

Disability Awareness in Wake County Public School System

October 2008



Goals for Presentation:

- Provide disability awareness information so that WCPSS employees and students are informed.
- Provide information specific to WCPSS-Special Education Services so that departments are aware of available resources.



Abridged History of Disability Law

- 1920 *Smith-Fess Vocational Rehabilitation Act* (which was in response to veterans returning from war, and amended after additional wars to reflect changes in availability of new rehabilitation therapies).
- 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka KS* (gave equal protections)
- 1973 *Rehabilitation Act* (redirected the Vocational Rehabilitation program to focus on severely disabled individuals)



Abridged History of Disability Law

- 1975 **Education for All Handicapped Children Act** also known as PL 94-142 was the first law to mandate free, appropriate public education for all children with disabilities
- 1990 **Americans with Disabilities Act** gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.



Abridged History of Disability Law

PL 94-142 was codified as Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2000 and requires public schools to:

- make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs.
- develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for each child. The specific special education and related services outlined in each IEP reflect the individualized needs of each student.
- follow particular procedures in the development of the IEP. Each student's IEP must be developed by a team of knowledgeable persons and must be at least reviewed annually. The team includes the child's teacher; the parents, subject to certain limited exceptions; the child, if determined appropriate; an agency representative who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education; and other individuals at the parents' or agency's discretion.
- Provide information to parents in the case that there is disagreement with the proposed IEP. This information informs parents that they can request a due process hearing and a review from the State educational agency if applicable in that state.



Abridged History of Disability Law

- IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 which focused on:
 - Access to the general education curriculum and state/local assessments
 - Reduction of the need to label children
 - Addressing the disproportionate number of minority children identified
 - Provision of early intervening services
 - Provision of researched-based interventions



People First Language

- Important to remember when communicating with or about people with disabilities e.g. “person with autism” not “autistic person”
- Focusing on the person...not the disability.
- Don't pity...and don't put forth the “heroes who have overcome adversity.”
- Sharing common thinking, but not speaking for all people with disabilities



Wishes from Special Education Students

Students

- I wish my friends would joke with me.
- I wish adults would stop shouting at me like I can't hear.
- I wish people would remember that I don't always spell well.
- I wish my friends would have more patience with me.
- I wish my teacher would call on me for "Share Day".
- I wish everyone would just give me enough time to say what I'm thinking.
- I wish I could walk and talk like my sister and brother.

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Let's Hear From Some People with Disabilities:

"The thing that I hate the worst, even worse than IVs in the hospital, is when people whisper behind my back and when they tell me how brave I am. Like I had a choice about all of this!"

"You don't LOOK like you have cancer!"
(autism, diabetes, asthma, etc.)



"My brother has cystic fibrosis. I hate it when he coughs and people tell my mom she should take him to the doctor for his cold. They act like she isn't taking good care of him. They even say, 'he shouldn't be out in stores when he is sick like that.' It really bugs me, cause my mom works hard to take care of my brother."



"Or how about when people's kids ask, 'Why's he in that wheelchair?' and the parents say, 'Shh... Don't you ever ask questions like that!!!' and drag their kid away like Owen is gonna give them some disease or like the kid is in big trouble or something? I hate that!!! I wish that people would ask more questions, instead of acting like Owen is some sort of freak."



"I've had Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA) since I've been 12 years old. The only time it acts up bad now is when it rains. I've had a hard time because by looking at me you wouldn't be able to tell I was sick at all and on certain days I don't even feel sick which makes people tell me that I fake it. Even the teachers give me a hard time. Some days I'm fine running around the hall and doing what a normal kid is able to do. And other days I can't even hold a pencil."



"Psoriasis: It is not fun having this; All of the kids tease me; But why, I ask? What if they were stuck in my body; what if they had a disease? So many what if's, and for 10-year-old me, so many 'you have its'."

“He looks so tired, you need to take him home to get a nap.”



"It really drives me nuts when people say that only old people get arthritis. I've had a type of arthritis called ankylosing spondylitis since 5th grade and it totally destroyed my hip joint. I sure wish that people would not say that if I would do this or that I would get rid of the arthritis - like I am not trying hard enough."



"I shake sometimes, and bad words come out of my mouth from nowhere. I wish people knew that I cannot help what my body does, and what my mouth says during those times. I don't know why it happens. What I do know is that the words kids use to tease me stick to me like they were superglued on. I am really not a freak. Really!"



"I was recently diagnosed with Celiac Disease, which means I have to remain for life on a "gluten-free" diet. I can't even eat a crumb of wheat, oats, rye, barley and many other processed foods without getting very, very ill. I lost a lot of weight before I was diagnosed, and people started being mean to me, telling me that I was faking being sick, it was just in "my head" , and that I must be anorexic. Even now, if someone tries to give me a donut and I say no thank-you or that I can't, they tell me, "Oh, its low fat if that's what you're worried about!" I hate being judged like that. I never chose to be on this diet!"



"I've always been very short and people assume I'm six when I'm really thirteen. I hate it when I get patted on the head and told I'm so cute. Gross."

"I have a problem with my eyes-- they blink a lot and it looks like I squint, too. The kids make fun of me by blinking or squinting just like me and I hate it!"



Do's and Don'ts

When you meet someone who has a disability, say 'Hello'. **Make eye contact** and give yourself time to get to know that person like you would with any new acquaintance.

- **DO** use person-first language, especially in print.
- **DON'T** mention a disability if it is not relevant.
- **DO** use specific terminology.
- **DON'T** make someone a hero for an ordinary feat.
- **DO** greet people at their eye level.
- **DON'T** worry about common phrases.
- **DO** respect personal space.
- **DON'T** always assume that tone of voice, laughter, and facial expression are accurate.



Siblings of People with Disabilities

- Keep siblings informed.
- Encourage emotional expression.
- Let siblings choose whether to be involved in care giving.
- Attention and rewards.
- Make connections with other siblings



Transitioning to Adulthood

- A vision of the future.
- Never too early to start planning.
- Dream big.
- Self-determination skills.
- Consider the culture



What drives kids with disabilities NUTS!

- People make like it's a big deal, as if illness stops you from having a life.
- Plans have to be cancelled at the last minute because of illness or treatments.
- Parents nag... "take your medicine....do your treatments...brush your teeth.....do your homework....pick up your room...get to sleep..."
- Birthday Parties & Sleepovers are for others. "It's often out of the question that we go because of meds and treatments and things, but everyone else gets to go. Later, when kids talk about the sleepover at school, imagine how we feel."
- They miss out on organized sports because coaches don't understand the illness.



WCPSS:

Special Education Services:

- Is committed to both the spirit and the letter of the law that protect the rights of these students and their families
- Works to ensure that every student will exit the school system to either meaningful work and/or further education
- Responsible for the administration of federal, state, and local funding for special education and related services



WCPSS – SES Services Include:

Adapted Curriculum
Adapted Physical
Education
Assistive Technology
Audiology
Elementary
Secondary
Preschool Services
Transition Services

Reading
Math
Writing
Behavior
Autism
Occupational Therapy
Speech Therapy
Physical Therapy
Vision and Hearing
Impaired



Resources:

<http://www.fsnncc.org/>

<http://www.disabilityresources.org/NORTH-CAROLINA.html>

<http://old.nichcy.org/stateshe/nc.htm>

<http://www.ncatp.org/>

<http://www.victoryjunction.org>

<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/general/disability-awareness.html>

<http://www.disabilityfilms.co.uk/categories.htm>

<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/ThDnPity.htm>



Films involving disabilities:

<http://www.disabilityfilms.co.uk/categories.htm>

Films categorized by disability:

Amnesia

Amputee

Autism

Blind

Cancer

Deaf

Disfigurement

Dwarf(ism)

General

Learning Difficulty

Limb & Spinal

Mental Disability

Polio & Post-Polio

Stuttering

Documentaries



Did We Meet Our Goals?

- Provide disability awareness information so that employees and students are informed.
- Provide information specific to WCPSS-Special Education Services so that departments are aware of available resources.
- Questions??? Contact WCPSS - Special Education Services - 858-3141

