

## Happy Disability Awareness Month!

This is a special month to celebrate and accept different abilities of those living among us. While every day should be practiced with equity and inclusion in mind, this month focuses even more precisely on the importance of this premise. As we reflect on how we make everyone feel included, it's important to go back to the basics and define, outline, and understand why meaningful inclusion in both education and in our lives should be a priority for all of us.

### DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

...THE VALUING OF DIVERSITY WITHIN THE HUMAN COMMUNITY, WHEN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS FULLY EMBRACED, WE ABANDON THE IDEA THAT CHILDREN HAVE TO BECOME "NORMAL" IN ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD... WE BEGIN TO LOOK BEYOND TYPICAL WAYS OF BECOMING VALUED MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND IN DOING SO, BEGIN TO REALIZE THE ACHIEVABLE GOAL OF PROVIDING ALL CHILDREN WITH AN AUTHENTIC SENSE OF BELONGING.\*

\*KUNC, N. (1992). THE NEED TO BELONG. REDISCOVERING MASLOW'S HIERACHY OF NEEDS.

**Inclusive education is an evidence-based practice that proves positive outcomes academically and socially for ALL STUDENTS.**

### BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

- PREPARES STUDENTS FOR REAL LIFE SCENARIOS.
- STUDENTS FEEL VALUED IN THEIR COMMUNITY AND AMONG THEIR PEERS.
- STUDENTS PERFORM HIGHER ACADEMICALLY THAN THOSE IN SEGREGATED CLASSROOMS.
- INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REDUCES DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES.
- STUDENTS CREATE STRONGER PEER TO PEER RELATIONSHIPS.
- THERE IS NO KNOWN ADVANTAGE OF BEING TAUGHT IN SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM. ALMOST 40 YEARS OF EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH PROVES ALL STUDENTS LEARN BETTER WHEN THEY ARE ALL TOGETHER.
- INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS AN EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE THAT PROVES POSITIVE OUTCOMES ACADEMICALLY AND SOCIALLY FOR ALL STUDENTS.

## WHAT IS MEANINGFUL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

- **A CLASSROOM MODEL** IN WHICH STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES ARE BASED IN A REGULAR STRUCTURE AND BENEFIT FROM THE SHARED OWNERSHIP OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS.
- **A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH BEGINNING WITH PROFILES** THAT HELP EDUCATORS APPRECIATE THE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES AND THE INDIVIDUALIZED ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT CAN BE ATTAINED.
- **A SCHEDULE** THAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE FULL RANGE OF NEEDS IN THE CLASS -- WHERE NO STUDENT ENGAGES IN "PULL OUT" OR ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES TO THE EXTENT THAT DISRUPTIONS IN THE DAILY SCHEDULE AND IN PEER RELATIONSHIPS DO NOT OCCUR.
- **A CURRICULUM** THAT IS RICH AND ACCOMMODATING FOR ALL STUDENTS -- AND WHEN FURTHER INDIVIDUALIZED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A PARTICULAR LEARNER.
- **A TEAMING PROCESS** IN WHICH SUPPORT STAFF WORK IN FLEXIBLE, COORDINATED WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP AMONG SPECIAL AND REGULAR EDUCATORS, PARENTS AND EDUCATORS, AND EDUCATORS AND THE COMMUNITY.
- **A CLASSROOM CLIMATE** THAT EMBRACES DIVERSITY, FOSTERS A SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND SUPPORTS POSITIVE PEER RELATIONSHIPS.

**IF THE STUDENT IS NOT PARTICIPATING, WITH THE PROPER SUPPORTS, IN GENERAL EDUCATION 100% OF THE TIME, THEN IT'S NOT INCLUSION.**

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS: