke because that was such a highlight last year.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Yes! That's one of the things I'm so bummed about missing this year. That is a staple of the conference and I will be living vicariously through everybody who's attending live because that is a big highlight. It's a great opportunity to connect with so many people from all over the world, really. It's a great opportunity for that. So, how can listeners learn more about you and the work that you're doing? Do you have any socials that you share out of, or a website? Basically how could they follow the work that you're doing?

Devon Caldwell:

A good place to start is find me on Instagram. My best friend and I have, like, a little education consulting business, and we are KG. That's for Kenton Girls, because we're from Kenton. KGEducation.ca. That's on Instagram. That's also our website. So, we spend lots of time on Instagram, so that's a great place to connect with us. You can also find me on Twitter or X as India0309. So, I'm active on social media and I'd love to connect with teachers in those spaces.

Katie Nieves Licwinko:

Perfect. And that's a solid time. Everybody's coming back from lunch. They're ready to keep on going. And that's a great time of day. It's such an energizing conference that I feel like no matter what time you are, somebody's excited to be there. But thank you so much for sharing with us a little bit about your session, and I am excited to hear how it goes.

Devon Caldwell:

Oh, well, thanks so much. It was exciting to talk about it. It's gotten me excited about it.

[Music]

I hope that this episode helped to showcase some session options for everyone who is attending ISTE next week! Remember, you can find additional sessions on special education, diversity and inclusion, adaptive and assistive technologies, and Universal Design for Learning by using the filters in the ISTE program search. If you're attending the conference, I hope you have an amazing time and I'll be living vicariously through each of you through social media.

Check out the show notes for all the session information from our wonderful guests in today's episodes. I'll also be presenting my session on artificial intelligence and Universal Design for Learning on Sunday morning virtually, and I've included that information in there, too.

If you're not attending, or this is the first time you've heard of ISTE, I hope you got some insight into some of the educational topics surrounding inclusion and supporting all learners.

See you next time!