



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

*Why*  
INDIGENOUS  
LITERATURES  
*Matter*

2019

Created for Wilfrid Laurier University Press by  
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## ABOUT THE WRITER

NASTASSIA SUBBAN has been an Elementary and Secondary school teacher with the Toronto District School Board over thirteen years. She is currently a Seconded Faculty Member in York University's Faculty of Education. Nastassia completed a Master of Education that focused on Africentric and transformative learning. She was a curriculum reviewer for the Grade 11 CAS 331: History of Africa and People's of African Descent course and created a curriculum guide for the text *Read, Listen, Tell*. Most recently, her focus has been on creating spaces for teachers to investigate the topic of self-knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

“It’s simple: no truth, no reconciliation.”  
—Justice (p. 159)

This curriculum document was created to supplement the text *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, by Daniel Heath Justice (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018). The message throughout the text is summed up with the quote above; without truth and story there can be neither love nor reconciliation. For generations, settler societies have ignored and buried the stories of marginalized people across North America in order to serve the wants of colonization. In particular, the original keepers of this land have not been listened to, thus hindering our ability as human beings to really connect, love, and build kinship. As Daniel Heath Justice states in his book, “the problem has never been a lack of available options, alternatives for finding meaning and purpose in relationship with one another. What’s too often missing is love in all its forms. Finding common ground that honours justice, embraces the truths of our shared history, and works for better futures takes courage and imagination—but most of all, it takes love” (179).

This curriculum guide is intended for those educators who work from the starting point of love and justice. It is intended for those who are willing to be uncomfortable in order to do what is in the best interests of their students. It is for those educators who recognize their power, privilege, and social location and are willing to be honest about those identities. This guide is for educators ready to hear and listen to the stories of others. This guide is for those educators who want to uncover the true meaning of humanity. Indigenous literatures matter not just because we need to read a different story; Indigenous literatures matter because we need a different mindset and way of being; we need a new story if we are to save this planet.

The text and this curriculum guide pushes us to begin or continue to strengthen intercultural relationships between students and teachers in the classroom through the use of story, so let us begin.

“Our stories are unending connections to past, present, and future. And, even if worse comes to worst and our people forget where we left our stories, the birds will remember and bring them back to us.” —Leanne Howe (Choctaw Nation), “The Story of America: A Tribalography”

**CHAPTER 1**  
**HOW DO WE LEARN TO BE HUMAN?**

**Lesson #1**

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Learning Goals:

- To develop a common understanding of what it means to be human
- To understand what reciprocity is

TASK	INSTRUCTION
<b>Gather</b>	<p>Teacher reads the following quote to the class and hands a copy of it to each student:</p> <p>“Cultures of gratitude must also be cultures of reciprocity. Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream’s gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human’s education is to know those duties and how to perform them.” –Robin Wall Kimmerer, Potawatomi biologist</p> <p>Teacher asks the students questions such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear this quote?</li> <li>2. “An integral part of a human’s education is to know those duties and how to perform them.” What does this mean?</li> <li>3. What does it mean to be human?</li> <li>4. How do you know you are human?</li> <li>5. Who taught you about what it means to be human?</li> </ol>
<b>Synthesize</b>	<p>Students will take the quote and the questions and free write (stream of consciousness) for 10 minutes on their own on whatever comes to mind.</p> <p><a href="https://medium.com/personal-growth/one-exercise-that-will-change-the-way-you-write-forever-13b278f20d17">https://medium.com/personal-growth/one-exercise-that-will-change-the-way-you-write-forever-13b278f20d17</a></p>
<b>Transfer</b>	<p>Students will share their answers with a partner orally and then discuss the questions again in a large group to see if the answers have deepened in thought.</p>
<b>Beyond</b>	<p>Students can edit what they have written.</p> <p>Ask students to bring in a childhood picture of themselves.</p>

## Lesson #2

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### Learning Goals:

- To establish the ethos for the class
- Deepen the class relationship

TASK	INSTRUCTION
Gather	Teacher provides this quote for students to reflect on silently: <i>“If you have hard truths to offer up to someone make sure the voice is soft, the language beautiful and that you protect the dignity of the other. When the storm clears, make sure you see all the sunshine.”</i> —Lee Maracle (italics in original)
Synthesize	Students begin stream-of-consciousness writing for 10–15 minutes.
Transfer	Teacher has a group discussion on what the quote means in relation to the class and classroom philosophy.  On chart paper, develop a set of agreements with regard to the discussions in the classroom so that students will have agency/ownership and become accountable for their behaviours and actions as the class progresses.
Beyond	Remind students to bring in a childhood picture of themselves and read the story “Show Me Yours,” by Richard Van Camp: <a href="https://thewalrus.ca/2007-11-fiction/">https://thewalrus.ca/2007-11-fiction/</a> . Questions to think about while reading:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did this story make you feel?</li> <li>2. What did this story remind you of?</li> <li>3. What was one part that stood out for you in this story?</li> <li>4. Would you recommend this story to someone else? Why or why not?</li> </ol>

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## Lesson #3

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### Learning Goals:

- Deepening the class relationship
- Learn one new thing about a classmate

TASK	INSTRUCTION
<b>Gather</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have students sit in a circle and go over the classroom guidelines that were established yesterday.</li> <li>2. Have a discussion about the short story "Show Me Yours," which was assigned for homework the previous day. Possible discussion questions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) How did this story make you feel?</li> <li>b) What did this story remind you of?</li> <li>c) What was one part of the story that stood out for you?</li> <li>d) Would you recommend this story to someone else? Why or why not?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Have students show their baby or childhood photos to the class and state their names again.</li> </ol> <p>Students will then stick their photos on their chest and walk around and have a conversation with at least five other students in the classroom. Here are some guiding questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your name?</li> <li>2. Why did you choose this course?</li> <li>3. Why did you select this photo to share?</li> <li>4. How old were you in the picture?</li> <li>5. What was your favourite memory from this time?</li> <li>6. What was a challenging moment during this time?</li> <li>7. What was your childhood like?</li> </ol>
<b>Transfer</b>	<p>Reconnect in a circle and share similarities and differences of childhood experiences.</p> <p>Teacher should be able to connect students to terms such as reciprocity, kinship, story, and relationship.</p>
<b>Beyond</b>	<p>These conversations will carry over into the next activity, which is the <i>Where I'm From</i> poems.</p>

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CHAPTER 2  
**HOW DO WE BEHAVE AS GOOD RELATIVES?**

**Lesson #1**

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Learning Goals:

- To develop a common understanding of stories and truth
- To begin documenting their story with the *Where I'm From* poem

<b>TASK</b>	<b>INSTRUCTION</b>
<b>Gather</b>	What is a story?  Why are stories important? Try to come up with multiple reasons (10 minimum would be awesome).  What is truth?
<b>Synthesize</b>	Students will read two <i>Where I'm From</i> poems as a class and then have a brief discussion about them.  <a href="https://www.sausd.us/cms/lib/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/3043/I%20Am%20From%20Poem.pdf">https://www.sausd.us/cms/lib/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/3043/I%20Am%20From%20Poem.pdf</a>  What are the stories in these poems?  How do they make you feel?  Teacher will jot down ideas from the discussion on the board.
<b>Transfer</b>	Students work on their own <i>Where I'm From</i> poems in class.
<b>Beyond</b>	Students continue to work and review their poems.

## Lesson #2

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### Learning Goals:

- To come up with a definition of story and truth

TASK	INSTRUCTION
<b>Gather</b>	<p>“The Truth about Stories Is ... Stories Are All That We Are”</p> <p>Students will do stream-of-consciousness writing for 10 minutes on the quote above.</p> <p>What is truth?            What are stories?            What does this statement mean to you?</p>
<b>Synthesize</b>	<p>Students will sit in small groups and discuss their writing. Some guiding questions are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is truth?</li> <li>2. What is a lie?</li> <li>3. Does truth matter? Why or why not?</li> <li>4. Are you always truthful? Can you give an example?</li> <li>5. Why is the truth important?</li> </ol>
<b>Transfer</b>	<p>Students regroup in a circle as an entire class and reflect on the links between their own experiences and some of the common themes or threads in the discussion.</p>
<b>Beyond</b>	<p>Students continue to work on their <i>Where I'm From</i> poems and incorporate some of the new findings from the readings into their poems.</p> <p>Teacher can bring in work from Thomas King: <a href="http://cislit.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/1/26116552/the_truth_about_stories_by_thomas_king.pdf">http://cislit.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/1/26116552/the_truth_about_stories_by_thomas_king.pdf</a></p> <p>Students and teachers can do a read aloud of the first lecture and then discuss those questions again:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is truth?</li> <li>2. What is a lie?</li> <li>3. What is a story?</li> <li>4. Can you give an example of a story you have been told that you are so sure is the truth?</li> <li>5. Does truth matter? Why or why not?</li> <li>6. Are you always truthful? Can you give an example?</li> <li>7. Why is the truth important?</li> </ol>

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### Lesson #3

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#### Learning Goals:

- The students and teacher present their *Where I'm From* poems to the class
- Students intentionally listen with the purpose of understanding

TASK	INSTRUCTION
Gather	Class could be set up as a poetry café (dimmed lighting, snacks, neo soul music)
Synthesize	Students and teacher present their <i>Where I'm From</i> poems to the class
Transfer	Students and teacher gather in a circle to do affirmations based on the poetry café: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did you appreciate in this poetry café?</li> <li>2. Was there something in someone's poem that really resonated with you?</li> <li>3. How did this process make you feel? And why?</li> </ol>
Beyond	There can be an extended discussion in class with regard to prejudging others, as hearing everyone's poems might make the students realize their judgments of some students were wrong.

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**CHAPTER 3**  
**HOW DO WE BECOME GOOD ANCESTORS?**  
**(CULMINATING ACTIVITY)**

“[T]hat’s the true wonderwork, the truest realization of being a good ancestor, and one worthy of deepest gratitude: imagining beyond the wounding now into a better tomorrow, working, writing, and dreaming a future into being.”  
 —Justice (p. 156)

**Lesson #1**

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Learning Goals:

- Understand what wonderworks are
- Understand what the culminating activity is
- Develop success criteria for the culminating activity

TASK	INSTRUCTION
<b>Gather</b>	<p>Students do stream-of-consciousness writing for 10–15 minutes on the following quote:</p> <p>Black fantasist Octavia Butler answers the question of why science fiction matters to Black people:</p> <p>“What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is science fiction’s thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of thinking and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what ‘everyone’ is saying, doing, thinking—whatever ‘everyone’ happens to be this year. “And what good is all this to Black people?” (p. 150)</p>
<b>Synthesize</b>	<p>Have a class discussion on the quote. Guiding questions are below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is science fiction?</li> <li>2. Why would the author use a Black writer in his text on Indigenous writing?</li> <li>3. What is a Black fantasist?</li> <li>4. What does this quote mean?</li> <li>5. Why is it important to us?</li> <li>6. Why is it important in the discussion of what it means to be a good ancestor?</li> </ol>

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TASK	INSTRUCTION
Transfer	<p>Using the discussion about the Octavia Butler quote, students then have a discussion on the quote below and discuss the parallels in order to understand what wonder is and why it is important in social justice work:</p> <p>“Wonder changes us and changes our world. When we stop marvelling at ourselves—ourselves in the most connected and expansive sense, that is, we as individuals, as activists, as communities, as past and future ancestors, as gods, as mountains and rivers and oceans—we lose belief in our ability to heal and transform even the deepest wounds. The act of bringing new life to our Indigenous stories reawakens our lands and peoples to remember the power we have always had, to feed our families and strangers, to care for the past and future. Hope is fed by our ability to apprehend and trust our storied connections, by the rush of unexplainable movement, by the unruly growing of our love and gratitude for the strange and marvellous ways we live on.” —Brian Kamaoli Kuwada (Kanaka Maoli) and Aiko Yamashiro (Japanese/Okinawan/Chamorro) (p. 153)</p>
Beyond	<p>Students are then provided with the culminating activity, which is below, and create success criteria for it as a group.</p>

## CULMINATING ACTIVITY: CREATING WONDERWORKS

*“This story deserves to be told; all stories do. Even the waves of the sea tell a story that deserves to be read. The stories that really need to be told are those that shake the very soul of you.... This happened, even if it didn’t.”*  
 —Lee Maracle (*Celia’s Song*, p. 160, italics in original)

**W**hat can wonderwork do for me? More importantly, in the quest to become a good ancestor, what can my wonderwork do for those around me? These questions and others you will consider as you create your very own wonderwork. “Fantasy offers places of sanctuary from which to continue the good fight” (p. 151). This body of work you create will aim to offer that sanctuary for yourself, your classmates, and those you have yet to meet. This work will be at least four to six pages in length and should consider many of the ideas we have discussed and written about in class. You will use the five stages in the design thinking process to create your piece. The final phase in this project will be to share your story with a Grade 9 or 10 class.

## FIVE STAGES IN THE DESIGN THINKING PROCESS

You work in groups of four or five for the first three parts of the design process. You have two classes for the first three parts and then another two classes in which to complete your first draft.

<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/5-stages-in-the-design-thinking-process>

### 1. Empathize

Through reading a novel or through conversations in class, begin the expansion of ideas around what it truly means to be human.

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## 2. Define

What is the problem that this short story will address? What will this story rupture? What will this story marvel about?

## 3. Ideate

How will your wonderwork heal and transform? Who will your characters be? Will you be a character? How will you demonstrate the diversity of the characters? Will they be human?

## 4. Prototype

Write a first draft of your wonderwork and then have a peer edit it. Once your peer has edited it you will then conference with your teacher about the contents of your work.

## 5. Test

Students will share their stories with a Grade 9 English class and a NAC10 class.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**HOW DO WE LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER?**

“Have you got it? You got it, right? And now I want you to act on it. And tell your friends, and tell your friends to tell their friends, and tell their friends to tell their friends. That way we can all live together like a nice big happy family!”  
—Waawaate Fobister, *Agokwe* (p. 157)

**S**tudents will share assignments with each other, then share assignments with grade 9/10 classes, elders, and community members.

How do we make intercultural connections? How does this link to everyone?

**Lesson #1**

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Learning Goals:

- Students share their wonderwork with Grade 9 or 10 students
- Students share their wonderwork with a few elders and community members

TASK	INSTRUCTION
<b>Gather</b>	Students meet with a Grade 9 or 10 class to share their wonderworks. The teacher may invite elders to listen to the presentations. They will begin with a few icebreakers:  <a href="https://www.kidactivities.net/icebreaker-games-for-kids/">https://www.kidactivities.net/icebreaker-games-for-kids/</a>  If an elder is present they may want to begin with a welcome ceremony.
<b>Synthesize</b>	Students share their wonderworks with the Grade 9 or 10 students. Afterward, they have the students complete a peer evaluation on each wonderwork:  Sample peer evaluation:  1. What about the story was interesting? 2. Would you recommend this story to others? Why or why not? 3. What could be improved upon for the next time it is presented?
<b>Transfer</b>	Students return to their classes to debrief:  1. How did it feel to present your work to others? 2. What is something you did well? 3. What is something you could improve on for the next presentation?

## FURTHER LINKS / EXTENSIONS FOR CURRICULUM

- Toronto's Indigenous history:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/first-story-toronto-indigenous-history-1.4170290>
- Books and resources, Aboriginal perspectives, from GoodMinds: The Teacher's Toolkit:  
<http://www.goodminds.com/>
- Indigenous cinema from the National Film Board:  
[www.nfb.ca/indigenous-cinema](http://www.nfb.ca/indigenous-cinema)
- "The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative," the 2003 CBC Massey Lectures, by Thomas King:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-2003-cbc-massey-lectures-the-truth-about-stories-a-native-narrative-1.2946870>
- "What Is the Significance of Acknowledging the Indigenous Land We Stand On?":  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136>
- Ontario treaties:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/treaties>
- Native land:  
<https://native-land.ca/>
- *Colonization Road*, a film by Michelle St. John:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/episodes/colonization-road>
- "Canada 150 Marked by Celebration and Activism in the GTA":  
<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/07/01/everything-you-need-to-know-to-mark-canada-day-in-toronto.html>
- "Listening to History: Correcting the Toronto Metis Land Acknowledgement":  
<http://activehistory.ca/?s=listening+to+history&submit=Search>
- "Getting Ready for Treaties Recognition Week":  
<http://etfovoice.ca/feature/getting-ready-treaties-recognition-week>
- "Settlers with Opinions," by Daniel Heath Justice:  
[https://theconversation.com/all-mouth-and-no-ears-settlers-with-opinions-83338?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=facebookbutton](https://theconversation.com/all-mouth-and-no-ears-settlers-with-opinions-83338?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=facebookbutton)
- "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments":  
<http://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>
- Treaty Education Initiative:  
<http://www.trcm.ca/treaty-education-initiative/k-12-treaty-education-continuum/>

- “Indigenous Languages Are Not Dialects”:  
<https://rising.globalvoices.org/blog/2013/12/04/indigenous-languages-are-not-dialects/>
- Egale: Canada Human Rights Trust: “Two Spirits, One Voice”:  
<https://egale.ca/portfolio/two-spirits-one-voice/>
- Giant floor maps, Canadian Geographic Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada:  
[http://www.canadiangeographic.com/educational\\_products/ipac\\_floor\\_map.asp](http://www.canadiangeographic.com/educational_products/ipac_floor_map.asp)
- “Canada 150: Toronto Traces Its Indigenous History Back 11,000 Years”:  
<https://www.toronto.com/community-story/7218897-canada-150-toronto-traces-its-indigenous-history-back-11-000-years/>
- “Aboriginal Languages of Canada,” by Eung-Do Cook and Darin Flynn:  
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/dflynn/files/dflynn/CookFlynn08.pdf>
- “Aboriginal Perspectives: A Guide to The Teacher’s Toolkit”:  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/toolkit.html>
- Indigenous Perspectives Education Guide:  
<http://education.historicacanada.ca/en/tools/493>
- Links to Medicine Wheel teachings:  
<http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com>
- “How Indigenous and Black Artists Are Using Science Fiction to Imagine a Better Future”:  
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-november-14-2017-1.4400378/how-indigenous-and-black-artists-are-using-science-fiction-to-imagine-a-better-future-1.4400425>
- “Indigenous Futurism: Transcending the Past, Present and Future”:  
<https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/in-the-spotlight/indigenous-futurism-transcending-the-past-present-and-future>
- “Indigenous Futurisms”:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_Futurism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_Futurism)
- “Aboriginal Perspectives on Self Determination”:  
[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation\\_gr6/blms/6-4-3d.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation_gr6/blms/6-4-3d.pdf)
- “Rethinking Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives”:  
[https://dandeneau.uqam.ca/upload/files/pdfs/Kirmayer%20et%20al\(2011\)%20-%20Rethinking%20resilience.pdf](https://dandeneau.uqam.ca/upload/files/pdfs/Kirmayer%20et%20al(2011)%20-%20Rethinking%20resilience.pdf)
- “Painting the Path of Indigenous Resilience,” a TEDx UofT talk by Lisa Boivin:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GX\\_TIFeVxGk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GX_TIFeVxGk)
- “An Introduction to the Health of Two-Spirit People”:  
[https://www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/HealthTwoSpirit\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/HealthTwoSpirit_ENG.pdf)

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## SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCOMMODATIONS

**A**ccommodations refer to learning strategies, tools, supports, and/or services that are required in order for a student to access the curriculum and demonstrate learning. *Instructional Accommodations* refer to changes in learning and teaching strategies that allow the student to access the curriculum. *Environmental Accommodations* refer to changes that are required to the classroom and/or school environment so that the students can learn in a safe and inclusive environment. *Assessment Accommodations* refer to changes and flexibility in assessment strategies that are required in order for the student to demonstrate learning.

### EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATIONS

#### Instructional Accommodations

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- Buddy/peer tutoring
- Note-taking assistance
- Duplicated notes
- Contracts
- Reinforcement incentives
- High structure
- Partnering
- Ability grouping
- Augmentative and Alternative Communications systems
- Assistive technology, such as text-to-speech software
- Graphic organizers
- Non-verbal signals
- Organization coaching
- Time-management aids
- Mind maps
- Increased breaks
- Concrete/hands-on material
- Manipulatives
- Tactile tracing strategies
- Gesture cues
- Dramatizing information
- Visual cueing
- Gesture cues
- Dramatizing information
- Visual cueing
- Large-size font
- Tracking sheets
- Colour cues
- Reduced/uncluttered format
- Computer options
- Spatially cued formats
- Repeated information
- Reworded/rephrased information
- Processing time allowed
- Word retrieval prompts
- Taped texts

## Environmental Accommodations

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- Alternative workspace
- Strategic seating
- Instructor proximity
- Reduced audio and visual stimuli
- Study carrel
- Minimized background noise
- Quiet setting
- Use of headphones
- Special lighting
- Assistive devices or adaptive equipment
- Extended time limits
- Verbatim scribing
- Oral responses, including audiotapes
- Alternative settings
- Increased breaks
- Assistive devices or adaptive equipment
- Prompts to return students' attention to task

## Assessment Accommodations

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- Augmentative and Alternative Communications systems
- Assistive technology, such as speech-to-text software
- Large-size font
- Colour cues
- Reduced/uncluttered format
- Computer options
- Processing time allowed

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