



THE BMX MODEL OF INCLUSION:

Describing how Valuing Significant Differences can Lead to Greater Participation in Communities Everywhere

June 2011

Introduction Judith Snow, M.A. and her Research Associates are in on-going development of the BMX Model of Inclusion. This model describes distinct ways that people who are labelled “disabled” and other people who are marginalized are viewed and supported. The model also indicates what contributions excluded people are supported to make and what leads to greater range and value in their participation.

What is Inclusion? Inclusion is a state of a community where **diversity** of and among individuals in the community is recognized, encouraged and sustained. Inclusion can be enjoyed in many dimensions - ethnicity, life style, faith, etc.

The BMX Model of Inclusion BMX proposes that three distinct states of Inclusion co-exist. Neither is better than the other, but often there is an emergent pull to move from one state to another. We are calling these states B, M, and X:

- ▶ **State B (Basic):** Groups allow the presence of people with diverse characteristics. State B's principal quality is that the includers share presence with diversity, but no other changes are anticipated or offered. The includers like their community as is, expect no major shifts, and the included are expected to adapt to the ways and means of the includers and to get along as best they can. Typically the included express gratitude for the opportunity and work hard to not cause difficulties.
- ▶ **State M (Mechanical):** Includers recognize that the included are struggling to get along, and are willing to make “accommodations”. The included move beyond simply being grateful for the opportunity to coexist and begin to advocate for support. For example, service providers currently tend to segregate individuals with cognitive challenges and the professionalization of supporters tends to turn citizens into helpers and volunteers instead of friends and colleagues.
- ▶ **State X (Crossover):** Both includers and the included recognize that another world is possible, one that benefits from the gifts and contributions available in the cultures, characteristics, and experiences of members of both the including and included groups. The perception fades that there are two sides and a distinct boundary.

Operationalizing the BMX Model:

State B (Basic)	<p>A teenager with autism and no speech is kept at the back of a regular classroom, with no attention paid to whether he is building friendships.</p> <p>He is permitted to develop his own learning strategies and it is noticed that his reading level surpasses his more typical classmates.</p>
State M (Mechanical)	<p>All teenagers with “disability” labels are given opportunities to be in a homeroom for 1st period. The school has a resource room for tutoring, an “inclusive” lunchroom, and Special Olympics classes to replace regular gym.</p>
State X (Crossover)	<p>Ninth grade students are invited to form a support circle with a teen who loves music, and who also has autism and no speech. Twenty-three students respond. They meet regularly and enthusiastically at different points in their day and week for the next four years. The teen who focuses the circle enjoys participating in the school band, gym and many more classes than anyone originally expected. The other teens express their appreciation at having an alternative to being “Nerds”, “Preps” or simply left out. The school administration notes a dramatic decrease in fights and vandalism.</p>

Research Goals: The BMX research team is laying the groundwork for a multi-year project focused on using the BMX model in supporting organizations to develop person-centered participation in communities. This initiative will categorize on-the-ground situations using the BMX model, evaluate community experiences with these models from the perspectives of both includers and the included, and explore what it would take for communities to develop the potential for Stage X growth.