INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES:

FOR DEAF/HARD-OF-HEARING; DEAFBLIND; AND BLIND/VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

DISCUSSING THE APPLICATION OF COMMON TERMS AND CONCEPTS IN REGARDS TO "INCLUSION" – AIMING FOR FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE IN ALL ASPECTS OF DEAF, DEAFBLIND, AND BLIND STUDENTS' LIVES.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT MY BACKGROUND… AND MY EXPERIENCES RELATED TO "INCLUSION"

- Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind

- Gooding High School

- Gallaudet University

- Western Maryland College (McDaniel College)

- Southwest Texas State University

- Maryland School for the Deaf

- Texas School for the Deaf

- Arizona Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

- Northern Arizona University

- New Mexico School for the Deaf

- Minnesota State Academies for the Deaf and the Blind

- University of Minnesota

- Professional Organizations and Conferences

DISCLAIMER

- I am not an expert on inclusion. I am trying to begin conversations and discussions by sharing what I've learned and perhaps what we need to learn so that we can all work together to improve the lives of our deaf, deafblind, and blind children. Please feel free to have conversations with me during this conference to share your thoughts and suggestions.

- In this presentation, I will primarily focus on school-age deaf, deafblind, and blind children but many of the principles I will discuss today can apply to people of all ages in different aspects of their lives.

- Many of my examples will be about deaf students because that is my "lived" experience – I hope you will utilize principles shared today with your deaf, deafblind, and blind students in your district.

SOME TERMS I WILL USE…

In this presentation, I will use the terms "Deaf", "DeafBlind", and "Blind".

For the purposes of this presentation – "Deaf" includes individuals who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. DeafBlind is a term that denotes individuals who are both Deaf and Blind (to varying degrees). "Blind" includes individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired. All three terms include individuals who may or may not have additional disabilities in addition to being Deaf, DeafBlind, or Blind.

INCLUSION

NOUN IN·CLU·SION \ IN-ˈKLÜ-ZHƏN \

Definition of INCLUSION

1: the act of <u>including</u> :the state of being <u>included</u>

2: something that is included: such as

a : a gaseous, liquid, or solid foreign body enclosed in a mass (as of a mineral)

b : a passive usually temporary product of cell activity (such as a starch grain) within the cytoplasm or nucleus

3: a relation between two classes that exists when all members of the first are also members of the second

4: the act or practice of including students with disabilities in regular school classes

INCLUDE

Definition of INCLUDE

1: to shut up: ENCLOSE

2: to take in or comprise as a part of a whole or group

3: to contain between or within two sides and the *included* angle

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a continuum of placement options be available to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The law also requires that:

"to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be attained satisfactorily. IDEA Sec. 612 (5) (B)."

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.
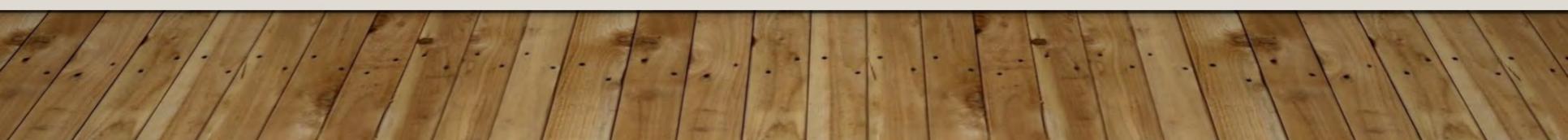
SUPREME COURT DECISION
ENDREW F. V. DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (137 S. CT.988, 2017)

The IEP must be "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances".

The student's "educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of his circumstances, just as advancement from grade to grade is appropriate ambitious for most children in the regular classroom. The goals may differ, but every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives."
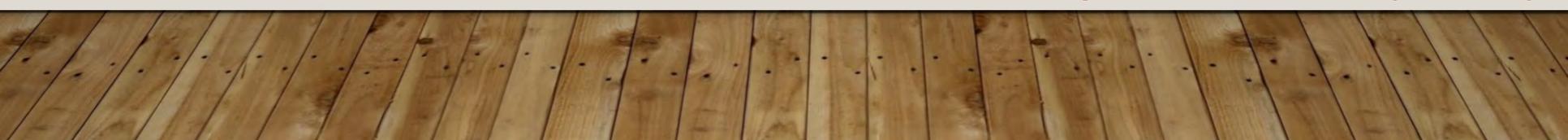
SOME COMMON FEATURES OF "OPTIMAL OR QUALITY" INCLUSION

1. Intentional, sufficient, and supported interactions between peers

2. Specialized, individualized supports

3. Family involvement

4. Inclusive, interdisciplinary services and collaborative teaming

5. A focus on critical sociological outcomes

6. Effective, ongoing administrative supports

7. Ongoing program evaluation

SOME COMMON FEATURES OF "OPTIMAL OR QUALITY" INCLUSION
(CONTINUED)

8. Access, Supports, and Participation

9. Create high expectations for every child to reach their full potential.

10. Develop a program philosophy on inclusion.

11. Establish a system of services and supports.

12. Revise program and professional standards.

13. Achieve an integrated professional development system.

14. Influence federal and state accountability systems.

DEC/NAEYC. (2009). Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute

ACCESSIBILITY VS. FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

- Concept from Video Relay Services
  - Argument for change from text-based relay services (TTY, etc.) to Video Relay Services.

- Comparison to Accessibility Features in technology for B/VI individuals – Minimal access vs. True access.

- Example of one door having a ramp vs. all doors having a ramp.

- Example of a judge determining quality of interpreter services.

- How does this apply to children in schools in Minnesota?

IMPLEMENTING FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

- How do we apply functional equivalence to inclusive education practices?

- What is truly full functional equivalence in our schools?

- What are some universal design elements that might be applied in all schools?

- What are the standards for functional equivalence?

- How do we provide this?

- Who determines functional equivalence? Who measures this? Who follows through?

APPLICATIONS IN OUR SCHOOLS: POINTS TO PONDER

- **<u>Early Intervention</u>** – How do we collaborate with parents and early intervention service providers?

- **<u>Classroom curriculum and instructional activities</u>** – Are we providing full inclusion? Are we providing functionally equivalent educational activities?

- **<u>Language development and access</u>** – Are we providing full access to language, communication, and learning? Do children have full functional equivalence in their school environment (both in and out of the classroom)? Do children have full access to language, learning, and communication in their homes?

- **<u>Assessment</u>** – How do we measure our students' growth? Are the assessment tools we use accessible in all ways (language, culture, identity)?

LISTENING TO STUDENTS' STORIES

- Inclusion means many things to different people. While we focus on language, education, communication, and social development needs of our children, we cannot forget the cultural and identity development of our students.

- In advocacy, we must consider aligning ourselves with other oppressed or marginalized groups. It is difficult to justify changes for ourselves if we continue to oppress or marginalize others. (race, cultural identity, other disability groups, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.)

- In planning our curriculum and educational activities, we should not only focus on the "disability" but include experiences from other minority groups.

- In our work with families and cultural groups, we must consider how our "norms" interact with the norms of their culture and life experiences.

RESOURCES – UTILIZING OUR PARTNERS

Collaborating with others and having conversations about accessibility, functional equivalence, and inclusion.   Some examples:

- Minnesota State Academies for the Deaf and the Blind (www.msa.state.mn.us)
- Minnesota Resource Libraries (Housed at the Minnesota State Academies)
- Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans
- Department of Employment and Economic Development (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/State Services for the Blind)
- MDE and Regional Low Incidence Facilitators (DeafBlind Project, DeafBlind Intervener training, etc.)
- Parent Organizations: Hands and Voices; PACER; etc.
- Community Organizations: Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens; National Federation of the Blind; American Council of the Blind,
- National Education Organizations – Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB – www.cosbvi.org) : Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD – www.ceasd.org); National Association of State Directors of Special Education. (http://www.nasdse.org/docs/nasdse-3rd-ed-7-11-2019final.pdf)

APPLICABILITY OF CONCEPTS OUTSIDE OF EDUCATION

- Olmstead Plan

- Job Placement and Supports

- WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)

- Senior Citizen Living Centers

- Post-Graduation Education and Training

- Accessibility of community events and activities

THINGS I HOPE YOU REMEMBER

- Minimal Accessibility vs. Functional Equivalence

- The value of building relationships and utilizing available resources

- Utilizing expertise of individuals who have the "lived experience" rather than "book knowledge" related to a disability

- Consistency and frequency of efforts to educate others

- The value of including (truly including) everyone – students, parents, family members, community members.

- Working towards common ground/understanding for the future of our Deaf, DeafBlind, and Blind children