National Inclusive Schools Week Proclamation Toolkit

In this brief toolkit, you will find information and inspiration for obtaining formal designations of *Inclusive Schools Week* in your school district in community and a sample proclamation.

Approaching the School Board

Activity: Everyone Has Something to Bring to the Table

Many of those who celebrate *National Inclusive Schools Week* have successfully obtained proclamations from their local schools boards. This is a wonderful way to raise district and community wide awareness of the benefits of inclusive practices. To make the most of your meeting with the committee, consider involving the members in a demonstration of an inclusive practice to show them how these educational strategies benefit and engage all students. Here's one activity that's easy, fun, and effective.

Materials: Index cards, Pen/pencils, Bulletin board

Time for activity: 15 minutes

To introduce the activity, "Everyone Has Something to Bring to the Table," pass out an index card to each school committee member and ask them to imagine that they are students in your classroom and that you are about to begin a new unit on _____ (use your imagination on this part/insert your favorite historical figure or event here). Instruct them to write down just one fact on this topic, ask them to post it on the bulletin board, and return to their seats. Make accommodations for committee members as necessary, or briefly explain how you might accommodate students with disabilities in the classroom. When everyone is done, read aloud from each of the cards. Little commentary is needed on the answers, just acknowledgment and encouragement for the various responses, which are a preview of what will be covered in the unit. Everyone will have an opportunity to contribute. Their answers likely will be diverse and together will form a rich collection of knowledge that students are more likely to remember than if were simply presented in a lecture or from a textbook. School committee members will be excited that you are using innovative techniques to engage students in learning.

There are many positive aspects about this activity. It tells students that they already know something about the unit they are about to study and shows them that they can learn a lot from each of their classmates. It gives everyone the floor, rather than just a few students. Be sure to point out all of these benefits to school committee members. The wonderful thing about this activity is that by engaging the members in this exercise they will see just how effective inclusive practices can be. You will surely liven up the meeting!

Following the activity, be sure to share information about *National Inclusive Schools Week* and details about your celebration plans. Ask them to officially declare the first week in December *Inclusive Schools Week* with a proclamation (a sample proclamation is available on www.inclusiveschools.org). They will surely oblige, especially now that you have won them over!

Approaching the Governor and State Legislature

A Grassroots Effort to Build Inclusive Schools and Communities in New Jersey

How a group of parent and advocacy organizations rallied together to obtain an annual statewide proclamation of New Jersey Inclusive Schools Week

In 2001, under the leadership of the New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education, a coalition of organizations (Statewide Parent Advocacy Network/New Jersey's federally funded Parent Training and Information Center, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Family Voices-New Jersey, among others) wrote to the New Jersey Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the Director of the state's Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, and several legislators, requesting that the governor identify the first week of December as *New Jersey Inclusive Schools Week*. Follow up phone calls were made to the Governor's proclamation office to ensure that the proclamation was issued on time.

In addition to the gubernatorial proclamation, the New Jersey State Legislature also issued legislative proclamations for *Inclusive Schools Week.* An *Inclusive Schools Week* proclamation has been issued each year since 2001. The gubernatorial proclamations are featured on the Web sites of the organizations who are part of the coalition, and are disseminated to local school districts along with sample daily public service announcements for school PA systems, local School Board resolutions, and the activities packets developed for *National Inclusive Schools Week*.

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Sample Proclamation

WHEREAS; The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative and Education Development Center, Inc.. has designated the week of December 4-8, 2006, as *NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK*; and

WHEREAS; [YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] is committed to providing the [YOUR CITY OR TOWN'S] children an education in schools and classrooms that are welcoming and capable of educating all the City's children;

WHEREAS; The educators of [YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] recognize that each child is unique, learns differently, and, therefore, learns better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interests; and

WHEREAS; The educators and families of [YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] have been working hard to ensure that our classrooms and schools are characterized as being high performing and inclusive; and

WHEREAS; By their efforts to make our schools and classrooms high performing and inclusive, the educators and families of the [YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] have contributed significantly to building a stronger and more inclusive [YOUR CITY OR TOWN] community; and

WHEREAS; The educators and families of [YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT deserve to celebrate their successes and wish to reflect on how they might even further improve;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That [YOUR SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT] join with the Collaborative and EDC in declaring the week of December4-8, 2006, as *INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK* in the [YOUR CITY OR TOWN] and encourage schools and classrooms across the [CITY/TOWN] to sponsor appropriate learning and community-building activities in its recognition.