The Role of Inclusive Classrooms in Promoting the Well Being of ALL Students

Dr. Jacqueline Specht
February 17, 2017

Risk

- Risk
  - Disability
  - Poverty
  - Language
- Negative Life Outcomes
  - Social isolation
  - Poorer educational outcomes
  - Lower employment
  - Behavioral and emotional difficulties

Resilience

- Why is it that individuals with risk factors do well in the face of adversity?
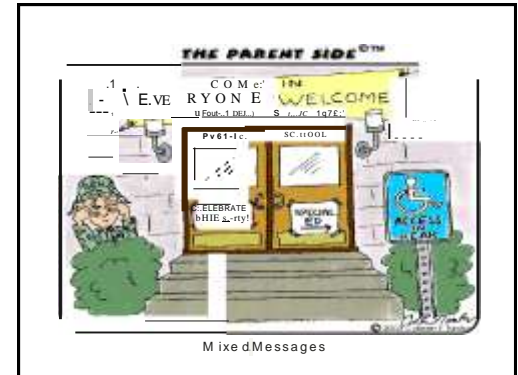 - Being
  - Belonging
  - Doing

RESILIENCE
ADVERSITY

Foundation of Inclusive Education

- Belief that **all** students belong and are valued members of their classroom and neighbourhood school communities

Inclusive Education

- Broadly – equitable and fair education for all
  - Gender
  - Race
  - Culture
  - Socio Economic Status
  - Sexual orientation
  - Ability

Mixed Messages

Segregation vs. Inclusion

Segregation
- the opportunity to interact with a broad range of difference and interest and understanding is lost
- Removes broad expertise from schools
- Undermines confidence of regular classroom teachers to deal with diversity

Inclusion
- creates "social capital"
- Builds core capacity in schools in relation to expertise
- allows teachers to be supported in dealing with diversity

Success In School

- is a broad concept that refers to the academic, social, and self-development outcomes

Research on Success and Inclusion

- Settings that promote inclusion are more successful in achieving learning for all
  - typically developing peers when students with exceptionalities are included in the regular classroom
  - for students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and language impairments
- Children with disabilities who are educated in high inclusive settings are:
  - in better health
  - enjoy going to school more
  - progress more quickly in school
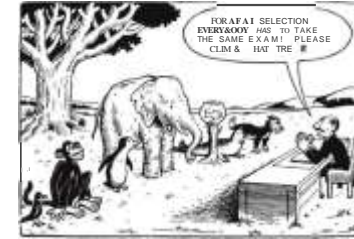 - interact more positively with peers

Belonging

- The need to form connections with other people is a fundamental need of human beings
- People who do not have their belonging needs met are more likely to experience emotional deficits (anxiety, depression, grief, loneliness).

School Belonging

- Students who feel a sense of belonging in school are more likely to experience positive mental health outcomes and be successful
- The school system can create an environment where students experience connections with other people and feel valued for who they are and what they bring to the relationship.

Child Characteristics

- A strong belief in ability for certain tasks (self-efficacy)
- High self-esteem and positive self-concept
- Ability to set goals and persevere at these goals

Relationship with Others

- Friendships
- Warm and caring adults, including teachers, who believe in the student
- Supportive relationships within the family

School Environment

- Availability of opportunities to discover special talents or abilities (competence)
- Positive school culture and climate
- Supportive classroom environments

Social and Emotional Learning

- Classrooms are more diverse
- Diverse students not feeling as connected to their peers, teachers or school community
- Alienation related to school dropout, gang activity, and poor relationships

Social and Emotional Learning

- Learning how to respect diversity within classrooms improves
  – school attitudes
  – behavior
  – performance
  – mental health
- Spirit Buddies (Jennifer Katz).

Supporting Inclusion

- New Hampshire researcher Cheryl Jorgensen and colleagues provide a framework for effective inclusion.
- These 12 essential practices provide a framework for conceptualizing inclusive, effective education for students of all abilities.

Essential Practices
Jorgensen, McSheehan, Schuh, & Sonnenmeier

- High Expectations and Least Dangerous Assumption
- General Education Class Membership and Full Participation
- Quality Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- Curriculum, Instruction and Supports
- Ongoing Assessment and Evaluation of Learning
- Family-School Partnerships
- Community Partnerships
- Team Collaboration
- Friendships & Social Relationships
- Futures Planning, Graduation, & Transition to Adult Life
- Self-Determination
- School Improvement
- Professional Development

Inclusive Education

- SUPPORT:
  - *for students* to learn … better … together
  - *for teachers* to teach students of all abilities
- MEMBERSHIP in a regular class
- going to your own "natural" NEIGHBOURHOOD school
- support to participate in and contribute to the life of the school
- school restructuring requires LEADERSHIP and advocacy together for the required supports

With much appreciation to Marilyn Dolmage