


NATIONAL CENTER  
on Inclusion Toward  
**Rightful Presence**



**Rightful Presence**  
**Cultivating True Belonging in**  
**Wisconsin**

# Today

- SWIFT and Wisconsin Partnership
- Inclusion in Isolation
- Rightful Presence
- Learnings and Applications

# Your partners in this work



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SWIFT Education Center is a national research and technical assistance center that strengthens school capacity to provide academic, behavioral, social, and emotional support to improve outcomes for all students.

# NATIONAL CENTER on Inclusion Toward **Rightful Presence**



**We assist with implementation** of practices that move school systems toward rightful presence for students who are too often kept at the margins.

**We embrace the full humanity and culture of students** with intensive cognitive needs, and provide them high-quality academic instruction aligned with general education standards, delivered among grade-level peers.

# Project Overview

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# Project Goals

## Goal 1

Least Restrictive Environment

## Goal 2

Engagement in General Education

## Goal 3

High Quality Instruction in General Education

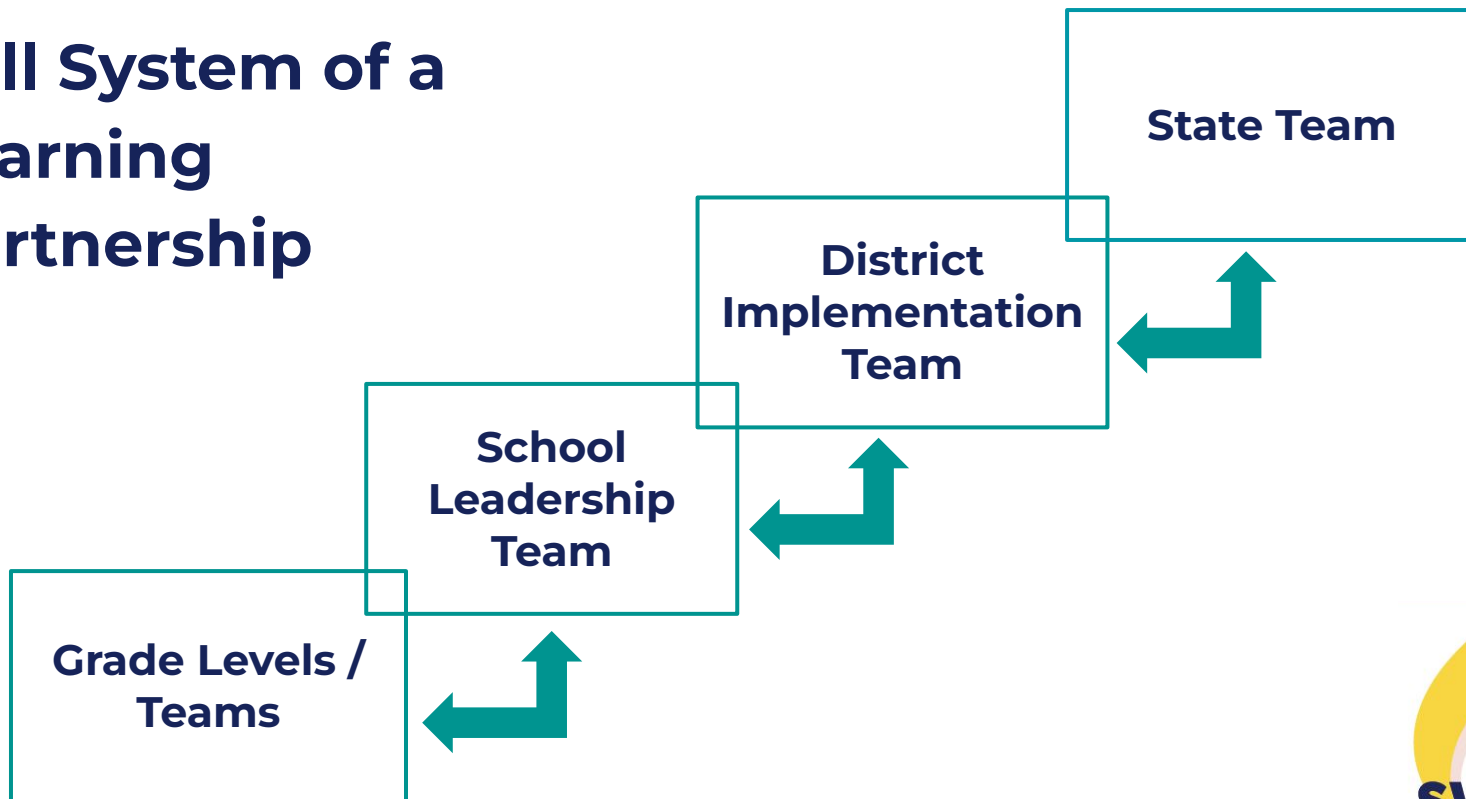
### Leveraging your Multi Level System of Supports:

Improving outcomes for students identified with Autism, Intellectual Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Multiple Disabilities.\*

*\*additional students taking the alternate assessment*



# Full System of a Learning Partnership



# Why Wisconsin?

- Strong fit with project aims to build equitable systems that create rightful presence for students, families, and communities
- Extent to which you already commit your resources, and are willing to continue pursuing this aim
- Evidence suggesting positive outcomes can be expected because you already systemically support students with high incidence disabilities in the core curriculum through systems (e.g., MLSS, UDL)
- SEA indication of capacity to support implementation in project districts as well as sustain and scale up in future

# Wisconsin School Districts

School District of Altoona



Monona Grove School District



Shorewood School District



# Dynamic Learners

The Department of Education has invested in a specific population of students who have been historically segregated into separate classrooms or schools as a result of a disability.

As active learners, they:

- Offer valuable and different ways of viewing the world and solving problems
- Are authentic and genuine in emotions and interactions
- Provide innovative perspectives to navigate tasks



# Research Shows

All learners who are educated in inclusive settings achieve greater success in areas of:

- **Academic outcomes** (Bowman et al., 2020; Jimenez & Kamei, 2015; Hudson et al., 2013)
- **Social skills** (Asmus et al., 2017; Fisher & Meyer, 2002)
- **Communication** (Kleinert et al., 2019; Buckley et al., 2006)
- **Peer engagement** (Brock et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2016)
- **Positive behavior** (Loman et al., 2018)
- **Post-secondary outcomes**  
(Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009)



Cited in IRIS Center, n.d.

# Research and Reality

## What we know

Dynamic learners who are educated in inclusive settings achieve greater success.

## Where we are

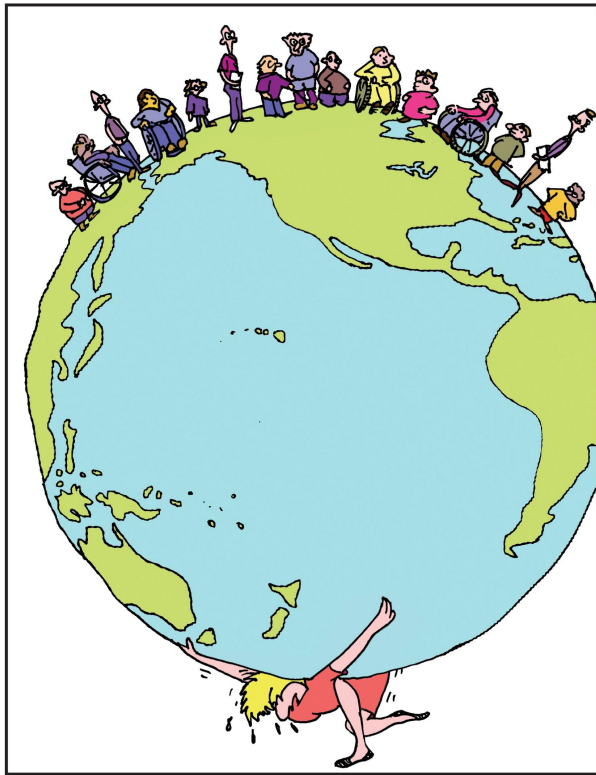
Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

4%



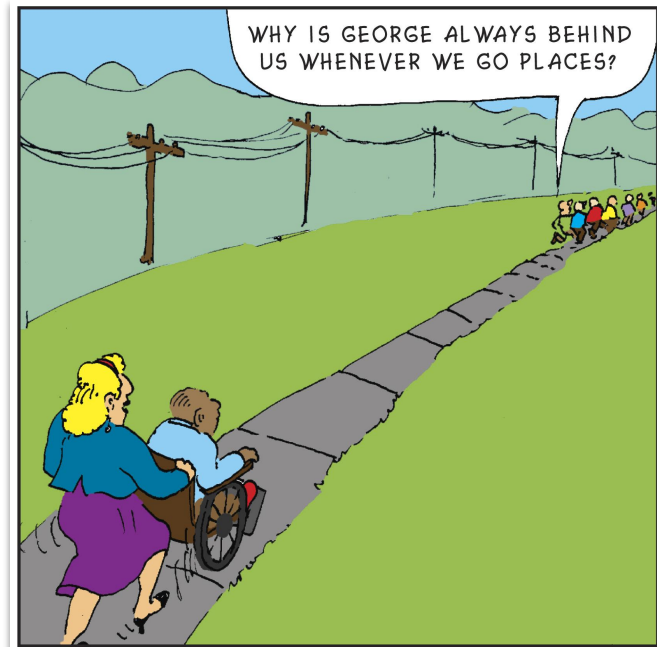
IRIS Center, n.d.

# **Inclusion** Toward Rightful Presence



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CAN QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION  
BE SUPPORTED ON THE BACKS OF  
PARAPROFESSIONALS?



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SECOND GRADE STUDENTS PONDER  
ONE OF THE GREAT MYSTERIES OF  
HILLVIEW SCHOOL.



SO, WHAT DO YOU PREFER TO BE CALLED? HANDICAPPED? DISABLED? OR PHYSICALLY-CHALLENGED?

"JOE" WOULD BE FINE.

© 1999 MICHAEL GIANGRECO, ILLUSTRATIONS KEVIN RUELLE

THE MOST APPROPRIATE LABEL IS USUALLY THE ONE SOMEONE'S PARENTS HAVE GIVEN THEM.

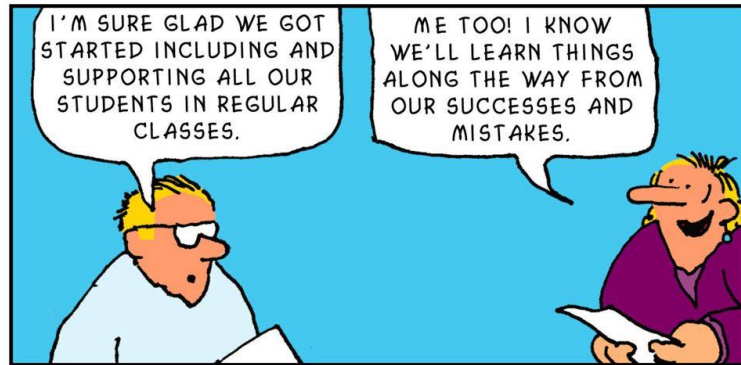


WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER TO BUILD ON A MORE SOLID FOOTING?

GET MORE PARAPROFESSIONALS. KEEP 'EM COMING!

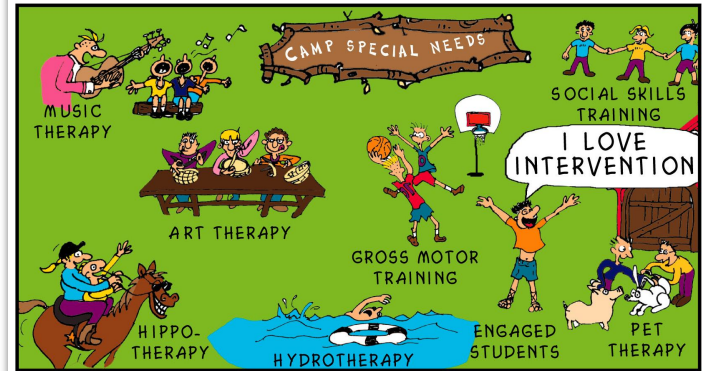
© 2010 MICHAEL F. GIANGRECO, ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN RUELLE

ON THE BRINK IS YOUR SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL BUILT TOO CLOSE TO THE EDGE?



A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS.

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DISABILITY LINGO GOES TO CAMP!

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# Inclusion in Isolation

- ❖ Starts from a place of exclusion
- ❖ Perpetuates the assumption that what school offers may only work for some students
- ❖ Puts the onus on students to demonstrate readiness for “less restrictive environments”
- ❖ Promotes a culture of hospitality, involving an ethical commitment by those with influence or authority to promote equitable outcomes
- ❖ Extension of a set of rights

(Adapted from Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020)

# Inclusion Toward **Rightful Presence**

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# What words or phrases stand out to you in this description of Rightful Presence?

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“We believe an environment conducive to learning and personal growth is established first and foremost through the cultivation of a culture of **true belonging**. Efforts toward that goal must begin with the presumption of the rightful presence and **inherent value** of the disenfranchised. Inclusion efforts alone cannot bring about substantial change because they adhere to the same **guest/host power dynamic** that serves to normalize the existence of a group who is ‘invited’ and a group with the power to invite.”

## True Belonging

To truly belong is to take a deep sense of comfort, safety, and peace, and connect it to an experience, place, or relationship.

We often feel most peaceful in a state of non-judgment and emotional validation.

## Inherent Value

Inherent value means a person's value does not need to be proven to exist; it is assumed to exist, even if undefined or unconventional.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of educators, staff, and systems to search until that value is found.

## Guest/Host Power Dynamic

Rightful Presence is characterized by a fundamental shift in power, not inclusion.

Marginalized students, families, and communities should be integral to the shaping and design of educational systems, policies, and practices.

# Rightful Presence...

- ❖ Presumes belonging
- ❖ Assumes students' full humanity affords them what the school offers in the first place
- ❖ Puts the onus on the system to create capacity and environments that ensure the necessary support for meaningful engagement in general education
- ❖ Collective culture aimed at creating equitable environments based on shared influence and/or decision making
- ❖ Reauthoring of rights

# From Inclusion toward Rightful Presence

Starts from a place of exclusion

**Presumes belonging** - students who benefit from intensive or specialized support belong with grade-level peers from the start

Perpetuates the assumption that what school offers may only work for some students

Assumes students' **full humanity** affords them what the school offers in the first place

Puts the burden on students to demonstrate readiness for "less restrictive environments"

Puts the **onus on the system** to create capacity and environments that ensure the necessary support for meaningful engagement in general education

# From Inclusion toward Rightful Presence

Culture of hospitality,  
involving an ethical  
commitment by those  
with influence or  
authority to promote  
equitable outcomes

Collective culture aimed at creating  
equitable environments based on **shared  
influence and/or decision making**

Extension of a set of  
rights

Reauthoring of rights

(Adapted from Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020)

**“True belonging doesn’t require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are.”**

*- Brené Brown*

*Braving the Wilderness, 2019, p. 157*



# Resources to Support Pathway to Rightful Presence

# Rightful Presence Implementation Guide

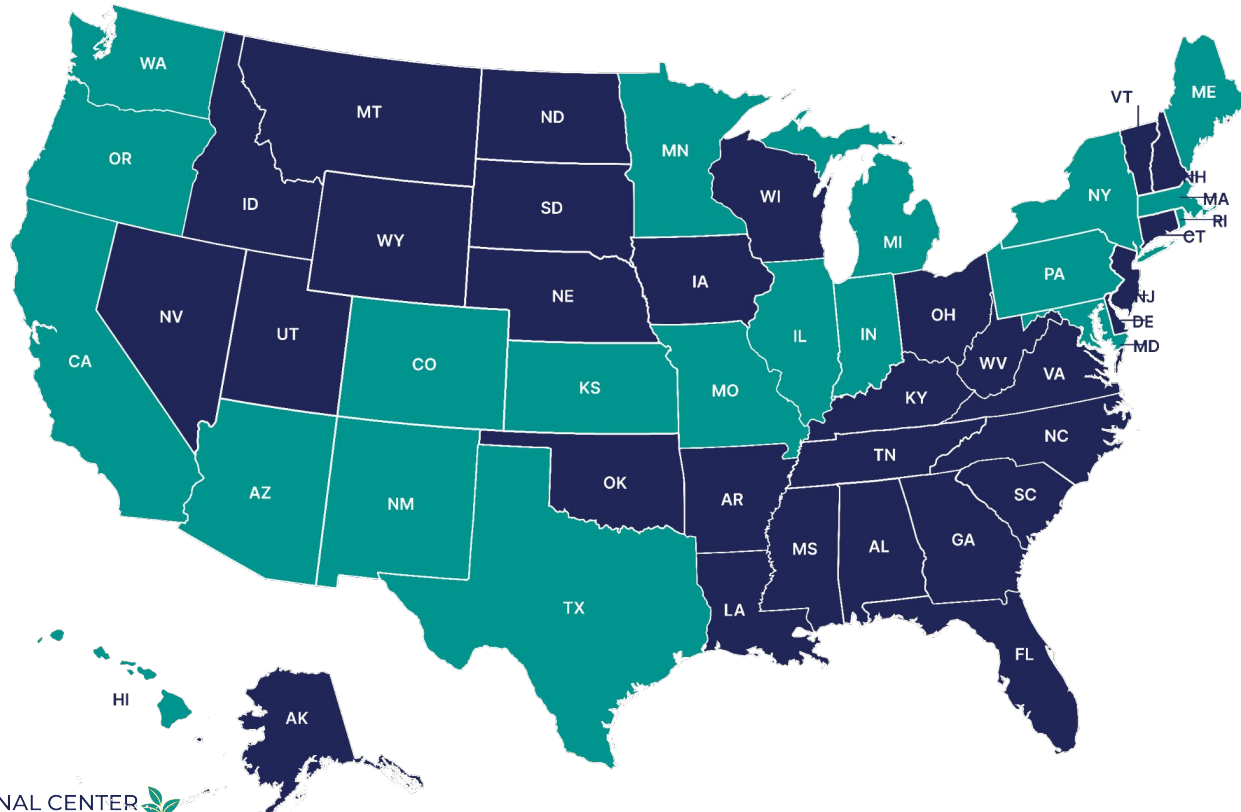
- Core components and strategic actions
- Application examples
- Resources to get started



[bit.ly/RPGuide1](https://bit.ly/RPGuide1)



# Targeted Technical Assistance



Supporting  
LEAs & SEAs  
nationwide in  
their work  
toward Rightful  
Presence,  
centering  
dynamic  
learners.

Email  
[swift@ku.edu](mailto:swift@ku.edu)  
to explore  
options!



We believe together we can  
transform education so that it  
benefits each and every  
student, their families, and  
ultimately the communities  
in which they live.

**“Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming.”**



*-Alice Walker, The Temple of my Familiar*

Poet, educator, civil rights activist, and Pulitzer Prize winning author

# Thank You!



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[swiftschools.org/newsletter-signup/](https://swiftschools.org/newsletter-signup/)

# NATIONAL CENTER on Inclusion Toward **Rightful Presence**



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