



INCLUSION PRESS

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Inclusion is about ALL of us

Inclusion is about living full lives - about learning to live together.

Inclusion makes the world our classroom for a full life.

Inclusion treasures diversity and builds community.

Inclusion is about our 'abilities' - our gifts and how to share them.

Inclusion is NOT just a 'disability' issue.

Inclusion.com creates & shares tools, resources, capacities, so all can live full lives.

Inclusion.com is for citizens: educators, families, individuals, organizations - all of us.

Inclusion: It's About Change!

Jack Pearpoint & Marsha Forest

Inclusion means change!! We believe both inclusion and change are inevitable. Whether we choose to grow with and from these changes is a choice.

It has been instructive to be a participant in hundreds of emotional meetings about "inclusion", when it is crystal clear after a few minutes that inclusion is only nominally the topic. The real topic (seldom stated) is Fear of Change! Many people in education and human services are afraid they will lose their jobs. Afraid of new responsibilities. Afraid of what they don't understand. Afraid of being accountable.

The words that come out are: "But, we don't have enough money! But, we haven't been trained to take care of those! But, I didn't choose special ed! But, I don't have special curriculum guidelines, and I don't have time to create a special program for "them". The other children will suffer!" We all recognize the phrases. Listen deeper. Most of the "buts" are about "me" "I". The butts that are couched in deprivation to the other children reflect both

ignorance of virtually everything we know (for centuries) about cooperative learning and peer tutoring, and too often are a guise to cover "I don't want to risk giving up control!". "I am afraid that people might find out that I don't know everything! I don't want to do this." I am Afraid! This is the key phrase underneath most of the kvetching and whining. But for many, there are deeper fears that are teased out with great delicacy. People are afraid of being "faced" with their own mortality, with imperfection. People are afraid 'they might catch IT'. These deep seated fears are a product of our culture. It is not the fault of individuals (teachers and human service workers) that they are afraid. We were all taught to 'put "them" out of sight' and as citizens and taxpayers we have. But, now we know that 'putting people away' is a decision just one step away from extermination. The film, Schindler's List reminds us that segregation in any ghetto is life threatening.

The answer is that we must Face the Fear, and Do It Anyway i.e. include everyone. This will be uncomfortable - even terrifying for a few moments, but fears pass. When we face our fears, and proceed regardless, they immediately diminish and come into perspective. We have had conversations with hundreds of "Inclusion Survivors" - teachers and human service workers who were petrified. They endured a few weeks of "Tylenol Therapy" and then as if by magic, the terror passed. In interviewing people about that period, there is an overwhelming pattern. Every single person remembers being terrified. No one can remember what they were afraid of... just that they were afraid - and it passed. It usually takes about six weeks which is the general pattern for any crisis situation to get back to normal.

There are lessons to be learned. All too often we tell people who are being faced with change: "Don't worry. Don't be afraid!" This is nonsense! Inclusion is about change. Change is terrifying - for all of us. Our bodies are designed to seek "homeostasis" - equilibrium. Change upsets us. It's scary. It's unpredictable. But since the issue is one of survival - about the Human Rights of individuals, we must do it anyway. We do not have the right to exclude anyone. Our fears are simply an obstacle to overcome. They cannot and must not be a reason to deny any person their rights. A second learning is that people need support to get through the crisis period of change. The fascinating facts are however, that this has very little to do with budgets. The key ingredient in effective support of change is supportive relationships. What we need is to 'practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty' - a kind word - a thoughtful gesture. It is knowing someone will be there when you need them. Recently, the American Federation of Teachers launched an attack on inclusion - a tragic and misguided assault. They have identified support as essential for effective inclusion and find "dumping" practices

abhorrent. We totally agree. But the enemy of lack of support in schools, training and beyond is not innocent children or the issue of inclusion. The villains are faceless policy makers who continue to slash at the support structures that enable and encourage teachers and others to go the extra mile. If some educators cannot come to terms with including everyone, it may be time for them to move on to other jobs. It is entirely legitimate to provide job security - but not security against change. People who cannot support rights for all have the right to their own personal opinion but not the right to stand in the way of the rights of other citizens.

We conclude that Inclusion is purely and simply about CHANGE. It is frightening - and exciting. The rewards are many. It will be and is hard and often emotionally draining work. Erik Olesen in his book 12 Steps to Mastering the Winds of Change says, "the mediocre resist change, the successful embrace it." We must invite success for inclusion and thus embrace change with all our hearts and souls. We must build strong teams to support one another. We must stop wasting our time worrying about the "kids" when what we need to develop are creative design teams that meet every problem with the same spirit found in the corporate sector. Let's borrow the lines from people who sell hamburgers, running shoes and hotel rooms - their slogans: DO What it Takes! JUST DO IT! and YES, WE CAN! These are messages we can adopt for our own work!! Finally we like to remember that "An injury to one is an injury to all!" and in the case of inclusion, "The benefit to one will be the benefit of all."

Jack Pearpoint is the founder and publisher of Inclusion Press. Marsha Forest was his wife and co-founder. Marsha passed in 2000. Inclusion Press continues to thrive.

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