For Immediate Release

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2006 NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK™ TO FOCUS ON TRANSITION PLANNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

6th annual celebration expected to break participation records

Newton, MA —The 6th Annual *National Inclusive Schools Week,* scheduled for December 4-8, 2006, highlights and celebrates the progress our nation's schools have made in using inclusive practices to ensure a quality education for an increasingly diverse student population, including students with disabilities, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, and English language learners. The organizers of the *Week* today announced the theme for the 2006 celebration— *Charting an Inclusive Journey through School, Work, and Life: Successful Transition Planning for All Students.*

Each year, the *Week* focuses on a particularly challenging area or aspect of integrating inclusive practices into the school experience. "We are excited about this unique opportunity to bring much needed attention around transition planning," said David Riley, Executive Director of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, a chief sponsor of the *Week*. "School professionals across the country are being held accountable for effectively planning student transitions, but are often left without the tools, resources, or professional collaboration to meet these objectives. Families also need these tools and resources." The *Week* will actively collect, compile, and develop a pool of resources designed to support educators, students, and parents in planning effective transitions.

Throughout a student's academic career, he or she will experience many transitions—from elementary to middle school, from middle to high school,

National Inclusive Schools Week

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and from high school to post-secondary education or work. These changes can be difficult even for students who have the best supports, but for students with disabilities, English language learners, and those with little community support, these transitions can make the difference between success and failure. Inclusive schools and communities guide children and youth along a personalized and supportive path, which can ensure smoother transitions and, ultimately, success.

The *2006 National Inclusive Schools Week* will highlight resources and literature that educators and families can use to prepare students to manage and embrace change, as well as various tools to teach self-advocacy and self-determination skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Numerous resources, materials, and products are available on the website throughout the year to help schools plan for the *Week* and spread the message that inclusive practices benefit all students. An updated Celebration Kit, which will include publications that speak to the benefits of inclusive schools, celebration ideas, lesson plans, and other publications, will be released later this year on www.inclusiveschools.org.

With widespread and meaningful participation across the U.S. and in several foreign nations, the *5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week* (December 5-9, 2005) was the most successful yet. The *Week* was celebrated in thousands of schools in virtually all 50 states. There were 500,000 hits to www.inclusiveschools.org and a record 60,000 Celebration Kits were downloaded. Additionally, 100,000 posters, pencils, and stickers were disseminated, and more than 50 association and corporate partners promoted the *Week*. The White House recognized the event with a message of support and appreciation to parents and educators, as well as the organizers of this celebration that seeks to develop schools and communities that are welcoming of all children and youth. It is anticipated that the 2006 *Week* will build upon this momentum and break participation records.

About *National Inclusive Schools Week*: An initiative of Education Development Center, *National Inclusive Schools Week* is celebrated annually the first week in December by schools, professional organizations, and cultural associations across the country and abroad.