



## M-S F2F Newsletter

# INCLUSION

"THEY AREN'T GIVING YOU A HARD TIME, THEY ARE *HAVING* A HARD TIME" — UNKNOWN

NO ONE SHOULD FEEL THEY DON'T BELONG HERE.

Last week Memorial Spaulding celebrated Inclusion with activities in each grade level that opened the conversation about differences. All grades read books about respecting differences and had some in-depth conversations about being a bystander or an ally.

All students at Memorial Spaulding were given daily challenges announced over the school speaker each morning by their peers. Students were also given a post-it note and were asked to finish this sentence, "I stand up and sit tall for inclusion by..." Their completed notes will be displayed on posters on the school walls.

### DISCUSSIONS AT HOME

- What daily challenges did your child learn about inclusion?
- Which challenge did he/she complete during Inclusion week?
- How does your child "stand up and sit tall for inclusion?"

M-S parent liaison from the Newton Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) Irene Margolin-Katz, along with Principal Morris and Vice Principal Andrea Youngsman hosted a Principal Coffee on Thurs. 12/7 for

parents to better understand how inclusion works in our school.

### MEMORIAL SPAULDING DATA

We have 76 students receiving special education services at M-S. That is 17% of our students.

The additional cost for these services is provided by the District and follows the child to each school they attend. It is important to note this does not take from any other student.

In addition to the existing co-taught classrooms in some of the upper grades at M-S, this year M-S became 1 of 3 Newton schools selected to participate in a pilot program: Kindergarten Co-Taught Classroom. Co-teaching is an instructional method that pairs a General Teacher and a Special Ed Teacher in the same classroom, and has shown to be successful in the grades 3-5.

Throughout the district, a majority of classrooms are inclusive. An inclusive classroom is a classroom where special and general education students learn side-by-side, with appropriate supports for special education students provided as required for them to be successful learners.

### QUICK FACT:

*An inclusion classroom simply means:*  
The needs of EVERY single student in our community are met and respected in the general classroom

**We are ALL different.** We started this newsletter with the hope of instilling compassion, tolerance and kindness for what we may not understand. And we hope you will help us.

Educational Disability categories include a variety of issues. Many issues are not obvious nor apparent therefore, not understood. Here are some examples:

- Autism
- Developmental Delay
- Communication Impairment
- Health
- Intellectual
- Neurological
- Specific Learning Disability
- Emotional
- Physical
- Sensory

*Read a Letter from a parent...*  
(Continue on the reverse side)

**From a Parent in our M-S community:**

Dear Families and friends of M-S, I've struggled with my son's issues at school and want to share my story with you...

As many of you know, the benefits of living in Newton are countless. And we may all have different reasons to feel this way. . . but I will say that the diversity of our community is one of the absolute highlights for our family. Growing up in a community where most people practiced the same religion, looked alike and all had last names ending in the preverbal "Italian vowel", I didn't have the same opportunities to know the world around me and appreciate the beauty of our differences as my children do now.

Not only are we an ethnically and religiously diverse community but our school district is a leader in its way of educating students in what is called Inclusion. The inclusion model is that which special education services are provided in the classroom whenever possible. This means children that need support in just about ANYTHING are not pulled out of class unnecessarily. Your child or his/her friends may receive academic help in class, a friend may lean on the help if a teacher aide for anxiety, social/emotional challenges, or physical assistance so they may get the same education as their peers in the way that works for them. Our children not only become richer for growing up in a school that supports ALL learning styles and differences, but in one that does not exclude children based on these differences.

Our kids are learning empathy, patience and understanding. My child with a disability is an active part of his class. He's fostering peer relationships and he's modeling behavior he sees in class that he may not have been exposed to if he was not included in the general classroom.

Sometimes this brings about difficult questions at home. When my child's best friend needs to leave the room because of extreme anxiety or my other child wonders about someone's physical difference, I welcome these learning

opportunities. This is my chance to continue the important conversations that happen in school. I reinforce that we are all different. We all learn in different ways, we look different and we have our own set of challenges. It is something to be celebrated and supported and they will grow up all the better for being exposed to different challenges.

Please remember you may not know that my son is socially challenged. Please be kind to all kids with behaviors you do not understand.

Together we can foster a nurturing environment for every single child to thrive in our community.

Thank you for reading this.

**FAIR IS NOT ALWAYS EQUAL.**

Teaching is a lot like Doctoring

Kids go to a doctor **with different needs:**

- I scraped my knee!
- My stomach hurts!
- I think my arm is broken!
- I have a cough!

What if the doctor said the **same thing** to all of them?

Here's some cough medicine!

Only **one kid** would get what he needs. **And that's not fair.**

**It's the same thing in a classroom.**

Every student has **different needs:**

- I have trouble focusing for more than 15 min.
- I think better when my hands are busy.
- I can talk about what I know better than I can write about it.
- I can't grip a pen or pencil.

So **different things** should get **different things** to help them succeed.

- Classroom breaks: kids take over multiple days
- Fidget toys and tactile activities
- Creating a video instead of composing writing on a paper
- Modified writing utensils; writing on a computer instead

**And that's what makes a classroom fair for everyone!**

Adapted from Teaching Everyone by Whitney Rapp and Katrina Arndt and Universal Design for Learning in Action by Whitney Rapp. www.brockmusepublishing.com | 1-800-638-3775.

**INCLUSION BOOKS TO READ WITH YOUR CHILDREN:**

- We're All Wonders
- Hooway for Wodney Wat
- Nobody Knew What To Do
- The Invisible Boy
- My Name is Yoon
- Say Something
- Chrysanthemum
- Pebble
- Yoko
- Odd Velvet

**One of our critical Core Values:**

**KINDNESS:** *Students should:*

- ◆ Value human differences
- ◆ Demonstrate consideration for the thoughts and feelings of others
- ◆ Help each other overcome obstacles to learning
- ◆ Show respect for themselves, each other, teaching and learning, and property
- ◆ Be respectful and responsible human beings who can contribute to the larger world

**REFERENCES & RESOURCES**

For more information on or to be more involved in **Special Education** at our school, please contact Irene Margolin-Katz at [rakushka@yahoo.com](mailto:rakushka@yahoo.com)

To learn more about the National Organization of Inclusive Schools Week and some of the activities offered in schools, please visit [inclusiveschools.org](http://inclusiveschools.org)

**GLOSSARY**

Definition of **in-clusion**

Pronunciation: in-<sup>1</sup>klü-zhən

Function: *noun*

**1** : the act of including : the state of being included

\*Merriam-Webster Student Dictionary

**ABOUT THE M-S F2F NEWSLETTER**

This is the first monthly installment of a Memorial Spaulding parent led newsletter *Family to Family*. We plan to cover topics that will help foster an understanding and appreciation of our differences- in learning styles, disabilities, cultural challenges and beyond. If you have ideas or wish to write a short essay for families in an upcoming issue, please contact:

**Michele Safar** at [mdivito@gmail.com](mailto:mdivito@gmail.com) -or-

**Ann Chinchilla DeGeorge** at [ann.c.degeorge@gmail.com](mailto:ann.c.degeorge@gmail.com)