

## Webinar Transcript

### Knowing the Learner: Creating and Contributing to a Robust Learner Profile for Students with LDs

[Host] LD@School team is very pleased to welcome our guest speaker, Usha James whose presentation this afternoon is entitled Knowing the Learner Creating and Contributing to Robust Learner Profiles for Students with LDs. During the webinar today, Usha will be discussing Module One of the "Learning for All" facilitator's guide. You can find a copy of this document in the handouts section of the GoToWebinar control panel, along with the slides from today's presentation. The Ministry of Education has provided funding for the production of this webinar. Please note that the views expressed in this webinar are the views of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Education nor the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. We will also be tweeting throughout the webinar today.

So if you'd like to participate in an online discussion, you can send us a tweet by using our handle @LDatSchool or the hashtag #LDwebinar, or you can just reply to one of our tweets. That takes care of all the housekeeping for this afternoon, so let's get started. It's now my pleasure to introduce our speaker for today, Usha James. Usha James has spent 12 years as a secondary school teacher and five years at OISE at the University of Toronto as an instructor and then director of the secondary program. She's co-authored textbooks, teacher resources, course profiles, and Ministry documents with the aim of providing practical strategies for teachers seeking to refine their practice. Usha has contributed to the Critical Thinking Consortium, also known as TC squared, as a resource writer and facilitator and is currently the Executive Director. Usha has worked with principals, superintendents, and teachers of kindergarten to post-secondary students, supporting their efforts to improve the quality of thinking of all learners.

[Usha James] Hello, everyone. Welcome to our webinar on the "Learning for All" K-12

Professional Learning Facilitator's Guide. I hope that you are all well and staying healthy and safe during this unusual time. And for those of you who are listening after we emerge, I hope that you're coming out of it feeling healthy and safe. We're gonna spend some time today thinking about, I'm gonna walk you through a resource. But at the same time that I walk you through this resource, we're also going to do a little bit of learning ourselves and consider what it's like for others who are just learning about learning disabilities. Perhaps not the first time, but deepening their understanding and trying to think about the implications for their practice. I know that many of you who are attending already have an understanding of not only what are learning disabilities, but also the strengths and challenges they pose for students that we work with and how we might refine our practice to better support those students. But part of what we're gonna do today is really look at people who are in positions to support others in their understanding. So that could be parents who are in a position to help teachers understand about their child. It could be teacher leaders within the school, learning resource teachers. It could be consultants at the district level. It could be principals of the school. If you are in a position to support somebody else's understanding, what is the approach we might take to deepen their understanding? So that's what this resource helps with that I'm gonna walk you through today. And hopefully it also supports your thinking about some practical ideas as well.

[Usha James] So let's get started. Sorry, I'll just stop and quickly introduce myself. My name is Usha James. I'm the Executive Director of the Critical Thinking Consortium. We're a not-for-profit educational organization. We've been around for about 25 years. And we support everybody. We have one mandate, to support everybody who is interested in nurturing better quality thinking amongst their learners. So whether those learners are four years old or whether those learners are teachers or whether those learners are superintendents, how do we nurture better quality thinking? And so I'm gonna talk a little bit about the background of this resource first, and then we'll dive right in. So let's launch our learning together with a few questions to help activate your prior

knowledge and invite you to think a little bit about your context. And because this is a recording, I'm gonna pause, give you a little bit of time to think, and then continue. So I'd like you to think a little bit about what is challenging about helping other people understand learning disabilities? Where is it sticky when you have to talk to other people about it? What do you notice about the questions? Also, what has worked for you when you've been trying to build understanding someone else? And finally, why might that have worked?

[Usha James] So if you take 30 seconds, if you're listening in a team, maybe talk to the person that you're sitting with. If you're listening independently, perhaps you can jot down a few ideas. I'll give you 30 seconds.

[Usha James] Okay, if we can come back together. What I hope you'll be able to make some connections to is how an approach that I'm gonna share with you might support some of those challenges, might help with some of those challenges. It might actually resonate the things that you do anyway in order to support other people's understanding. So let's jump right in. Where did this come from, this resource? It was funded by the Ministry of Education, the Department of Special Education here in Ontario. It came out of an interest from the Ministry many years ago, 2012, 2013 was sort of a beginning point in thinking about "Learning For All" and how to best get it into the school systems, how to support the rollout and implementation of the document "Learning for All," and of course, the revision that came with it. Then several years later, there was a sort of feeling that the professional learning that had accompanied the initial rollout of the doc, that sort of tapered off a little bit and was not as robust as it could have been and that it might have become a document that was simply sitting on people's shelves. So there was interest in reviving it.

[Usha James] The Ministry of Education contacted us at the Critical Thinking Consortium to help them think about what might be a good way to revive the document

and deepen understanding about the practices inside of it. We worked with a number of boards and the Ministry to think about what was needed in systems. And what we learned was that there was a great deal of understanding amongst the people who were actually leading learning. So in order to help educators deepen their understanding and practice, there had to be somebody leading educator learning. And so people who were leading that learning had the understanding. What they didn't have were the resources or the time to think about how to best frame professional learning. And so what we learned from our focus group sessions and our collaboration was that it would be really helpful for somebody who's facilitating professional learning to have sort of a package of lesson plans, of sessions they could use with, in staff meetings, on PD days, in order to deepen the learning. And we also, so we did some of that work. We presented it widely. And as you can see from the slide here, we really focused some of our thinking on how do we move beyond simply awareness in teachers about, and compliance of doing the things they had to do into really deepening their understanding about equitable practice and knowing their learners deeply. It was first conceived as a four-module guide.

[Usha James] So I'm showing you the first one, the first module, which is Knowing Your Learner. So there was some research, of course, that drove our thinking about it. It was the same research that led to the development, or was embedded in the development of "Learning For All". Oops, my thumbnail is backwards there. I apologize for that. And the idea was that this facilitator guide would supplement and complement the implementation of "Learning for All." And so it would constantly drive people back to that resource, but it would also widen and deepen understanding. So part of what we wondered, because we had seen really effective thinking in many districts when "Learning for All" was first rolled out into the districts. And so one of the things we wondered was how might some of those strong gains in capacity and understanding at the district level transfer to the practice of educators. So as I said, people at the district level, people who are leading learning, had a really strong understanding. And yet, the people were worried that that understanding wasn't transferring into classroom practice.

[Usha James] So what would support that transfer? We also thought about how might these professional learning opportunities be enhanced and extended to move beyond compliance and awareness, to really help teachers feel like they knew and had ownership over the learning of each and every one of their students. And finally, we knew it was a successful initiative and long-running initiative, but it needed to be refreshed a little bit. And this is sort of something to think about in terms of any of your initiatives. You know, things go on for a while and they lose interest or it feels like we've done it, how do you expand and deepen a successful, but long running initiative? So those were some of our early questions. And we're going to address some of our findings at the end of this. We decided that what we really need is a thinking approach to professional learning. And that's where our framework at the Critical Thinking Consortium was embedded. So I wanna talk to you a little bit about that guide and the approach taken. And I actually, I'm hoping we can play with some of the activities that are inside of it so you can get a feel for it. And as we examine it and work through it together, I'm hoping that you will consider how might the approach taken help with some of the challenges that you identified earlier in the session of helping people develop understanding and capacity to respond effectively to students with learning disabilities. So keep that in the back of your mind, and maybe those little jot notes that you took at the very beginning of the session next to you and see what might be helpful, what do you already do, how might this help in continuing to refine your practice.

[Usha James] So one of the early activities, the one that launches all of the sessions, asks teachers, or educators, or anybody who is attending, to do the following. So you start by first rating the complexity of teaching. So I'm going to ask you to do the same. If you were to put a little X on this line somewhere about how complex teaching is, from very simple to very complex, where would you place it? I'm going to give you just 15 seconds to think about that. Okay, so once you thought about that and decided where you're going to place your X on the line, I'd like you to consider what factors contribute most to the level of complexity? If you had to list the kinds of things that contribute most

to the level of complexity, what would they be? Take another 30 seconds and jot down some answers or talk to the person sitting next to you. When we ask teachers this question, many of them talk about the wide range of abilities in their classroom, the needs, the strengths in their classroom, the limited resources, the level of complexity of the curriculum. There are a number of things that educators point to that lead to complexity. And for parents and principals, there are different answers that arise in terms of what makes it either very complex or not very complex. And of course, it's context-specific. So thinking about complexity and how complex teaching is, I'd like you to engage in another activity that's from the guide. Thinking about complexity, if you had to determine, narrow your focus a little bit from just broadly teaching to teaching students with learning disabilities, I'm gonna use an activity with you.

[Usha James] The instructional strategy is called Visual Synectics. And I really like it with students and also with educators, because it requires you to sort of think outside of your normal norms and make connections. It makes your thinking visible. So if you had to answer this question, teaching students with learning disabilities is like, and I'm gonna give you something to insert there, because. Which of these images, I'm gonna show you four images. Which of these images is it most like? Is teaching students with learning disabilities most like this? A picture of an iceberg. You might not be able to see at a distance. Is it most like this, conducting an orchestra or being in orchestra? Is teaching students with learning disabilities most like this, being in or being a barista in a coffee shop? Or is teaching students with learning disabilities most like this? Picture of a bank. So take a moment and think about do you think teaching students with learning disabilities is most like image A, B, C, or D? Think to yourself and talk to your partner.

[Usha James] Okay, if I were to bring you back together, and as we do in the "Facilitator's Guide," invite people to talk about which image they chose and why they chose that particular image. Again, when I use this in face-to-face sessions, people often talk about, we get a wide variety of different images people choose. And people

have put a whole number of things, from, of course, an iceberg, an obvious image. But there's so much beneath the surface. There's so much we don't know about students. But there's also so much we don't know about teaching those students, or teaching students generally, what are the most effective ways. There are people who says, you know, it's like a coffee shop because everybody has their own order, and differentiating sometimes feels like I need to prepare something different for every kid, and you know, the pressure that goes with that. And there's also lots of distractions. There are many different sounds and things going on in the coffee shop simultaneously, and there's a lot of pressure to stay focused and to do it effectively and efficiently. Some people say it's like an orchestra. Sometimes it feels like we're the conductor of the orchestra. When it works well, it works well. And it works badly, it is really all over the place, when you're a teacher and you're desperately trying to bring people back together. And other people say it's like that one-on-one attention in a bank, that you rarely get that time, but when you do, you have to make the most of it. So I don't know if those answers resonate with anything that you were thinking about. But this is one of the activities to try to get teachers to surface their belief, their experiences, and their feelings about teaching students with learning disabilities.

[Usha James] And we find that's a really important beginning to any learning. Nobody is a blank slate. And so just as with our students, we want to make sure that we take the time to surface what are their, as I said, experiences, their beliefs, their feelings, about a particular topic. Because those things will become facilitators of their understanding, or they will become barriers to their understanding. And so bringing them to the surface gives us an opportunity to anchor further learning to them. So we go on, again, always sort of narrowing. So going from teaching is complex because, or how complex is teaching because, to what is it like to teach students with learning disabilities, and then moving a step further to now trying to make a connection to what this series of sessions is going to be about. How might a robust learner profile help? So given all the things we talked about in terms of what's it like to teach students with learning disabilities, inviting

people to think about what might be helpful if you had a robust learning profile of the students that you were seeking to support. Now, clearly we haven't defined what a robust learning profile is. And that's another key element of supporting people's understanding, and even in classrooms, teaching students. How do we invite them into the final challenge that we're going to grapple with, creating a robust learning profile right at the beginning so that they can start their thinking, introduce their initial thinking, and attach it to some of the challenges that they have raised themselves?

[Usha James] So once we talk a little bit about that, and I invite you to sort of think about that, what might, how might a robust learning profile help with the complexity, we'd like to introduce the challenge. So this is, so Module One, as I said, of this particular "Facilitator's Guide" is around Knowing the Learner. The whole module has a learning challenge. We call it a learning challenge or a critical challenge. And it's a critical challenge because it is something that teachers, educators have to grapple with anyway in their everyday work. And so why not use any professional learning time we have together to actually practically grapple with that challenge? So the challenge of this session, which we introduced early on, is to create by the end of these sessions, or contribute to a robust learning profile for students with learning disabilities. Of course, the "Learning for All" guide goes into what are sample student profiles. But we know that it's one thing to read about what is a good learning profile and it's another thing to really think about it, to unpack it, to be challenged by it, and to challenge some of the assumptions around it. So that's where we're going to go with it.

[Usha James] This particular module starts off in the learning launch with those activities we already talked about, and then invites educators to actually look at, you know, what is a very brief learning profile. So I'll just read it out loud. Dan is a grade five student with learning disabilities. He enjoys school, gets along well with his classmates and loves class discussions. So this might be all you know about a student coming into your classroom. How much does this help? How robust is this learner profile? So if you

had an opportunity to make this more robust, what would you add or change? So I'd like you to think for just a minute, what are some of the things that you would like to know more about Dan in order to better support him? Think to yourself for a minute, what would those things be? So notice we're asking educators before we look at any other definition of a robust learning profile or a template for a robust learning profile, we're asking them first to think to themselves what is it that you need. What would be helpful in supporting this student?

[Usha James] To make a list, and now we're gonna look at some opportunities for that as we continue. So that's sort of a beginning, thinking about this approach to professional learning. So I'm gonna pause the activity and the walkthrough and ask you to reflect a little bit on the approach we've taken so far, I'm gonna show you more, but on the approach we've taken so far. So what do you notice about the approach we just took to professional learning? At this very early stage, just a taste of the beginning of learning. I'd also like you to think about some of the hurdles that are encountered when nurturing teacher thinking and practice about teaching students with learning disabilities.

[Usha James] So those challenges that I asked you to think about right at the beginning of this session. And then also thinking about some of goals for school, depending on what your role is, what are some of the goals for school and system change around meeting all students' needs? When you think about that, how does this approach to professional learning, this thinking approach to professional learning, support some of those hurdles? How might it or not? How might it support some of the goals for school and system change? What's the difference between learning that you have seen around learning disabilities and this? Are there any differences? How is this helpful, or perhaps not as helpful as some of the things that you see? Remembering this is just the beginning. As you reflect on that, take a moment, reflect on that, and we're going to hold onto these questions and return to them as we learn more about what's in this "Facilitator's Guide" and how might we support educator understanding and capacity.

What is at the basis of the thinking approach that we take? I'm not gonna spend too much time on this, but I want to just show you, to provide a window into what's underneath this, what guides our approach.

[Usha James] At the Critical Thinking Consortium, we have a framework to promote thinking. And it has these four aspects or arenas that we can play in in order to promote thinking in a classroom, or thinking in a school, or thinking in a district. And from our research and our years of experience, we've noticed that in order to promote thinking, we need to create opportunities for thinking. So when you're in a classroom, how do we ask questions that really do invite thinking of every single student? Or when you're in a staff meeting, how do we create tasks or invite questions that invite the thinking of every single staff member? Second, how do we shape the climate to support thinking? So we've often talked about creating safe learning environments where everybody feels included and as if they belong. Promoting a thinking learning environment goes a little bit further and asks us to think about how do we shape the climate or the culture in a classroom or in a school where students, or where educators and students actually feel like they could take a risk, they could offer their opinion, they could try something they're not entirely sure about, and it would be okay? So how do we support their thinking in addition to their feelings of belonging, which are, of course, important. Third, how do we build people's capacity to think? Because just because we ask a great question doesn't mean we're going to get deep and rich answers.

[Usha James] And so our research has uncovered five types of intellectual tools that all people need in order to be good thinkers. And so when we ask a thinking question, or we engage people in thinking about their practice, or in classrooms thinking about the curriculum, we know that in order to answer effectively, to reflect on their practice, to think about their curriculum, they're going to need these five types of tools. They're gonna need some background knowledge. You can't think about nothing. They're going to need some criteria for making judgments and decisions about their curriculum or

about their classroom. They're going to need to understand thinking vocabulary. So if we use words like evidence or inference or conclusions or clues and they don't understand those words, then they don't have the tools they need to think about the question. They're going to need some thinking strategies. So how do I get from A to B? How do I work through this complex question or task? And they're going to need some habits of mind, which are personal characteristics of a great thinker. So we can build people's capacity to think using those tools, and we can provide guidance or feedback or assessment to inform their thinking if we focus on those five tools. That's a much bigger conversation about this framework. I'm just introducing it here to show that underneath our approach to helping educators better understand and build capacity around students with learning disabilities, underneath it, there's this framework that informs how do we support those educators in their thinking, because this framework that was first developed to promote a thinking classroom is just as important when we're promoting thinking schools and systems.

[Usha James] So an overview of this Module One, which you'll find for free on the EduGAINS website, and I'll sort of give you an idea of where that is in a moment, but it has five different sessions. So each session can be a staff meeting or half a day at a PD day. And you can use any pieces of them. They're there to sort of be adapted and malleable. Or as an individual educator who's listening or a parent who's listening, you can work through it yourself if that's helpful. If you're not in a position to lead other people's learning, you can certainly work through it yourself. It has these five sessions. A launch, which is the introduction, which we talked a little bit about already and you saw some of the activities from it. And then a session on understanding learning differences, examining sources that might inform a learning profile, recognizing and capturing patterns, and then a final session to pull it all together, if you're doing it in a linear fashion.

[Usha James] So really quickly, I don't want to do a lot of the activities in each of these,

but I do want to walk you through them so you're familiar and see if it surfaces some interesting ideas and questions and practical ways to proceed when thinking about these topics. So the second session in this module, Knowing Your Learner, is about really understanding learning differences. In each session, there's a challenge of what we hope educators will be able to do by the end of this session. Of course, according to the way that we structure our sessions, our work with students, and our work with educators, we invite them at the beginning to grapple with this challenge. So if the challenge at the end is draft a script you might use to articulate your understanding of learning disabilities to a student teacher so he or she might understand better. That's the challenge. Why have we chosen that challenge? Because we believe that if, by going through this session, teachers or educators are asked to actually create something that will be useful to them, something they could foresee using. Maybe they don't have student teachers, but maybe they need to talk to a colleague, or maybe they need to speak to a friend about it. But somehow, a script that you might use that articulates your understanding of learning disabilities. If they can do that by the end of the session, they will have consolidated their learning.

[Usha James] Now, it's very likely at the beginning of the session, they have some ideas. And so we want them to, at the very beginning, understand the goals of the session. Every session has clearly articulated goals. What are we going to do in this session? And the facilitator to modify them or use them as is in order to help educators understand. But we want them to take that challenge that we've just introduced to them and say, this is what you're going to be able to do by the end of this session. Oops, sorry. But what would you say right now at the beginning of the session? Imagine you're trying to explain learning disabilities to a new teacher or to an occasional teacher. What would you say? What would be difficult about explaining it? What questions might you need answered because you don't understand it as well as you would like to? So inviting them right at the beginning to articulate, to find, to share what is it that they already know and what questions do they have. As they move through the session, we invite

them to do a number of activities that build their understanding. So this is an example of one of the activities. And I won't go through it with you right now, but if you have a moment, I think it's a really fun and interesting activity, is take a blank piece of paper and record how you got from your home to this conference.

[Usha James] Now, clearly, you're not at this conference. You may still be at home if we are still socially distancing. But if you are listening to this somewhere else, if you think back to say, how did you get from your home, how do you usually get from your home to school so that someone else could follow your route. How would you show them? So every session has these types of interactive activities that will help build participants' background knowledge. In this activity, once they do this, we start thinking about the following questions. If you were being assessed on your ability to travel, or to communicate your travel route from home to an unfamiliar location, how successful would you be? So how easy was that? If I was going to assess you on that, would you do well? Or was it tough to actually explain your route to an unfamiliar location to somebody else? We ask them to think about if they would find the task challenging under certain circumstances. So would you find the task challenging? Would you need specific accommodations? Would you have other strengths to compensate? If this was deemed an essential skill, would it be difficult or disabling for you?

[Usha James] So for example, you might have said, "It's very hard for me to do it on paper. "But if I could just say it out loud." Or, "I would actually use my hands to explain to people. "It's easier for me that way." Or "I could draw it, but it's hard for me to write it." So inviting them to think about a task that they would do, what was difficult about it, where do they have strengths in terms of that task, and then thinking about how assessment now interferes a little bit. If you had to be assessed in a particular way, how does that affect your success in carrying out the task? So inviting them to do the task and think about it is one of the things that we work on through the different engaging activities that we're looking at, is asking them to build a little bit of empathy and to feel

what it might feel like for students with learning disabilities. So again, what if you were only required to draw a map for the task. What would it feel like? Or if you were only required to write the directions?

[Usha James] We invite them to think about questions like what might the experience of students be when tasks demand skillsets for them that are not as strong? What is the relationship between the demands of a task and how students will perform? So inviting educators in a session like this to think through these questions raises all sorts of information around what people feel comfortable with, what they considered already, what they are not sure about how to mitigate for certain challenges. And I hope that by thinking through these questions, it sort of deepened sort of your thinking. Now, I know that many people listening already have a very good experience or understanding of what learning disabilities are.

[Usha James] So really thinking about folks who may not feel as confident in their understanding, how might this module help them with that? So I won't spend a lot more time on this, you know, the particularities. But I do want to show you some other things that are included in the "Facilitator's Guide." So inside this "Facilitator's Guide," there are key points. So if you're facilitating a session, or you're trying to explain to somebody else, or deepen their understanding, what we try to do is include sort of boxes of key points that you might use in your explanations. They're suggested throughout in order to help the facilitator point out and explain that crucial information. You'll see that there are also ideas about what the facilitator might do, and there are direct quotes to resources from "Learning for All," or in this case, the PPM8, which describes from the Ministry what a learning disability is. And finally, there are invitations to grapple with what those definitions are. So rather than simply providing a definition and hoping people absorb it, whenever we provide background knowledge or information, we ask teachers or educators to grapple with what do you think about that? What might be confusing? What might need clarification? It helps them engage with background information instead of

just be passive receivers of it and it helps them make meaning, we hope.

[Usha James] And finally, ensuring that there is rich, that they're not just, I think we said right at the beginning, in order to have a thinking classroom or a thinking school or be a thinking person, you can't think about nothing. You need information. And so ensuring that there are small chunks of important information that are included all the way out. What we've noticed people do is use these exactly, put them up on a PowerPoint slide, et cetera, but they are interwoven between activities that are meant to engage teachers. We've also included in the "Facilitator's Guide" videos from the LD@School website. We wanna make sure that there's lots of student voice and artifacts for teachers to grapple with. And I want to show you a few more as well. So in this case, we're not gonna go through this, but in this case, we have students who are talking themselves, talking about their experiences, their experiences of school, what their strengths are, where they know they need to mitigate for some of the challenges that they experience. And what we've done is ask, after giving a little bit of information about say, cognitive processes, ask people to watch the video and make connections between the student language about how they talk about their strengths and needs, and then what cognitive processes might they be referring to even though they don't refer to them explicitly. Which ones might they be referring to implicitly?

[Usha James] So always asking educators to apply their learning in the moment. So I'll pause there before we continue. I'm gonna give you a brief overview of the other sessions, but I won't spend too much time on them. But I'd like you to pause for a moment and think about the approach that I'm describing. What do you notice about the approach to building understanding and capacity for educators to respond to students with learning disabilities to plan for them, to build, to know their learners deeply, which is the focus of this module? So I'm gonna pause for 30 seconds. What are you noticing and how is it making you think about the challenges of helping somebody else understand that we raised at the beginning of this session?

[Usha James] Okay. So once we get through all of the pieces of the first session, we return to the challenge. Draft a script educators might use to articulate their understanding of learning disabilities to a student teacher so he or she might understand better. That returning, oops, that returning to the challenge by the end of the session, and of course, you can return to it in the middle of it, but sort of now that you've got some understanding, how has your thinking focus changed?

[Usha James] So that's just, we've walked through activities from the first session in this module, the learning launch, and the second session in this module, understanding learning differences. But there are three more. I'll really quickly show you what's inside of those sessions and I encourage you to find them on EduGAINS website and take a look, because there's some really deep, interesting understanding that's built through them. So let me walk you through them a little bit, the next two, just so you have an idea. So in this session, 1.2, we are helping educators think about what sources might inform a learning profile. Where should we be going for our information? What counts as data for us? And to design a tool that could be used to track, excuse me, some of that focused observation.

[Usha James] So you can see the Challenge is draft a helpful observation tool. Heard from many educators that they learn so much by observing students. But what's very difficult is that they don't have a tracking mechanism so that they can hold onto what they've learned as they watch students. So in this session, we invite educators to work together to actually draft an observation tool that would work in their context. And we walk through a number of different things in the session in order to help them do that. In the next session after that, we actually ask them to start contributing or drafting a learning profile for students and preparing some speaking notes that could be used to have a conversation with the student about their learning profile. So we think it's really important, and we heard this from our focus groups, that educators are talking to the

kids about their learning profile. That's a theme that runs through all of the sessions in order to help them better understand or think about how to do that well.

[Usha James] So what kinds of things would you see as you walk through, as you look at some of these sessions or you use them with educators? We invite people to think about what can we learn through different types of products, or different types of assessment vehicles, observations, conversations, and product. And I'd really like to advocate for the reframing of assessment as assessment being learning about our kids. If we think about assessment as always learning about our students, then it repositions it from coming up with a judgment about our students to gathering information so we know them better. And when we know them better, we can make better decisions about our instruction.

[Usha James] So if we think about assessment as learning about our students, we have different vehicles, observation, conversation, and product. So asking yourself, and we asked educators this, what do you already know about the thinking of your students? What are your data sources right now? So reflect on how often do you use observations, how often do you use conversations, and how often do you use products, and how do you use those things? And what do those sources tell you, exactly? So we'd like to spend some time on thinking about what do those sources actually tell us when we observe or have conversations or when we look at student product? And importantly, what do they not tell you?

[Usha James] We know that products cannot tell us certain things about students. And if we surface that with educators, that products are great, student work is great for telling us some things, but it really doesn't tell us other things. It doesn't tell us how a student grappled with a challenge. It doesn't tell us about their thinking strategies often. It doesn't tell us the student's feelings about where they did well and where they need support. So if there are things that products can't tell us, then how do we use

observations and conversations effectively to know our students better? It may be helpful to think through observations, conversations, and products in this way. What are the questions we might ask ourselves about observations? So here's a question. When might you intentionally and strategically observe students? And what we do in the module and what we think through together is the different times you might observe students. And of course, there are others in addition to what we've got here. But inviting teachers to plan for themselves when might they observe students intentionally to better get to know them. And then think about what are you looking for? What will you be looking for? What do you notice? How will you track what you're noticing?

[Usha James] Similarly with conversations, thinking about who might you talk to about the students' specific strengths and needs? And of course, in the module, we talk about a number of different people you might talk to. And of course, always recentering. Talk to the students themselves in an intentional way. And inviting teachers to think about what questions will you ask to help you get a fuller picture. And finally, when thinking about products, what products might help us better understand the student? Remember, that's the focus. What product, what might help us better understand the student? How will we know our learners? And so we invite educators to actually go through in the, you'll see in the "Facilitator's Guide," there's all sorts of samples I'm gonna show you in a moment. There's all sorts of different documents that you might go through in order to know your student better. And some questions that we're inviting educators to think about.

[Usha James] So I'm conscious of the time. So I'll quickly show you that in the facilitator's guide itself, we provide sample products that facilitators of a session could print out or could provide digitally. These have all been created in collaboration with the ministry and the boards that were working with us. We also provide conversations for educators to actually analyze. And these are really fascinating, actually. We've got educators with a parent, sorry, educators. We've got scripts of a conversation with a

parent, with a conversation with a learning resource teacher, a script with a student themselves. So really looking at those conversations and thinking about, hmm, what am I learning through a conversation so that you have some practice for when you have your own conversation, you're thinking about what am I learning. So these are sort of the sessions in Module One that you'll find within the "Facilitator's Guide."

[Usha James] I hope that they sound interesting and engaging and useful in overcoming some of the challenges that we know exist in trying to deepen educator understanding and build capacity about how to support students with learning disabilities. In addition, we are, sorry, I'm gonna split through. We are collecting some of our findings. We've noticed that people who have used Module One are finding it very helpful and are sharing some of the ways that educators engaged. We've also finding that by going through the module, educators are beginning to build their own learning profiles either in small teams or as a school. There are some teacher-generated tools and some feedback on how well that's going. So I hope you take a moment to take a look at those also.

[Usha James] So what's next? There are four modules planned. So we are looking for funding for those pieces. But we know that we will keep moving forward. I'm gonna skip through this, but if you'd like to take a look, we certainly do have an overview for Module Two which is guiding our development of it. And you'll see that these are the titles of the sessions. They won't be linear. You can pick out any one of them and use them, and hopefully there'll be lots of great practical strategies. But they will all use the same thinking approach. So I hope that that's been helpful and that you see the rich and deep framework that underlies the approach that we're taking to professional learning about this really important topic that we hope keeps the thinking about supporting all of our students and "Learning for All" alive. Thank you so much, and I know, I think we're gonna flip over back to Susanna for some final questions or thoughts.

[Host] - Yeah, thank you so much, Usha. I know I'm thinking a lot. And so I assume our audience is also deep in thought about what you just covered with us today. Let me just switch over to me. Open this so we can begin our question-and-answer period.

[Usha James] While you're doing that, maybe I'll just answer one question that I didn't answer that I said I was going to, which is where do I find this "Facilitator's Guide." So if you go to the EduGAINS website, you will find a icon for "Learning for All." If you click on that icon, it's a little bit buried, but if you click on that icon, you will see a graphic and one of the options is Models for Instruction or Models for, sorry, Models for Professional Development. If you click on that, you'll see the "Facilitator's Guide" there. And it's a 150-page document with everything that you need to go through. So sorry, I just thought I would answer that while you were looking for those.

[Host] Oh no, that's great, perfect. And I will also include a link to that document in the email that follows this webinar and on the eventual recording page so that everyone will be well-equipped to find that if they wanna work through the activities, either by themselves or with a group. So the first thing that I'm sort of grappling with here is how detailed do these learner profiles have to be? 'Cause I know you said at the beginning, you can't think about nothing. You have to have background knowledge. And we don't always know what background knowledge individuals have when it comes to learning disabilities. Again, I don't think these things should be massive, 12-page reports, either. So how do you balance getting enough information so everyone's on the same page without completely overloading people?

[Usha James] Yeah, really good question. So I think the "Learning for All" document provides some samples. So what we've noticed, and you'll see that in the teacher-generated tools that I briefly showed, is that the idea is teachers, educators need to think about how much do they need. And so thinking, taking a more constructivist approach to thinking about what do I need to know now, and then having

some space for that to grow as you learn more. I think what we've heard from educators is we need something that's manageable, easy to reference. But you also need something that's rich. And so one of the things that I've noticed with some people that I'm working with is they start with a single page that's easy to reference and that's organized in a way that captures the most important learning from all those other documents so there's no need to have the entire OSR copied and in your possession.

[Usha James] That's not what we're talking about. What we're talking about is when you look through the OSR, what is the kernel that you're going to pull out of there that's gonna be helpful for you in your assessment and your instruction, your planning. What we've seen is that they start with a single page. But as they learn more, that might grow over the course of the year. And so I know somebody who has a binder for information divided by each kid's name. And in that, there's just sort of a few pages of the things that they are knowing, learning about their learners. So it can take many forms. But the most important thing is that it's useful for the educator in their planning.

[Host] Wonderful. And then how do you go about sharing this with let's say, I created a really great learner profile about this student, and now they're going off to the next grade or another course, perhaps, in secondary school where it's a different teacher who doesn't know them quite as well as I do. How do you go about sharing the learning you've done?

[Usha James] Yeah, really good question. So I think there are important mechanisms that need to be thought about at the school level. So thinking from an administrator's perspective, you know, what are those transition meetings like? What are the questions we ask? How do we talk about students? I worry that sometimes the bulk of those transition meetings might be about behavior. And I wonder about broadening to think about what are all the different things we know about our learners. So in terms of sharing, I think it's a, there are two sort of levels. One is what are the structures at the

school level or at the system level for sharing to make sure they're robust? And that's a question for leaders to think about. You know, I've seen many different forms of in-school team across the province. And so I think sometimes we can be trapped in the way we've always done things, but there are multiple ways to frame certain structures and think about those transitions. But for the individual educator sharing, I think it's important to draw out the most important learnings about the student, but across a number of different categories so we don't end up just talking about behavior or effort or home life or something like that. We're talking about student learning, about their cognitive processes, about what type of instructional strategies work for them, about their strengths and about their needs and how have we leveraged their strengths and how have you mitigated or supported them in their needs. I think those are some categories to think about when we're sharing.

[Host] I like that you touched on strengths and needs there. Just jumping back to the example you gave in the presentation about Dan. I think he was a fifth grade student who really enjoyed school, had lots of friends. So he's got that social-emotional side of him very well-developed and he loves class discussions. But that profile, very, very short, seemed to only show strengths. What is the value of adding a strength and what sort of balance do you want between showing the strengths of a student and the weakness, or the areas of need?

[Usha James] It's interesting. That opening profile, and the whole point of it was to be sort of incomplete so that people could think about what they needed more. As you said, it was social-emotional and preferences, loves class discussions. So those are important. We want to know students' preferences. But we also want to know what are the, what are we noticing about their cognitive processing? So what do we know about, and what do we understand from all of the sources that we've accessed, say about their working memory, about their ability to grapple with questions, about, you know, a variety of different things that we might know about their how they learn, but also most

importantly, you know, what are their strengths? When we know their strengths, part of what we're doing in the second module is looking at how do you leverage those strengths in order to help accelerate or support students in the way that they not only learn best, but that they can access information best, they can communicate best, et cetera. Of course we want to make sure, and that was sort of the point of the task about communicate to someone how you got to an unfamiliar location from your home. When you have the opportunity to use your strengths in your learning, that's gonna accelerate that learning. It's gonna deepen the learning. And I think inviting teachers to sort of stand back and say, did my instructional practice or my assessment practice actually hinder learning? Or is it helping learning? And we only can make those decisions if we understand what does help the learning of that student and where are their strengths. So knowing that upfront helps us with our planning.

[Host] Amazing, that was really well-said. Thank you so much. I think that's all we have time for question-wise today. But we understand that the viewers watching will probably have many questions of their own. So if you enter those questions into the question box, as we described earlier, we will venture to get answers to every one of their questions. All right, I think that is good for today. What do you think, Usha?

[Usha James] I think that, too. Thank you so much to all of you for viewing. And I hope, again, that you're safe and well. And please do not hesitate to be in touch. So the last slide that I showed had contact information. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if there's anything we can help with, or if you're having trouble finding the facilitator's guide or if you wanna learn more.

[Host] So that is all we have time for today. We're gonna end our question-answer session at this time. But if you have any questions that we didn't touch on today, please either email us at [info@LDatSchool.ca](mailto:info@LDatSchool.ca) or join our conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #LDwebinar. And we'll endeavor to get all your questions answered. If you

enjoyed this webinar and would like to hear about upcoming webinars and our other new resources that are coming out all the time we invite you to follow us on social media. We have a very active Twitter, as I've been referencing today. We also have a Facebook. On both of those platforms, we are @LDatSchool. Or you can sign up for our monthly newsletter. You can do so using the small link there, or wait for the email coming tomorrow, which will also include a link to our newsletter. On behalf of the entire LD@School team, I would once again like to thank Usha for this presentation and thank all of you participants for joining us. Please remember that we'll be sending out an email tomorrow. This email will include presentation slides, a copy of the resource that Usha was talking about today, Module One of the "Facilitator's Guide" of "Learning for All". It will also include a link to a survey. This is a very short survey. And the feedback we receive from this survey provides us with a lot of important information for producing future webinars. As a reminder, we'll also be sending out a link to this recorded webinar in approximately three weeks, as soon as we have the webinar transcribed and closed captioning completed. Thank you again for participating and enjoy the rest of your day.