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Reframing Possibilities: Meaningful Inclusion - Not If, But How

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>> SPEAKER: We will get started. Thank you, everyone for coming today. This meeting is being recorded -- this webinar is being recorded.

So you understand that. We will get going.

Welcome to Disability Teaches Us Reframing Possibilities Meaningful Inclusion. Not if but how.

Today using Zoom, you will notice this is in a webinar format. Please use the chat for comments. You can open the chat by using your Zoom toolbar at the bottom of the screen. You can select participants in the menu, you can comment to panelists or you can comment to panelists and attendees.

Please use the Q&A function for questions.? Services are available and like I mentioned before, this webinar will be recorded.

In the chat Dina has jumped in the link for the closed captioning if you would like to utilize that. You can also utilize subtitles at the bottom of your toolbar.

More on cart services. We have live remote? Services available today. If you would like to use those captions, you can use the Zoom toolbar and activate live transcripts or you can access the web link that is posted in the chat for you which will take you to a separate web browser.

We are offering clock hours for this webinar. We will need to take attendance for those who are interested in that. You can open up the chat and share your name, your role and what city or school district you are in.

That is for clock hours. In this moment, you could take some time to get grounded and make this an accessible space for yourself.

Just a reminder, this is a webinar. You will only have access to panelists video. That means you can stretch, you can feel free to make your space wherever you are comfortable for yourself. Again, for those who do need clock hours, you will need to e-mail Rose at the office of the education ombuds. We will provide her information in the chat as well.

I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and my team today. It's a pleasure to have everybody here.

My name is Jen Chong Jewell and I'm with pave and I'm also with the family engagement collaborative which is a part of the IPP project. You may or may not also see my son pop into the screen from time to time. His name is Gabriel.

The FTC family engagement collaborative is made up of open doors for multicultural families, roots of inclusion and education Northwest. And I will pass this to Taina.

>> SPEAKER: I'm one of the directors at the inclusion for all, inclusion for all.org. Super happy to be here on this sort of and okay Saturday morning.

I am a white woman in my 40\_s\_, I have bleached blonde hair and I am sitting wearing a navy blue top and sitting in front of a very packed bookcase.

And then on to Rose.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you. I'm Rose Spidell and I work at the Washington State Governor's office of the education on but also known as OEO. Really pleased to be here to welcome our speaker and to be with all of you.

I am a white woman with long red hair and a black sweater sitting in my living room. You can see a bit of the bookshelves in the background. I go by she/her pro-nines. I will send it back over to Jen.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you, Rose and Taina. I forgot to introduce myself with a visual description. My name is Jen and I am a middle-aged woman of Asian and European descent. I have long wavy brown hair and behind me is a curtain. My pronouns are she/her. Thank you.

We will go to our next slide.

At this moment, on the screen is a topographical map of the state of Washington and I would like to take a moment to do a land acknowledgment. This morning we take a moment to honor America's first people and all elders, past, present and emerging. We are called on to learn and share what we know and learn about tribal history, culture and the contributions that have been suppressed in the telling of the story of America.

And the lands I live on, I am on the traditional lands of the Suquamish, who have cared for these lands since time immemorial. If you would like to participate in acknowledging the land that you live on, feel free to drop that into the chat.

As we are doing that, thinking about the traditional lands that we live, I would like to take a moment to have a collective breath.

Right now, as this is being recorded, it is the morning of Saturday, August 24 -- 2022. I would like to acknowledge that at any given moment there is so much going on in our personal lives, in our communities, and in the world that impacts us.

While we ask you to identify yourselves earlier by the roles you have, we come today as a collective, focusing on making things better for our young people in schools. We just know, just like our young people, they do not just possess a single identity that defines them.

What we do share is that we are all part of the community, no matter which role or title that has been assigned to us or taken on by us.

We are all impacted by things that happen in community and within us we have the tools to make things better for all people.

Today we are coming into a learning space with a few goals in mind. First, to understand -- develop an understanding that inclusion is not a place but a practice. We also want to take the opportunity to dispel various myths associated with inclusive education. Take time to learn about the difference between individual efficacy and collective efficacy, and then towards the end respond to a call to action and think about the next steps that we can take individually and collectively which could include considering participation in two more workshops coming up through the Disability Teaches Us series.

At this -- I do want to mention Disability Teaches Us. We have had two previous learnings, disability justice in schools. That was in May of 2020. And Disability Teaches Us listen and learn from youth which was in August of 2020.

Today what we are exploring is Reframing Possibilities Meaningful Inclusion not if but how. If you are interested in the previous webinars, you can find them on the office of the education ombuds website.

I also want to mention that this work is connected to the office of the superintendent of public instruction, inclusionary practices project.

Back in 2019, our state legislature recognized that we needed resources and support to improve the condition of inclusive education in our state. To do that, the state legislator -- legislature provided OSPI with \$25 million for the 2019 biennium and \$12 million for the 2021-23 biennium to provide educators, families, community members with professional development training to support inclusionary practices across the state.

At this time, we would like to hear from you. In the chat, if you would, consider two questions. What is inclusive education? What is it to you? And also you can include what is not inclusive? What wouldn't be inclusive education to you? Go ahead and drop in the chat and then we will take a moment to have that happen and then Dina will read out some of the responses.

>> SPEAKER: Here is something it is not. A child just attending a special lunch or recess with their same age typical's peers. Everyone has a seat at the table. Inclusion is not just about physical placement. Needs are met in a collective space. Not being left out. Inclusion is not about making assumptions about any child. Inclusion is access for all, equity and equality inclusive education is education for teachers and students are supported and general education -- inclusion is not having to leave to learn. Not a classroom in a building.

>> TAINA KARRU-OLSEN: All students have access to education in the general education setting. Not about placement. All kids are Gen Ed kids. The same access but with supports and modifications. Everyone belongs.

Meaningful participation, not just being in the room. Building structures with everyone in mind. Everyone in the same classroom learning together and engaging inclusion is identity affirming, pursuing competence, sense of belonging, removing barriers for all students not any form or percentage of segregation. Everyone learning with and from classmates in general education classrooms. All are welcome.

These keep on coming. We have a very active audience thank you for pulling out some of those feel free to keep going.

This is really great information and I think.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: We are in a shared learning space and we are among the experts too who also have solutions to these issues.

I'm going to take a moment to introduce you to our presenter. I am so thrilled to bring her to this virtual space in Washington today.

It is my pleasure to introduce all the way from New Jersey, because we can do that with Zoom these days, Dr. Priya Lalvani. She is a professor at Montclair State University. She teaches courses in disability studies and is the coordinator for graduate programs and inclusive education.

She holds a Ph.D. in developmental psychology. Her research is focused on examining the ways society and politics affects the experiences of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Through her research, she seeks to confront ableism in schools, and society, and to highlight the problems with dividing students based on their abilities, which result in the widespread segregation of many students with disabilities in schools.

She is the editor of constructing the mother, narratives of disability, motherhood and the politics of normal, and the co-author of undoing ableism, teaching about disability in K-12 classrooms. I would like to introduce Dr. Priya Lalvani and I will pause sharing my screen just for second. Dr. Lalvani?

>> PRIYA LALVANI: Hi everyone. I am really delighted and honored to be here. All the way from New Jersey. It was a really easy commute, surprisingly. Thank you, Jen, for that generous introduction. My pronouns are she/her and I will do a visual description. I am a visibly south Asian woman. I hesitate to say middle-aged. I suppose I should. I have dark brown or black hair to my shoulders and I am wearing a black sweater. I have plants in the background and some hummingbirds on the wall behind me. Thank you for inviting me. I'm very excited to be here.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you, Dr. Lalvani. I will continue screen share.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: I am going to start of course today is all about inclusive education. Actually, I have to say, I wonder if I am even talking to the right group of people because I was just looking at all of your definitions and I was -- this is not the group of people I need to be talking to. What beautiful and sophisticated and wonderfully insightful definitions you all provided of what inclusive education is and is not. I was hearing things like access and belonging and identity. It is all of these things. It was great to read your definitions in the chat. Thank you for that.

Inclusive education doesn't have an official definition. I will share the working definition that I work with that is aligned with a rights based, civil rights based and disability justice based definition, but I want to put it out there, the definition will depend on who you ask.

I like to joke that there is the mental compliance definition, there is the check off the box definition, and so here is what I like to work with.

You will see that many of the ways in which is described here in the audience is very much aligned with that.

It is a philosophy and a practice and that is something that people forget. It is not just a way of thinking. It is a philosophy, but it is also what you do. It is a practice. Jen mentioned this earlier, of educating diverse students in classrooms which are heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, class, culture, gender identity, ability and disability, and other identity markers using strategies that are responsive to each student's strengths and needs.

A few things pop here. Obviously the one thing is that it is a philosophy and a practice. Also you will notice that I broadened it be on disability. Today we are here to talk about inclusive education for students with disabilities specifically, but I just want to put out there in our consciousness that inclusive education hasn't always been about disability. Historically it started with conversations about a social class and whether a free public education is a right for those that cannot afford to pay.

There have been conversations about inclusive education in the context of race, as we all know. So I just want to put out there that we automatically think it is about whether or not the kid with a disability can join the classroom, but it is really inclusive education is a way of thinking broadly, much more broadly than these identity groups that I have identified here on the screen.

It is really learning to be responsive to a heterogeneous group of students in your classroom. The most important thing that I like to point out is that without that last part of the sentence, using strategies that are responsive to each student's strengths and needs. Without the strategies, it is not really inclusive education. It is inclusion in name only.

We are going to look very briefly at what does the law, the federal law -- which is known as IDE a, individuals with disabilities improvement act. I would take a moment here to acknowledge that most of you may know it as IDE a. It is commonly called IDE a although the name in 2004 with this most recent iteration is now called individuals with disabilities improvement. It's actually education improvement act. There was a little bit of an error here. You would be fine to continue to call it IDE a but in case you encounter it under this name and you are an educator or parent, I just didn't want you to be confused.

So what does the law say really. It states explicitly that students with disabilities need to be educated to the maximum extent possible alongside their nondisabled peers. Some critics of the law itself -- and there are many -- and I am one among them -- although the law was written to be progressive and was an provided access to countless students with disabilities who had previously been denied their rights to a public education, there are criticisms of the law itself and they are valid. One of them is that the law was written in a way that was ambiguous, that allowed for the loophole to be baked in and here in the sentence you can see one of those, which is educators to the maximum extent possible. It is not a measurable -- it depends on how you define that.

Here is the line that is really, really important to understand.

The law states that removal -- we are talking about removal from the general education setting, removal may only occur when education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. To me, the first four words, removal may only occur when -- think about it. It is profound. Those words are profound because there is an implication there.

We need to start with the assumption that the child is in the general education setting.

The law only identifies when a removal may occur. The law is not talking about a criteria for a child to have access to it in the first place. In reality, many in this audience may already be aware that that is not how in reality it operates.

Many children begin their education in a self-contained setting and then they are asked to work their way up to an inclusive setting. Were in fact, everyone should be really clear. The law makes it clear that the first consideration, the first assumption clearly from that sentence, removal may only occur -- the only time a justification has to be made and the burden of that is on the education system, not on parents, to justify why the child was, in fact, removed. From a general education setting.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: I will talk about the Washington context.

We are going to talk about least restrictive environment. Again, we understand that just because a student is physically in a classroom doesn't mean that -- I am doing the air quotes -- included. This is the data we have. This is from OS PI 2019 data.

This was before COVID.

Washington State ranks 44 out of 50 states for inclusive practices. And again, this is just based on least restrictive environment. This is the time that is calculated when a student is physically in the general education setting or classroom. In Washington, we have LR 81, 80 to 100 percent of the time. Only 57.7 percent of all students with disabilities -- these are students with individualized education programs -- are in general education settings.

In that realm, only 54 -- 54.5 percent of students of color with disabilities are placed in these settings.

When we go to the next LRE, this is for 40 to 79 percent of the time. 38.4 percent of all students with IEPs are placed in general education settings. 31.1 percent of students of color with disabilities are placed in these settings.

The last LRE is zero to 39 percent. 12.4 percent of all students with disabilities are in general education. In that realm, 13.3 percent of students of color with disabilities are placed in these settings.

I do want to check those data again. I might have accidentally reversed those. I will pause there. Priya, if you have any thoughts about Washington data. You are from New Jersey. It might be similar in New Jersey too.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: It's interesting. I didn't know these statistics about Washington. I have to say that New Jersey where I live, sadly we rank I believe 48 or 49 out of 50. In inclusive practices.

You are doing minimally better. It is interesting these data that you have put up there about when you disaggregate by race and ethnicity, when it is 80 percent of the time in a Jan and classroom, students of color, that number is less than all the students. Same for the next category. The only time it is more -- it's an inverse relationship. The only time that are more students of color is in a segregated classroom. That is a very, very similar with the statistics here in New Jersey, which actually will show much worse than that as well.

Very similar to the national numbers as well.

That is a bit of a depressing moment there. As Jen pointed out, the first one there is talking about -- we are just talking about least restrictive environment. We are not even talking about whether inclusive education is done meaningfully. This is the data for just being in the classroom and with that, only 57 percent of all students are even in a Janet setting. That is not what we should be really.

Let's look at what might be happening. We could sit here all night with what is happening. Let's look at a few things.

One is this idea that we really should wrap our minds around is, what's happening is that often we tend to think that a child is included if we placed them in a general Ed class. And then they are not provided with the supports that they need. Or they are not provided with the supports they need and I should point out that by as our laws, there is an exhaustive list of supports and accommodations and supplementary services that can actually be infused into a general education setting.

We need to understand that with that, if a child does not get the appropriate supports they need, then it doesn't work. I don't know said this, I don't know if it was Doug Bricklin, but inclusion is an easy thing to do poorly. When we do it poorly, we say it doesn't work. We need to ask ourselves if it was inclusive education that didn't work, or whether inclusive education was even attempted in the first place, despite the fact that a child was in a general education setting.

When we try to force a kid to fit an already existing curriculum and program without altering the curriculum, the environment, the physical space, the seating, the work that is being done -- then that child is set up for failure. When that child is set up for failure, we say that inclusion did work and -- vicious cycle and it feeds into those numbers we were looking at.

Let's look at some things. My research as Jen already mentioned earlier, a lot of my research is focused on the family experience of navigating the special education system and in particular I am interested in inclusive education.

I am interested in how families experience their advocacy for inclusive education specifically.

Even more particularly, in the case where in their child has a developmental disability, autism, or has a label of intellectual disability. Like, how do they fair?

Additionally, I'm interested in looking at discrepancies in those families experiences by social economic privilege, by ethnicity, by race and so on.

Marginalized groups, historically marginalized groups, how does their experience compare?

Let me speak overall. Across the board and across all of my research -- and I will say that my research aligns with a bigger body of research that exists and is very similar -- these are the things that I found. Families continue -- it has been for decades since we have the laws, but even now, families are feeling that they need to advocate on behalf of their children's right to an appropriate education with access.

Most of the families that have spoken to have reported that they have experienced something that I call institutional resistance. That means they wanted inclusive education for their child, and their school or the administrators or the child study team, resisted that, explained that it was not a good idea, it could be done, etc., etc.

Often, families, parents, are steered -- I use this term steered. It is not a term that is officially used, but it is my term. I sort of came to this after a few years of doing this research with families and the same kinds of experiences that I was hearing. We have heard of steering in other areas, like in real estate world you hear of steering families that are steered in that context.

But we don't talk about steering in the context of special education. It is very much alive and well where some families are told, this is the best class for your child. Here your child will get support. Here they have 80 teachers to treat children. Excuse my sarcasm there. Here you will get a great deal of specialized instruction. In other words, the self-contained classroom, the separate classroom is marketed, is sold, is packaged with a lot of bells and whistles that make it seem very appealing to families.

That to me seems like steering.

Overall, this is consistent finding across the literature, not just mine, over the last two decades and remained unchanged.

Families who advocate for inclusive education receive being in a quote unquote battle. The literal word battle comes up very frequently in family narratives. I have been actually working on a discourse analysis of family stories and I found that battle-related metaphors are very common. It is surprising the number of times that families make references to we are in a fight, we brought up the guns, we are in the trenches. We pull out our ammunition. It is -- it saddens me that all of these decades later we are still quote unquote fighting for the same thing that is already, is already a legal entitlement of children with disabilities.

I want to put out there that at the root of some of this is something that we need to understand, that is ableism. Many of you may be familiar with the term ableism. What it is. Many of you may have not heard this term before so I will spend a moment to explain that.

Ableism refers to negative attitudes towards and a devaluing of individuals with disabilities or a sort of entrenched way of thinking that views disability as an entirely negative and undesirable existence. The quickest way to understand it really is that it is an analogous device as racism and sexism and the other isms, as we call them. So just like the other -isms, ableism is a pervasive system of oppression of various levels. You can have it at the individual level, cultural level. Most damaging is the institutional level which encompasses policies and practices -- those are the most powerful.

The result in a lack of access or a preference for nondisabled ways of learning, moving and communicating. When you think about the context of schools, think about schools.

The ways in which you have set up learning. The expectations are those that work for some kids, for maybe most kids. The majority of kids may move in a certain way, the environment may work in that way, communicating and learning through texts and participation by sitting and writing. These are all ways that we deemed that we as humans learn.

We set up the whole system that is to the advantage of some people and now we are having to make accommodations for those that it doesn't work for. Maybe we need to flip the question. Instead of creating a system that only worked for some, maybe we should reframe that and think of how instead could we have set up this classroom, this lesson, this curriculum, in a way that almost all or a larger group of people can access it?

I'm going to talk for the rest of this time about a bunch of myths and misconceptions about inclusive education.

I talked about my research with parents, but I also do research on teachers and educators. I also work on a daily basis with teachers.

Through the last decade, I have come to understand that perhaps the problem is that we are not understanding what inclusive education is supposed to be in the first place and we are operating on a number of misconceptions.

The miss information that we may hold as educators can sometimes also get communicated to parents directly by educators.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Let's take a moment to gather and think about what are some myths that you are aware of? What are some misconceptions that you might be aware of? Or maybe you are wondering, I heard this but is this really true? Go ahead and drop those into the chat and then Taina will pick a few to read out loud before we go into our next part.

>> TAINA KARRU-OLSEN: Myth, student had to be at grade level or close to be at grade level. That is a pretty prevalent one.

That it makes a lot of money to make inclusion work. Yes. I've heard that a bunch of times.

That inclusion -- that student needs to have quote unquote good behavior to be allowed into general education classes.

Only certain students can do inclusion. And now these are just pouring in. I guess we have all heard a bunch.

Am I turning this over to Jen again?

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you, Taina.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: Those were interesting and sadly true that these myths we hear all the time and sometimes we are explicitly informed these things.

One of the most common myths -- I have identified the five or six most common ones that came out in my research. Literally everything in the chat there is something I have encountered as well.

This idea that in the self-contained classroom, it is better for them because they will feel more safe and they will feel at home and they will fit in with other kids that are like them. Even as I am speaking I am thinking how offensive it sounds to me to say to any person that he will be more comfortable in this group with people just like you.

And for what other group would that even be okay?

In my research with teachers, I have found that a large majority of teachers hold the belief that genuine belief -- I work with teachers, I believe that teachers are coming from a good place -- but there is this idea that they won't be comfortable and they won't fit in and they will be bullied or they will be teased or they will be isolated. So I think why put them through that. I've heard many teachers say that to me, why put a child through that if they can just be in a class where they feel safe? We want to avoid them being rejected or teased or bullied.

Here is a quote from one of my research studies with teachers. I will read it aloud to you.

In a self-contained classroom, they feel very much at home and the advantage is like a family. It is not like they're a stranger in their room. And sometimes with a special ed kid, especially one with a big, big disability, it's kind of like they are a stranger in the class because they are not getting what everybody else is getting. In a special ed class they are getting it.

Sometimes with my own students, I like to play a game called what is wrong with this picture? I don't know if everyone has seen the highlights magazine, the puzzle mania magazine. At the back there is a picture and you have to see how many things are wrong with the picture. There is a hot dog and a swimming pool, it's snowing but someone is wearing shorts. That game.

So what is wrong with this picture? There are so many things. First of all, I want to point out, children with disabilities may be the only group of kids that it is okay, it remains okay to actually operate with this



assumption that if they are getting teased and bullied or left out in a classroom, they are the ones who need to leave. I ask you all to think, if you just removed the word disability, and put any other characteristic of a child who is not feeling like they belong and who is not fitting in or is rejected because of their appearance, because of their weight, because of their accent, because of their ethnicity -- in what other situation would be okay for educators to say this child will simply feel more comfortable with others who are like them? Our car and yet, it is okay. It flies. For people with disabilities, the child must leave since they were the ones who were rejected and not fitting in.

That is one thing that we want to think about and we keep doing this in a school setting.

The other big issue here is, they are not getting it in the class. Says this teacher. So they must go to another class will they will get it.

This teacher is not considering that if the child is not getting it, as she puts it, perhaps what needs to change is the teaching strategies, the methods, the supports, the accommodations, the services.

What needs to be adjusted is the teaching.

Myth number two, you might of all heard this one, they won't be able to keep up in the general education classroom.

There is this fear that a child with a disability is -- I don't know how many parents have been told, in the Jen Ed class it is fast, it is quick, it is overwhelming, they have to keep up. Your child won't be able to keep up. There is this whole keep up thing. There is nothing in the laws which requires a child with a disability to be keeping up. It is not a criterion. They are not expected to be doing the same work necessarily.

They are working on their identified goals on their IEP. So the laws explicitly state that a student with a disability only need to demonstrate that they are benefiting. By benefiting we need they are making progress as per their IEP goals. Whatever those goals are. Whatever level those goals are at, that child is working on that and is making progress based on that.

Any removal from a general education classroom based on this reason would be a blatant violation under IDE at a.

Here is another quote. I have put some of these in there just so that you can see what these look like. Through the narratives that I've collected our park here is another educator saying that the best learning environment would be in the self-contained classroom. I think in the self-contained classroom where they can work at their own pace and master skills on their level. You know, and then move onto the next level. I think that would be the best setting for their cognitive level.

Again, I would want to say to this educator, indeed, a child with a disability should be working at their level and moving on to the next skill level. You are absolutely right. And that can actually happen in the general education setting, with appropriate supports.

And here we have the other one. There is this idea that inclusive education is great for some kids. For some kids with disabilities, it works because they don't need intensive supports. They kind of can manage, they can keep up, they can follow along. But for students who need high levels, intense levels of support, I'm told, those kids have to be served in a self-contained setting.

Again, we want to do a little bit of a mind adjustment here. Inclusive education is beneficial and has been demonstrated to be beneficial in research for all students with disabilities not just those who are quote unquote high functioning. I want to say that I don't appreciate the term high functioning but I put it over there because it is a term that people use.

As per IDEA -- I'm confusing these terms. As per the laws, the full range of supports and services need to be provided in the least restrictive environment. That includes intensive levels of support for a child if that is required.

Again a quote. From an administrator this time. Well, you see, he's not speaking that much yet. He needs a lot of assistance with communicating and so we are observing that he doesn't really participate in these activities because it is hard for his needs he needs a lot of assistance which we don't have in this class. The class we are recommending is where he can get a whole lot of support and help.

So here we have an administrator saying to a parent that the activities are hard for the child and the child will need a lot of assistance, which we don't have in this class. And therefore the class we are recommending, of course, is the self-contained class where the student apparently will get a whole lot of support and help. Which again sounds to me like steering.

Again, as per law, if the child needs a certain level of assistance and supports, that is the level of assistance and supports that child is supposed to be getting.

To be saying that we don't have that in this class, again, it seems to me a violation of IDEA.

And then we have inclusion works for some kids. This slide is based on a particular study that I did with teachers and was interested in understanding how they are approaching or what is their belief about inclusive education. I came to this place where I was working with all of these teachers who were genuinely very committed and really, really cared.

I just wanted to understand if something is going wrong in the fundamental premise of what they think inclusive education is in the first place, even before we get to their practices.

It turned out that the majority of teachers in that study expressed beliefs that inclusive education is something that some kids get and there is some sort of a criterion for which kids get placed in inclusive education. A lot of teachers, they don't even know why or how some kids were placed in inclusive education. But to their understanding, it was based on one of these criterion.

Some teachers believed that the level of impairment or the functioning level -- there it is again -- was a criterion. There were like, well, some kids who are high functioning they are placed in inclusive education and the ones that are low functioning should be in the self-contained class.

Other teachers in the study believed that it was the child's cognitive abilities or their IQ scores that determined.

I have to say that I have had a great many conversations with administrators and folks on the child study team who seem to feel that IQ scores have a bearing on the child's placement. I beg to differ.

First of all, we can't get into it now, but there is a long history of oppression related to IQ testing. That is another days story. Even if a child does have an IQ score, that score cannot be used as a justification for removal from the general Ed class. It can only be used to determine what additional supports perhaps the child may need.

There is nowhere in the laws that suggest that a child's cognitive or functioning ability or their IQ or anything that is a criterion for them to be there.

Other teachers believe that in order to be in a general Ed classroom, they needed to not have any disruptive behaviors, which is also not the case.

If a child is removed from the classroom, in the instance that they are hurting themselves or hurting someone else, in that case, the plan always needs to be a return. Even if a child is removed for that, there always needs to be a definitive plan for how they will bring the child back into the classroom.

And then other teachers believed that being verbal or speaking verbally was a criterion, which blows my mind. This day and age, there are so many augmentative and alternative ways of communicating and this to me is a clear form of ableism. In an earlier slide I said that ableism was the assumption that the ways in which nondisabled people move and communicate and learn is the norm.

And children with disabilities need to be normalized. This idea that a child who communicates another way -- it might be by signing or pointing or by using a pictorial board -- is not a good candidate for inclusive education, is preposterous.

Really something that we all have to bear in mind is that the general education classroom is the natural environment for all students with disabilities, not just a few.

And then there is -- if I had a dollar for every time a parent was told that their child was not ready for inclusion. There seems to be this idea out there that a child somehow has to show that they are ready to enter the general education setting.

We need to really rethink that and we need to shut that down whenever possible.

Thinking about it, isn't it programs, not children, that need to be made ready? Children are ready by virtue of the fact that they exist. Children are ready to be in their natural community of peers. That is where they are born into and these -- this is their community, this is their school with these are their peers.

They are not getting ready to be in the world. The program, then, perhaps the question is, is the program ready? It may not be. So that is where our focus should be.

Have we created the environment in readiness for this child? Is the physical space going to work? Is the equipment going to work? Is the seating going to work? Is the curriculum going to work? Is this particular lesson going to work? Is this assessment going to work?

If you ask me, to me it is a little bit of an ethical dilemma, and it is an ethical issue.

I don't mean you, obviously, but when one is suggesting that a child should demonstrate, you are putting the burden of proof on the child to demonstrate that they belong. To me, that is a moral and ethical issue.

A child does the burden of proof is not on the child to show you that he can walk this way, talk this way, hold a pencil this way, pull up their pants this way. That burden of proof is not to be placed on the child. In fact, what is interesting is, and in an earlier slide I pointed out that removal may only occur when -- explicitly the law places the burden of proof for removal on a school district. The burden of proof is not on the child to show that they can be in a general ed class and it is certainly not on the parents. I work with parents all the time who spend inordinate amounts of time and energy making a case. I am a parent too. I get it. I would say to them, but the burden of proof is not on you to show them that your child can go to a general education class. The burden of proof must be made by them to demonstrate and justify why the child was removed in the first place.

Here we have another communication again from an administrator. We all agree about inclusion and we will get there. But for now, she's just not ready for inclusion. Our recommendation is that you see it makes sense she should be in the smaller classroom, to help get her ready for an inclusion class in the future.

I just want to point out a couple of things here. There is a body of research does it is not my body of research, but it is there -- that demonstrates that the longer a child remains in a segregated setting, a self-contained setting, the harder it actually becomes for that child.

This idea that we will put this child in a self-contained class and then they will catch up and then we will get them into the class later, it's actually not consistent with the data that shows that the longer a child remains outside of the general education classroom, the harder it will be to reintegrate that child into a general education classroom.

The best way to be integrated into a general education classroom is to start in the general education classroom.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you so much, Priya, for the learning so far.

We are going to launch a poll in just a moment. Rose is going to make that available to participants.

What we are asking you to do is consider how many of the myths that you have heard today from Priya have you heard yourself, maybe you have been in a position where you have said these things to a parent. You can check all of those that apply.

There is a myth number one, in a self-contained classroom they feel very much at home. Myth number two, they will be able to keep up in a general education class. Myth number three, self-contained classes are better for students who need to get high levels of support. Myth number four, inclusion works for some kids. And myth number five, she is not ready for inclusion.

You can mark any or all of those and we will take a look at the results in just a moment.

Rose, what are you seeing on your end with the poll?

>> SPEAKER: So far we've gotten 43 responses on this poll. We are seeing -- I will keep it open for a little bit longer. But then I will publish after we and the poll. You still have a minute to add your responses.

We are seeing high percentages of people have heard these myths or variations. The highest is they won't be able to keep up in a general education classroom. At 95 percent of people responding.

Self-contained classes are better for the students at 91 percent.

I would say the one that we are hearing the lowest percentage on, that percent is still 76 percent of people responding have heard myth number four, inclusion works for some kids. It looks like we have a couple of more added.

Shelly go ahead and close -- close the poll?

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Yes.

>> SPEAKER: I will share these results. You can see here again, most common myth, they won't be able to keep up in a general education classroom, 96 percent of people responded they have heard that.

Inclusion works for some kids, our lowest rate and get it is still at 74 percent. Almost three quarters of the respondents have heard all of these myths at least once or some variation.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you, Rose.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: That is a depressing bit of data right there. Unfortunately not surprising. It seems like almost anyone who is a parent has heard that they won't be able to keep up.

I'm going to spend little bit of time now talking about parents and their experiences. I just want to take a minute because Jan, in your wonderful and really generous introduction to me, and I think that I should also add something to that that I didn't mention earlier, is that in addition to being a researcher in this area and a disability studies scholar and a teacher educator, I am also a parent. I have two children, one who is defined by our culture as nondisabled and normal. The other one who is now 20, my daughter has down syndrome.

I want to be transparent and position myself also as a family member of a person with a disability as I move forward with the slides because I have been part of this battle, as they call us, for inclusive education. I too have heard all of those myths and it has been a journey for us as well. I should say my daughter is 20 and graduated last year from high school. She spent every single day of her schooling in an inclusive, fully inclusive setting.

I just offer that just to position myself, not just as somebody who is doing the research from the outside, but as someone who has lived every single day of her life on the other side of the table. I would like to joke that I go back and forth on both sides of the table as a professional and a parent and I have heard it from every angle.

That is my interest and my investment in this is very real.

Back to institutional roadblocks. This is one of the most persistent things that I find in all of my research and all of my conversations with parents, is that parents report that when they seek inclusive education

environments for their children -- talking about particularly certain families who have kids with as I said earlier either developmental disabilities or autism, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities -- experience that they get so much resistance that they have to fight, that they have to make a case, that they have to argue it, get people in. They have to go to conferences to learn. There is all of this happening. Meanwhile, they say, they are steered toward self-contained environments by professionals who either in subtle ways or outright explicitly, state to them that those self-contained places are the best for their children.

That is the environment that is right. I have heard it said many times, in my professional opinion, you are making a mistake, administrators have said this to me, to parents, in my professional opinion, in my expert opinion, you are asking for inclusive education, you are making an error. The best place for your child is the self-contained classroom.

Parents perceive that they are in a battle for inclusive education for their kids later we are still seeing that inclusive education is largely parent driven.

Here is an example of what I am calling the marketing and packaging and selling of self-contained spaces. This is what it looks like. This is a parent is speaking here. They said does this parent is talking about the child study team later. They said, we have a small classroom where Billy won't be overwhelmed. We don't want him to be overwhelmed in a bigger classroom. The kids do great there in this class. This self-contained one. I am trying to remember how exactly she phrased it but more or less it was presented in a very positive way. So how could I say no to that? Especially because I didn't understand least restrictive, I didn't understand inclusion, I didn't understand any of that stuff. So that's why, you know, I took the advice.

This is very compelling. Because when parents have children with disabilities, they don't go to a special education course. They don't -- you wouldn't expect a parent to know otherwise. Why would a parent know all of these things? A parent looks to an educator as the expert. Looks to who they think are the experts that will guide them, who know what is right. And here this parent is saying, they didn't know that stuff. This expert told them, so of course they took the advice. And why would one not come as a parent? It would seem like you are taking a risk if you don't.

When I'm in the doctor's office, and the doctor advises something that I don't want to do that, the doctor says, it is on you. That is scary.

Across the board, studies indicate that decisions pertaining to student placement in inclusive learning environments are too often parent driven.

That means when you see a child with an intellectual -- labeled with an intellectual disability, a developmental disability, autism or multiple disabilities, and they are in an inclusive learning environment, chances are pretty high that they are there because a parent advocated for it.

That is a problem.

Parent advocacy -- I see there are Merry parents in this audience. You are familiar, very likely, with the idea of having to advocate for your child. I want to put that in a broader historical context. What we are doing as parents today has a long history, a tradition of advocacy is what got us to this place in the first place. It was grassroots family movements that were the driving force that banded together with individuals, with disabilities, and lobbied for radical change.

That is actually what led to the passing of public law 94142 in 1975 which is now evolved into IDEA.

I want to put this advocacy that we are doing today in the broader historical context of 40 years. Or more, actually. Much more than 40 years. Of lobbying and passionately advocating to make those changes. It is families, it is parents that have got us very much to this place.

But now that I've said that, I am now going to problem the ties family advocacy itself. What is wrong with this picture? As I said, I will situate myself among those parents who have advocate and have advocated for their child. The first problem with family advocacy of course is that it leads to something I called battle fatigue. Parents expend huge amounts of time and resources and energy in order to try to get their child into an inclusive placement. I have interviewed parents to try to understand the extent of time and what that looks like, and for many parents, it involves going back to school, educating themselves or going to seminars or reading books. For some it means hiring an advocate and sometimes hiring a lawyer. In order to do this, of course it is emotionally draining, and of course for some parents it is financially draining. Because parents have to rely on their cultural and economic capitol that is available to them in order to secure an appropriate education for their child. Which is already an entitlement of their child under the law.

That is one problem.

The next one is that if -- I just said that parents have to dip into their cultural capitol and their financial capitol. Will then that should make us think about the next problem, which is in that case, who is advocating and who is not at the table? Which parents even have the resources available to them such that they can be empowered? To fight this so-called fight?

Who has -- by the way, when I say capitol, it is not just financial resources. We have to look at resources broadly have to look at cultural capitol which includes the language. Who has the language? Who are members of dominant culture that share the kinds of beliefs about individual advocacy in the first place? What about families that don't believe that it is their right or their place or that it is culturally not something that they think one should do to oppose somebody in a position of power, to take them on, to have the language to do that, to have the time to do that, and to have the money to do that?

That would mean that those families that have that level of privilege are able to access inclusive education for their children in some cases and I should say that it doesn't even always work when you do have all of that available to you.

Which leaves the children from families that don't have those resources in even more vulnerable situations. It feeds into actually directly feeds into our data which shows that self-contained classrooms are populated by historically marginalized groups of children, language minorities, children from lower SES background, and black children. So you can just see how it does play out.

The next one is, the biggest -- I think this is the biggest problem with family advocacy, is that we can advocate for our child, but it leaves the system unchanged.

I as a parent and I have done it, I have advocated for my child so I get why a parent will advocate for their own child. And each time we do that, it allows a child to access inclusive education, but it doesn't put the burden on the system to change our par so what we need to start doing as a group is that we need to sort of refocus our energies. If our goal is inclusivity in society for our children, because we want to think broadly. It is not just a school's. We have a eye on the prize, I say. It is inclusivity and acceptance in society. Then we need to think beyond fixing the immediate issue for our own children and go back to our roots as families, where we came from, was a history of grassroots collective advocacy and activism. Together families can work together to make systemic change at their schools and work with the administration's, then the impact would be felt not just by our own children, but by those who are not necessarily at the table or at this webinar.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you, Priya. I'm just watching the time.

I want to briefly talk about next steps and maximize some time for question and answer with Priya.

To begin with, it was really important for all of us to reflect on what is our understanding about inclusive education and what is not inclusive education. I think we understood that it was definitely more than just a physical time spent in a physical environment.

We are going to have a couple more learning opportunities with Priya. Mark your calendars. April 21 and April 28 more information to come on those opportunities.

But really, back to understanding what is inclusive education, how do you define it, and what is happening in your own community, in your own school. You can ask, as a parent, any member of the community can ask for that data around what is happening with our students with disabilities and where are they accessing their education. Is it an inclusive setting or is in segregated settings?

As we are thinking about this, maybe you already have some ideas. Maybe you have thought long and hard about this and you want to share that out.

Go ahead and drop in the chat based on what you have heard today or what you have been thinking about for a long time. What is a next step you are going to take to see that all of our students have access to inclusive education. As you are doing that, Taina will look through any of your offerings that you are sharing in the chat. She will read a few of them out in just a moment.

And really, how can we work together in solidarity with one another to promote Meaningful Inclusion in our schools and communities? Together.

>> TAINA KARRU-OLSEN: I see some grassroots organizing going on in the chat. Around the work some PTSAs are doing. Folks are going to get on that and get networking and get organized in their districts. Shelley is saying that she is going to commit to read engaging with the special education PTSAs in her district.

And people are going to share this information with their special education teams, parents and admin.

Continue to push students into the inclusion setting.

Keep -- if you are working on something, put it in the chat. Get to know each other. Build those networks.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you, Taina.

I'm going to go ahead and move us to questions for Priya and I will give Rose an opportunity to take a look in the chat and see if there are any questions to bring forth that Priya can answer. And of course if it is Washington state specific, we can follow up with you as your facilitation team today.

>> SPEAKER: Priya, there are a few really good questions here in the Q&A. Some of them are similar to what is been coming up in chat. We did have one question about, is there a place where folks can go to look at and examples of the kind of full range of aids and supports that might be considered and could be used before removing a student from a general education.

If you are thinking of resource websites or locations to go and find ideas on that, do you have some go to places?

>> PRIYA LALVANI: I mean, we have -- I am here in New Jersey so I have more like New Jersey based resources which I don't know if it would work. We have New Jersey coalition for inclusive education. I would have to say the law itself states it. There is something called rights law where you can go and it explains parents rights as well. Or you can Google parents rights under special education IDEA and it will list the kind of accommodations and supports that a child is entitled to.

Those are some. It's a great sort of short bridgeway of accessing the law.

>> SPEAKER: I think we can.

One other question that someone asked is, is there information, have we seen how this impacts the transition times from the high school onto post-secondary? If the student receives Meaningful Inclusion early on, do you see more success in transitioning? Can you talk a little bit about that.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: Is interesting that you ask that because I'm just now becoming so much more familiar with the transition system. My daughter is in that program right now.

To my understanding, of whatever I've read in the past, it is not about successful versus not, but rather the quality of what happens in that transition program time.

There is data that actually -- it is not research that I've done or been involved with in the past, but what I have seen is that students who have spent their education in an inclusive setting, the transition period and the goals look very different. There is also data that shows the outcomes of where students in inclusive settings do actually end up, versus children who have gone through the self-contained classroom setting. There is data that shows that self-contained education tends to lead either to adult institutional type settings, and jobs in workshop type settings. So piecemeal work kind of things. Or the food industry. There is data that shows that students with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, what have you, who have been through inclusive education, their transition looks different qualitatively as they are preparing for jobs in very different settings.

There is also data on dropout rates, and that is a whole other story.

Students who are in high school tend to drop out at higher rates when they are in self-contained classrooms.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you. That is more powerful information to support this effort.

We have a question that is kind of a tough one when we are thinking about advocating for an individual student. If you are advocating for inclusion, this as a parent, and you are seeking time in general ad and maybe propose that they would get some additional one-to-one support, if the team says ultimately know to some of the supports that you think are necessary, there is sort of a question as the parent in that moment, if I insist on inclusion and my child won't have the supports, and my pushing them to a situation that might be traumatizing? And what are the alternatives in that moment?

>> PRIYA LALVANI: That is a tough one. I don't know what to say. Inclusion done badly is not a good thing I suppose.

I don't know -- I know there is a lot of data out there on children's self-esteem and trauma in self-contained settings as well. That is something to think about. We are always -- this might not be the direct answer. I don't know. Yes, it might be traumatizing to a child to be in a setting that is not supportive. And that has happened, of course. Hundreds of times.

I can't speak to that. I can say that we are always focused on the trauma that a child might experience in an inclusive class, but we are forgetting that there are reams of data on the trauma in a self-contained class. That is already a given because there is data that says that a child's sense of worth, especially as a child grows, and kids get it. They get well they are in that class after a certain age.

That is also trauma in a different kind of way. A lasting identity that you have crafted for that child, that they belong in that space.

But, yeah, I will acknowledge that refusing to provide the supports, it is not going to be a good situation.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you. If we have time for one more question. A couple of questions around some of us here on this website are folks who are fortunate to have social capitol time and other things to be advocating. It sounds like sometimes when parents push that advocacy for their individual kids, they are hearing a message back, well, if we give this to your kid, that is not really equitable for everyone else. Do you have some ideas on how families who do have that capitol to be pushing this can move it forward in a way that looks towards equity and avoid those defenses.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: I'm not sure. Is it that the parent is hearing that if we give this to your child is not fair to the other kids?



>> SPEAKER: It sounds like that.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: That should be shut down. That is a blatant violation. That should not be said. Any discussion with a parent as per law can only be about the supports that that child needs. A conversation about precedent or unfairness to the other kids is not part of the conversation.

Any conversation at an IEP is about how to supports and provide all of the supports that this child needs and if that is not available, the conversation needs to be about how we can either make it available or what can be done. That is the conversation and that is the only conversation that needs to be had. Not whether a child can be in the setting, but let's make a list of all of the supports that would be needed. And they would need to make a case for why that particular support cannot be done. I would argue that almost anything one could bring it in.

I know that we are running out of time and folks had said about the money issue, that always comes up in my classrooms as well. I just have one sentence say, you want to know how expensive it is for a district to send a child out of district to one of those segregated schools for kids with disabilities alone, talk about what costs a lot of money. Segregation costs a lot of money.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you so much. Jen, I will turn it back over to.

>> JEN CHONG JEWELL: Thank you so much, rose, and Priya for having a dialogue.

We have come to the end of our time together. We could definitely continue this conversation and we will. We will have two more learning opportunities with Priya coming up in April.

Be on the lookout for that. What I do want to point us to really quickly before we leave is the OS PI inclusive practices project.

You can go to the OS PI website or Google it. There was a discussion about well, what about the supports and how do we get there? Well, a lot of our education partners are doing a great deal of professional development right now around those things.

And developing pathways and learning about how to build our systems to be more inclusive.

Because really, as parents we will talk about our child, but when our child is included, it benefits all kids. When we build out the system to be truly inclusive for sure.

Another opportunity is checked out the family engagement collaborative which is a part of this project. You can find us on that website as well.

There is a website that is probably not as well-known, it is called Ed for all. This is knowledge mobilization educators. Check it out.

And also, just recently published is the educational justice roadmap which was funded from the Washington education association and the national education association. This really is about outlining a systemic educational revamp, what is needed to make it inclusive for all students again.

We talked about disability in this webinar, but really the things that make inclusive education better for students with disabilities, also improves education for all students who are experiencing opportunity gaps and inequity.

The last slide is just more additional resources. There is more reading to do and of course there are Dr. Lalvani's book, and undoing ableism, teaching about disability in K-12 classrooms.

Again, if you are an educator and you would like your clock hours, please e-mail rose at the office of the education ombuds. Her e-mail is in the chat.

We will send a form for you to fill out and you will verify your attendance through the chat today.

I do have to give a special thank you to Debbie Esposito, my colleague out in New Jersey for New Jersey span, a parent advocacy network. She is with the start program, start engaging parents of students with disabilities.

Thank you, Debbie.

And here is this quote. Inclusion is a right, not a special privilege for a select few.

Again, on behalf of our team today and thank you again, Dr. Lalvani for spending your time with us, your afternoon on the East Coast, and our morning, here on the West Coast.

On the slide I have contact information for the facilitators. You can follow Dr. Lalvani on Twitter at and then she also has an e-mail available if you would like to reach out to her.

We do really appreciate all of your time and we have a evaluation for you. Please fill it out to. Your feedback is important to us as we build out meaningful learning opportunities for families and community members to come together.

I think that is all I have on my end.

I will do a quick stop share for a second so we can all come back on screen.

Thank you, again, everybody.

Thank you so much for your time this morning and taking that collective breath together. This was a lot and we feel it in so many ways. Because we are families, we are community members, we all care about students and wanting to see all of them succeed.

Thank you for your time.

>> PRIYA LALVANI: Thank you so much and thank you for inviting me. I just want to say I was really moved by all of the comments that were coming in. I was trying to read them as fast as I can.

Thank you what a great group.

>> SPEAKER: I will end the webinar and we will see you next time.