Reflecting on Our Practice: Ten Ways Schools Can Foster Belonging Among Students With and Without Disabilities

Erik Carter, PhD

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Why We Do What We Do

“To meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.” [emphasis added]

Promoting Progress for Students With Disabilities

Development of high-quality educational programming for students with disabilities

Implementation of high-quality educational programming for students with disabilities

Ensure access to FAPE and improve outcomes for students with disabilities
Poll

What is your current role that has led you to learn more about the statement of special education and services and aids for students with disabilities?
Meet the Presenter

Erik Carter is Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Special Education at Vanderbilt University and co-Director of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). He began his career as a high school special education teacher in San Antonio, Texas. His scholarship focuses on research-based and principle-driven strategies for supporting inclusion and valued roles for students with disabilities in school, community, and congregational settings. He has published more than 250 articles and chapters, along with six books.
FROM EXCLUSION TO EMBRACE
TEN WAYS SCHOOLS CAN FOSTER BELONGING AMONG ALL STUDENTS

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VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
WWW.ERIKWCARTER.COM
Exclusion  Segregation  Integration  Inclusion  Belonging
I know I belong when....

You belong here
REFLECTING ON OUR COMMUNITIES:

- What are we doing well right now?
- What could we be doing better or more of?
- What should we be doing entirely differently?
- What should we begin doing next?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are students with disabilities …</th>
<th>What are we doing really well right now?</th>
<th>What could we be doing better or differently?</th>
<th>What should we be doing entirely differently?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited</td>
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<td>Welcome</td>
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<td>Known</td>
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<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Befriended</td>
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<td>Needed</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Loved</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflecting on Belonging
1. TO BE

PRESENT
1 in 7 children in your school has a disability
NATIONAL PATTERNS

Separate or Other Settings
Mostly Special Education
Both
Mostly General Education

Source: www.ideadata.org
Percent of Students with Intellectual Disability Served in Regular Classes 40-100% of the Day

Source: IDEA Data
To Be Present
Are students involved in all of the same places, programs, and activities as their peers at your school?

WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW?

WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENTLY?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL?
2. TO BE INVITED
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Not Invited (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disabilities</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.nlts2.org
EVERYBODY WELCOME?
To Be Invited

Is their presence and participation actively sought out and encouraged by others at your school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT ARE WE DOING</th>
<th>WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENTLY?</th>
<th>WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
3. TO BE WELCOMED
Presence in the Classroom

M = 84.2%
Range, 20-100%

Proximity to Any Peers

M = 42.3%
Range, 0-100%

Source: Feldman et al. (2016)
"PART-TIME INCLUSION"

"Peter? He comes and goes...": First Graders' Perspectives on a Part-Time Mainstream Student

Roberta F. Schnoor
Syracuse University

Part-time integration of students with moderate and severe disabilities into regular classes has become a common feature of special education programs. How regular education students think about their school experience, including part-time mainstreaming, can be a source of information for integration efforts, but these perceptions have received little attention in the special education literature. Participant observation and in-depth interviews were employed over a 7-month period to study a first grade class in which a student described as "moderately mentally retarded" participated on a part-time basis. This study addresses this gap.

The findings reveal that these descriptions centered around Peter, the part-time mainstream student. Significant discrepancies between Peter's and his classmates' perceptions of him were identified. Peter was seen as a "late comer" among his classmates, while the teacher viewed him as a "middle" student. The perspectives of the non-disabled peers were essential in Peter's self-identification as "inconsistent attenders" and "absentees."
To Be Welcomed
Are students received by others at the school with warmth, friendliness, and authentic delight?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW?</th>
<th>WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT?</th>
<th>WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
4. TO BE

KNOWN
Intellectual disability is “characterized by SIGNIFICANT LIMITATIONS both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills.”

Autism is characterized by...

- **DEFICITS** in social-emotional reciprocity; ranging from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back and forth conversation through reduced sharing of interests, emotions, and affect and response to total lack of initiation of social interaction,

- **DEFICITS** in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction; ranging from poorly integrated-verbal and nonverbal communication, through abnormalities in eye contact and body-language, or deficits in understanding and use of nonverbal communication, to total lack of facial expression or gestures.

- **DEFICITS** in developing and maintaining relationships, appropriate to developmental level (beyond those with caregivers); ranging from difficulties adjusting behavior to suit different social contexts through difficulties in sharing imaginative play and in making friends to an apparent absence of interest in people.
To Be Known
Are students treated as unique individuals, recognized for their strengths, and appreciated for who they are?

| WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW? | WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT? | WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL? |
5. TO BE

ACCEPTED
• “We don’t really do inclusion here.”
• “We just are not equipped to serve your child.”
• “Perhaps you’d feel more comfortable at a place with a ‘special program’ for her.”
• “We aren’t really sure he will get much out of being in our typical classes.”
• “Her behaviors are a bit of a distraction.”
• “Students like her are served in our self-contained classrooms.”
Disability Awareness
To Be Accepted

Are students embraced without condition and viewed as equals by their peers?

| WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW? | WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT? | WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL? |
6. TO BE

SUPPORTED
EDUCATIONAL TRENDS: STAFFING

Source: www.ideadata.org
PEER-MEDIATED PRACTICES

Peer Support Arrangements
Peer Networks
Peer Partner Programs

https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/peer-engagement/practice-guides/introduction
To Be Supported

Are they receiving the assistance they need to participate fully and meaningfully in all aspects of the life of their school?

| WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW? | WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT? | WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL? |
7. TO BE

HEARD
A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

- Choice-making
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Goal-setting
- Self-management strategies
- Self-advocacy and leadership
- Self-awareness & self-knowledge

https://web.waisman.wisc.edu/www/naturalsupports/pdfs/FosteringSelfDetermination.pdf
To Be Heard
Are the perspectives of students sought out, listened to, and respected by others?

| WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW? | WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT? | WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL? |
8. TO BE

BEFRIENDED
“... alone we are poor, together we are rich.”

–SUE MOSTELLER
Family
Friends and Close Companions
Acquaintances (Classmates, Teammates)
Professionals and Paid Supports

Source: Biggs & Carter (2017)
### Table: Phone Calls with Friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Never or Rarely Receive Phone Calls (%)</th>
<th>Never Got Together Often from Friends (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disabilities</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disabilities</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Impairment</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.nlts2.org](http://www.nlts2.org)
Can we name people she can…

- Eat with?
- Walk with?
- Celebrate with?
- Cry with?
- Play with?
- Pray with?
- Shop with?
- Catch a movie with?
- Just hang out with?
THE “FRIENDSHIP FORMULA”

- Shared activities
- Common interests
- Regular opportunities over time
- [Sufficient support]
- [Valued roles]
To Be Befriended

Are students developing relationships with their peers that are marked by reciprocity and mutual enjoyment?

WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW?

WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL?
9. TO BE

NEEDED
To Be Needed

Are students valued by others and considered to be indispensable members of the school community?

| WHAT ARE WE DOING REALLY WELL RIGHT NOW? | WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER OR DIFFERENT? | WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT AS A SCHOOL? |
10. TO BE
LOVED
To Be Loved
Are students experiencing the deep and gracious love of others?

WHAT ARE WE DOING
REALLY WELL RIGHT
NOW?

WHAT COULD WE DO
BETTER OR DIFFERENT?

WHAT SHOULD
WE DO NEXT
AS A SCHOOL?
ALL ARE
Which portrait describes your school or district?
What would it take to move toward inclusion and belonging?
A FEW HELPFUL RESOURCES IN THIS AREA

- https://tiescenter.org
- https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu
- http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu
- http://www.swiftschools.org
- http://www.ocali.org
- https://allbelong.org
- https://intensiveintervention.org
- https://improvingliteracy.org
- https://promotingprogress.org

Creating Communities of Belonging for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Everyone wants to be valued and have a sense of belonging in their community. The need for valued belonging is true for students in a school community as well. Although belonging is equally important for all students, students with significant cognitive disabilities are less likely to experience a deep sense of belonging.

Developed to directly address the creation of school communities in which each and every student is included in all aspects of everyday school life, Creating Communities of Belonging for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities describes ten dimensions of belonging. This is a "ready to use" resource that includes a mini guide for each dimension of belonging that defines the dimension, provides snapshots of what it would look like, presents steps schools could take to promote change, and suggests areas of reflection for members of the school community. Belonging matters for everyone - check out this resource to support that outcome for each student in your school community!
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https://promotingprogress.org/news/connect-progress-center
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References


