

The 10 Dimensions of Belonging: What You See, *Hear & Feel* When ALL Learners are Included



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Introduction





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Supports states, districts and schools on inclusive practices and policies with a focus on K-12 students with extensive support needs
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Today, we will:

- Understand the 10 Dimensions of Belonging for all students, families and staff
- Understand the linkage between Belonging and inclusive organizational cultures
- Consider what Belonging looks like in everyday practices
- Be familiar with a resource for reflecting on Belonging in your organizations



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Inclusive Schools Benefit Every Learner

Differentiated instruction increases student engagement and learning.

Academic supports help each student access the full curriculum.

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral supports help maintain a positive, safe, and supportive learning environment for everyone.

Respect for diversity creates a welcoming environment for all.

Inclusive practices make effective use of a school's resources.

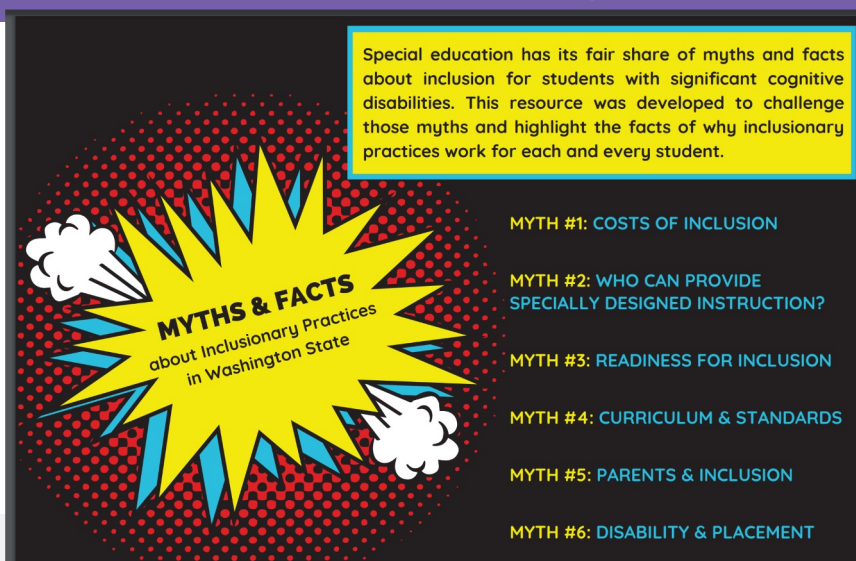
WA Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction



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Myths and Facts about Inclusionary Practices in Washington State

Special education has its fair share of myths and facts about inclusion for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This resource was developed to challenge those myths and highlight the facts of why inclusionary practices work for each and every student.



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Carter & Biggs on Belonging

“This long journey from *exclusion* to *segregation* to *integration* to *inclusion* has been a protracted and winding process. Movement has not always been in one direction and progress has sometimes stalled. Indeed, all four of these terms could be used to describe aspects of the educational experiences of students with significant cognitive disabilities in nearly every state and country....Yes, students should be included in all aspects of everyday school life. But they should also participate in ways that lead to a deep sense of belonging. School should be a place of *belonging* for every student.”



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District's Mission & Vision

- Does the district's vision and mission include students with disabilities?
- Does the district's vision and mission include students with extensive support needs?
- Does the district “walk its talk” in its vision and mission statements when looking at the practices for all students?



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Think of a time where you felt like you belonged.
What did it feel like?
How do you act?

Think of a time where you felt like you did not belong.
What did it feel like?
How did you act?

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BELONGING

- Needed
- Present
- Invited
- Welcomed
- Known
- Accepted
- Involved
- Supported
- Heard
- Befriended

10 Essential Dimensions of Belonging

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Belonging is a universal human need that is fundamentally linked to learning and well-being.

(Healey, K. & Stroman, C., 2021)



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Being Present

- Are students **present, or involved in**, in the same places, programs, and activities as their peers at your school?



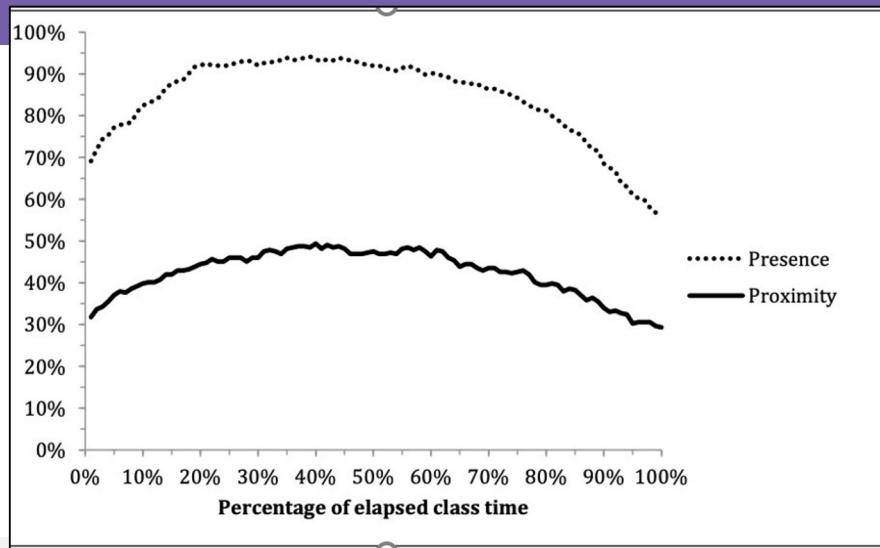
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**So What?
What results
are evident?**

| Statewide Changes in LRE | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 19-20 | 20-21 | 21-22 |
| LRE 1 | 57.7% | 60.0% | 62.4% |
| LRE 2 | 28.4% | 26.3% | 24.3% |
| LRE 3 | 12.4% | 12.2% | 11.6% |

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Presence in the classroom & Proximity to Peers

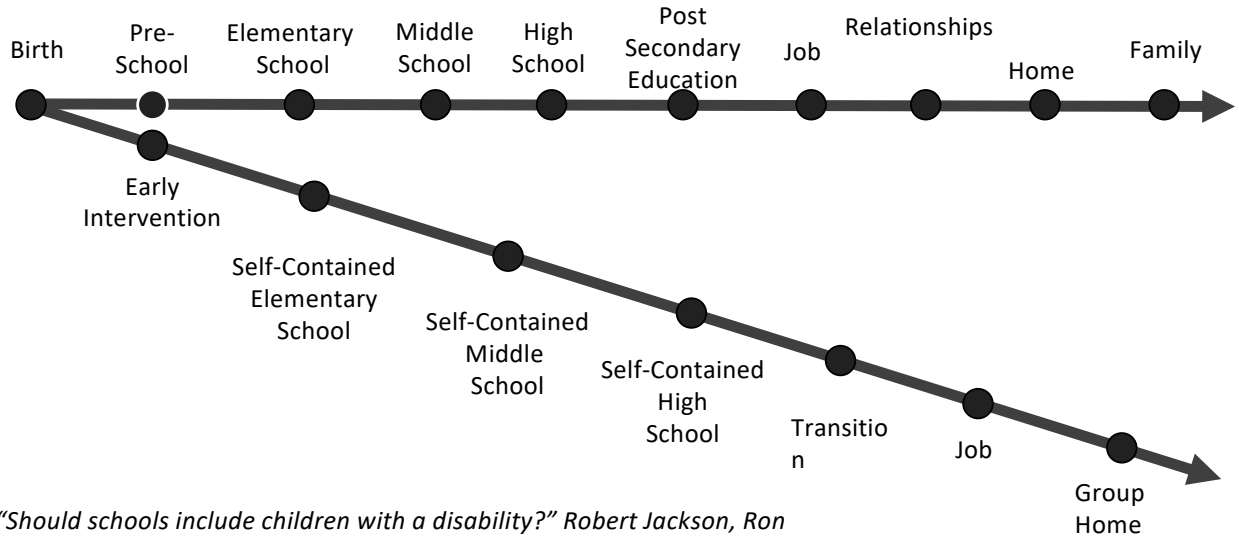


Feldman, Carter, Asmus, & Brock (2016)

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Thinking about Inclusion



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“For every student who remains educationally segregated there are other students with similar attributes, abilities, and needs who are successfully included.

This simple fact suggests that whether a student with a disability is meaningfully included may have less to do with his or her characteristics and more to do with the attitudes, skills, structure, and practices of the adults responsible for providing education.”

MICHAEL GIANGRECO, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT



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Being Invited

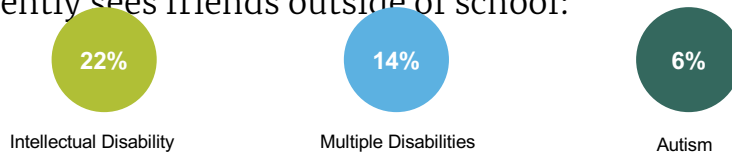
To be invited is to have your presence or participation sought out by another person.



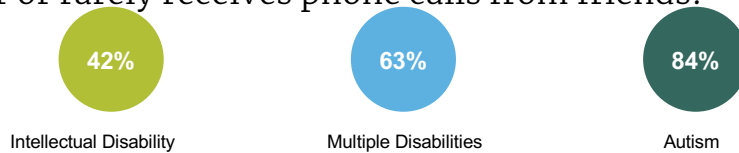
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Friendships During Adolescence (Source: nlts2.org)

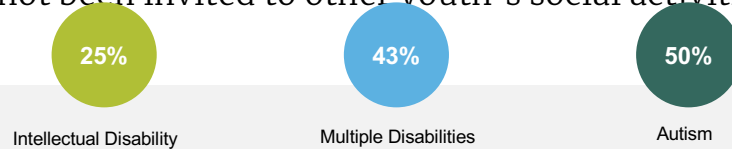
Frequently sees friends outside of school:



Never or rarely receives phone calls from friends:



Have not been invited to other youth's social activities during the past year:

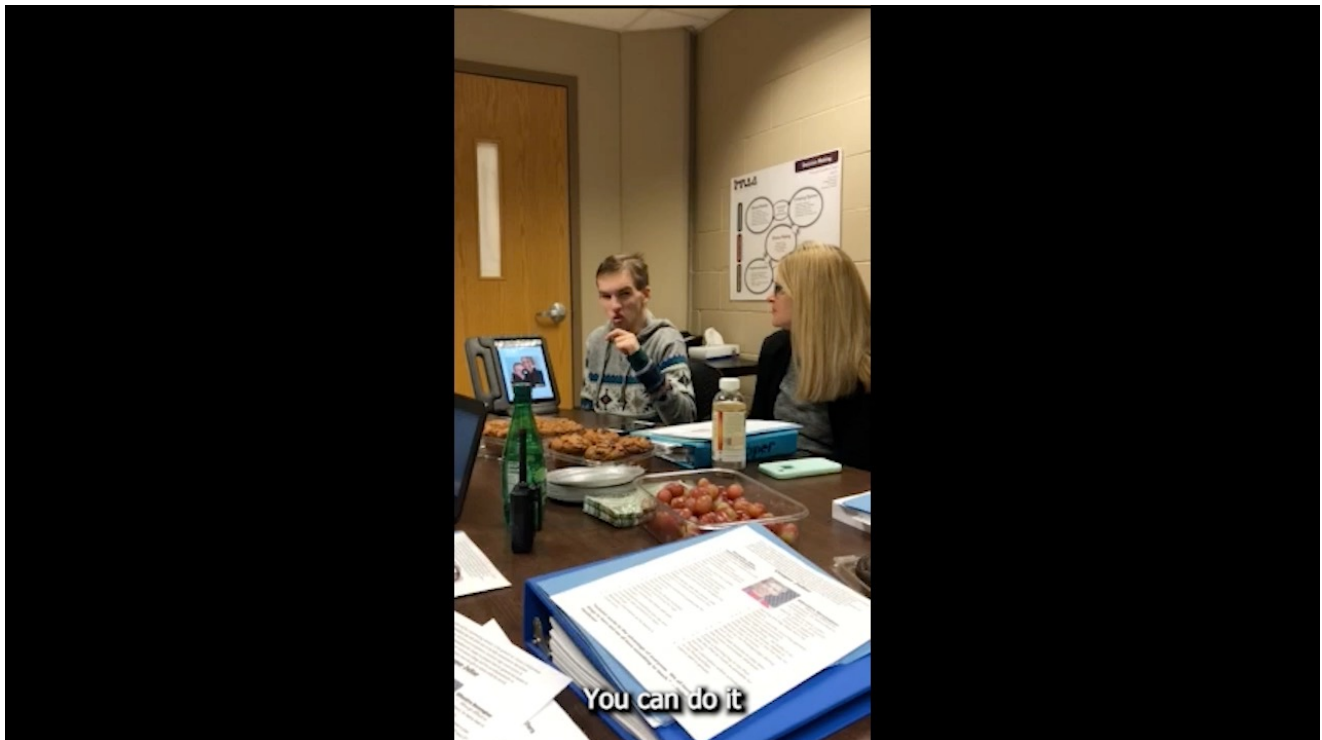


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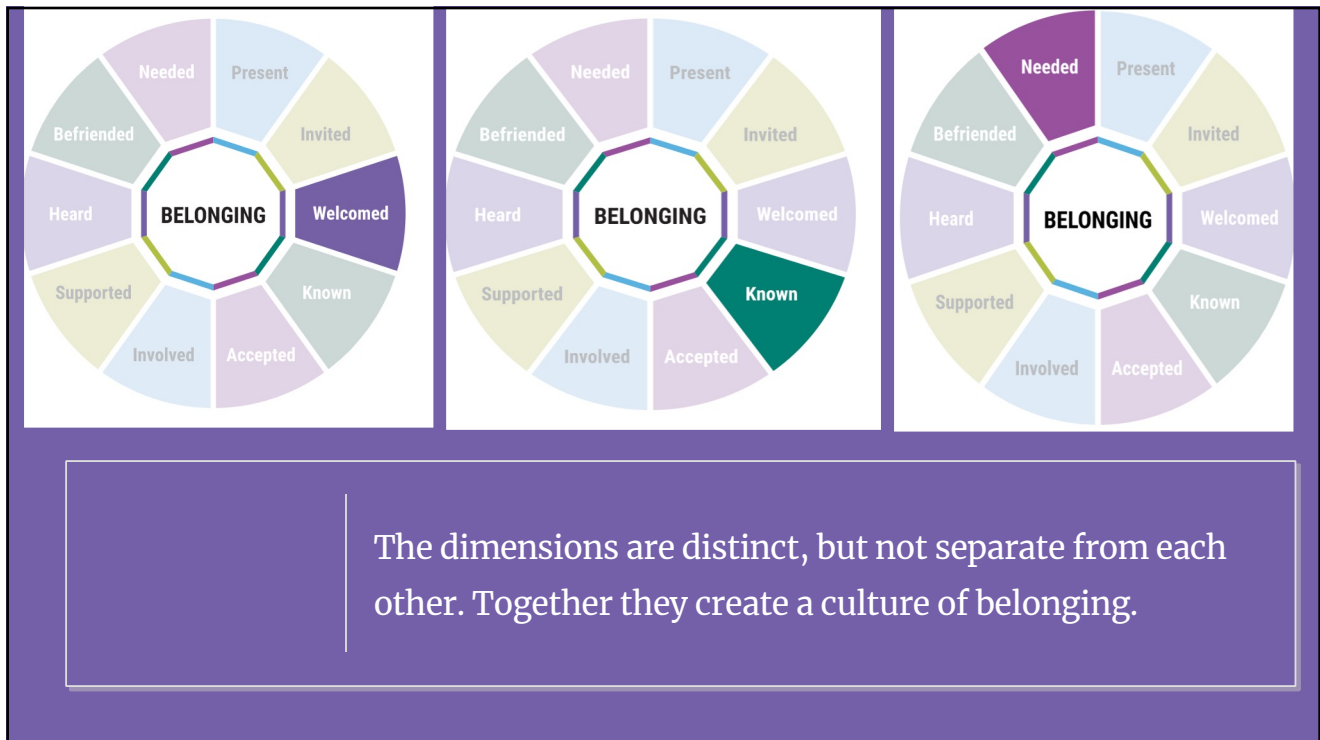
Being Heard



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Actions send a message

"And, the super sad part...no one cares. When my 9 year old was sick for a few days, I had countless emails from his teacher checking on him. Same with my little two when they miss daycare. Because they are loved.

*But not [my son with autism]....My mama heart is broken.
Because I see his value. I know his worth. He matters.
He matters so much."*

Instagram post from parent: Findingcoopersvoice

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Gabriel (a WA 5th grader) who loves music; Plays in his school Band; Is part of Chess Club; He receives special education services under the category of intellectual disability

Jen (Mom): Gabriel was sick for a week; Both his general & special ed teachers called to check on him; His general education teacher said that she hoped he got better soon and that his classmates missed him. His classmates were upset they were not able to partner with him in activities.

These calls were brief but very meaningful. They meant a lot as a parent. And, they meant a lot to Gabriel.

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Being Invited,
becomes
Being Involved



Questions for Reflection

- Notice whether students with significant cognitive disabilities are participating in the same breadth of class and school activities as other students. To what extent is the presence or absence of invitations impacting this involvement?
- Ask fellow teachers what (if anything) makes them hesitant or resistant to having students with significant cognitive disabilities in their classes or programs. What steps could you take to address or alleviate those concerns?
- Develop a list of activities, clubs, or programs at your school. What are some ways you could share these opportunities with students with disabilities and their families in ways that would encourage greater involvement

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Belonging Reflection Tool

- Tool for team reflection on how belonging is experienced by students with disabilities
- Invite diverse perspectives to share unique insights and recommendations
- Questions invite *celebration, action and improvement*
- Good reflection should culminate in observable action (Forest & Pearpoint, 1997)

Belonging Reflection Tool



Although individuals can use this reflection tool, it is designed for collaborative reflection. To the greatest extent possible, talk with and listen to others at your school (e.g., teachers, related service providers, school counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, families, students with and without disabilities). For each of the ten dimensions of belonging, reflect on what you are doing well and what could be done better or differently. To ensure this reflection leads to observable action, agree on taking at least three actionable steps that will make a noticeable difference in promoting inclusion and belonging at your school.

| Dimensions of belonging | What are we doing <i>really well right now in this area?</i> | What could we be doing <i>better or differently in this area?</i> |
|---|---|--|
| Present Are students involved in all of the same spaces and activities as their peers? | | |
| Invited Is the presence and participation of students actively sought out and encouraged by others at their school? | | |
| Welcomed Are students received by others at the school with warmth, friendliness, and authentic delight? | | |
| Known Are students viewed as unique individuals, recognized by their strengths, and appreciated for who they are? | | |

Forest, M., & Pearpoint, J. (1997). *Four Easy Questions*. Inclusion Press.



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References & Resources



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