Breaking Down Barriers to
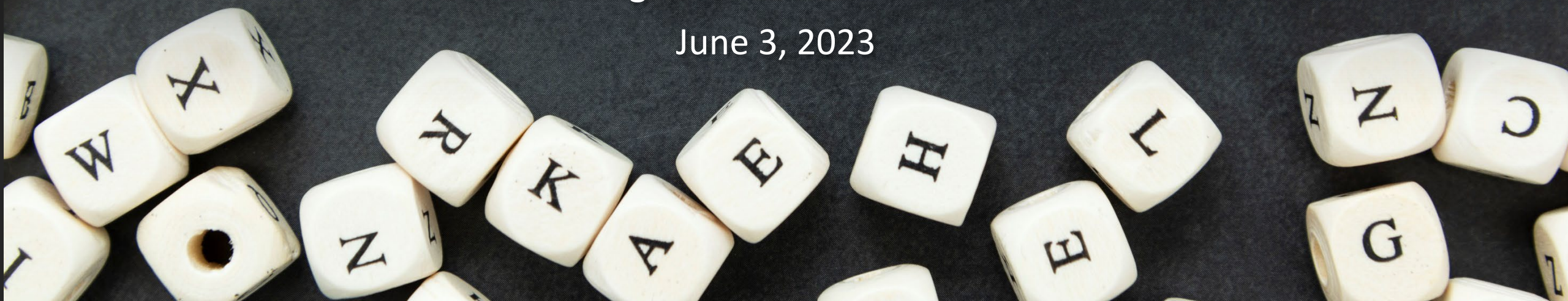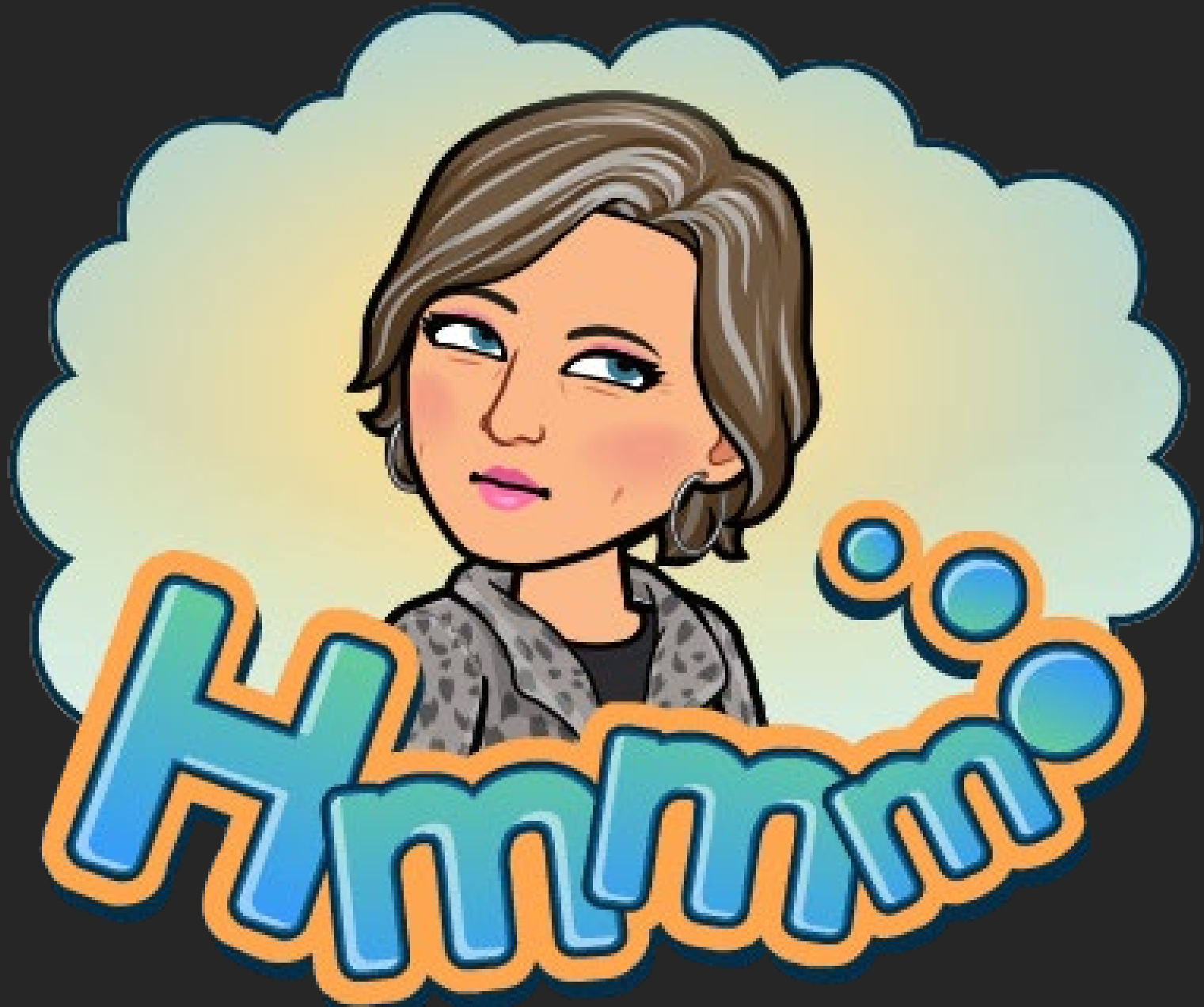
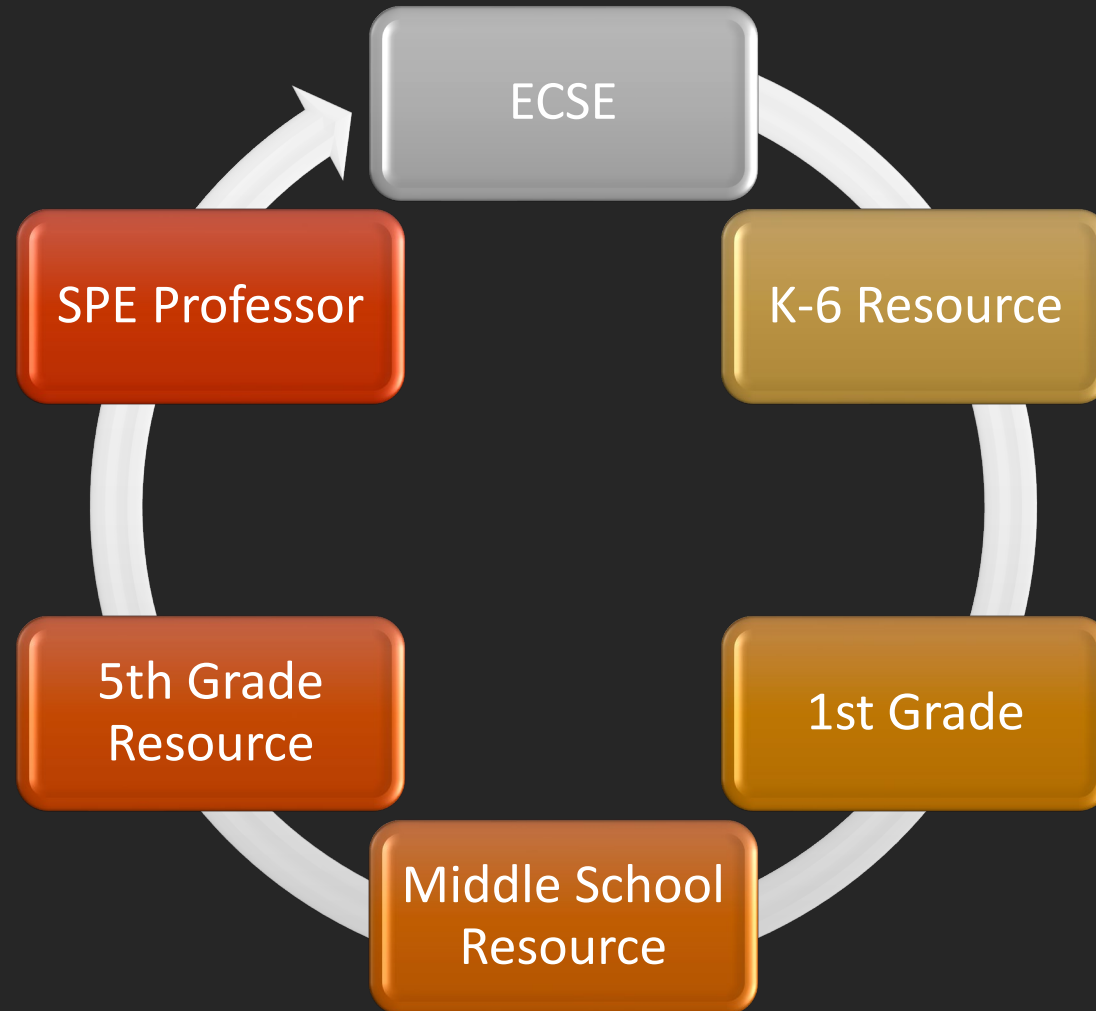Michigan Alliance for Families

June 3, 2023

Who am I?

My Professional Background

My Professional Beliefs

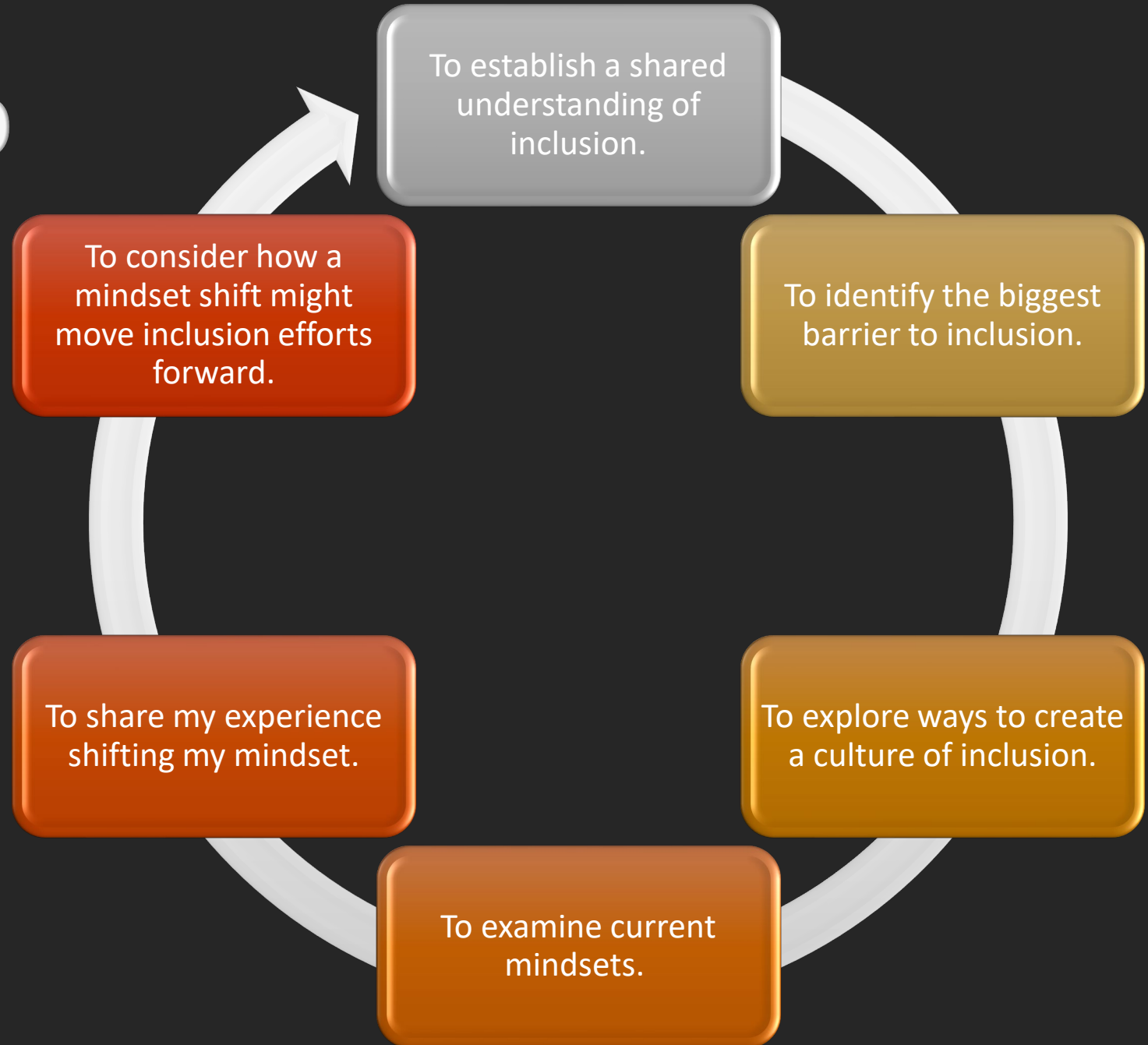I believe that human beings matter and have value.

I believe that disability is natural and inevitable.

I believe that the education system was designed with specific children/students in mind.

I believe inclusion is not only achievable, but imperative.

I believe questions are more important than answers.

What does "inclusion" mean to you?

What Is The Biggest Barrier To Inclusion?

Learning about Disability

We learn about disability very early in life through...

- Our families and friends

- Our religious institutions

- Our schools

- Our doctors and healthcare professionals

Would you agree or disagree with this?

Other Ways We Talk About Disability

Physically challenged

Differently-abled

Intellectually challenged

Special Needs

Handicapable

Euphemisms are:

Mild or indirect word(s) or expression(s) substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

Commonly Accepted Euphemisms

Restroom	Full-figured	On the streets
Correctional facility	Batting for the other team	Vertically challenged
Pre-owned	Let go	Collateral damage

What are these "really" referring to?

Are they helpful?

What are the consequences of using them?

The Problem with Disability Euphemisms

They imply that the word disability is bad, negative, or derogatory

They minimize the impact of impairment by over-generalizing or masking its meaning.

They are usually overly "cutesy" or linguistically awkward.

They prevent people from embracing the word "disability" which has important legal protections.

What About These Words?

Special Needs

Disabled Person

Person with a Disability

Are they similar? Does it matter which one(s) we use?

Special Needs	Disabled People	People with a Disability	Handicapped

How Did We Get Here?

- How did we learn about disability?

- Where did the words we use come from?

- Why do we use them?

- Why does society think about disability this way?

- Where did stereotypes of disability come from?

Lauren Schrero: The Nora Project

Disability Studies

- Examines the experiences and perspectives of people with disabilities.

- It focuses on the social, cultural, and political aspects of disability.

- Seeks to understand how disability understood and perceived in society.

- It aims to promote equity and justice.

Views of Disability

- The way we understand disability influences attitudes and responses to disability.

- Inform educational policies and practices.

- Inform healthcare policies and practices.

- Inform economic policies and practices.

- Inform policies and practices related to criminal justice, housing, financial support, etc.

Medical View of Disability

Disability is a feature of a person, directly caused by disease, trauma or other health condition, which requires medical care provided in the form of individual treatment by professionals.

Disability is a flaw or problem within the individual.

Disability is "bad" and should be avoided.

The goal is to be as close to "normal" as possible.

The Medical View and Ableism

- Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other.

- Discrimination in favor of those who are able-bodied and neurotypical.

Examples of Ableism

- Dismissing or not making space for utilization of different methods of communication.

- Not making environmental accommodations for "one" child (ex. Adaptive playground equipment)

- Planning school trips without considering the accessibility of the venue or transportation.

- Assuming eye-contact = listening.

- Not including children in general education classrooms until professionals agree they are capable.

Consider this

The mother of a 3-year-old wants her child to spend time with other young children. She visits several preschools close to her home (unannounced visits), interviews the directors and teachers about the 3-year-old Tuesday-Thursday half-day class, and talks to other parents whose children are enrolled at the preschool. She's determined to find the place that's right for her child!

The mother of a 3-year-old with a disability is told which special ed preschool her child will attend. She's not crazy about putting her child on the school bus five days a week for the 45-minute ride each way (at 8:30 am and 3:30 pm), and she doesn't visit the school to check it out. She'd really like to keep her child home with her—she can't imagine her son being away from her all day (and taking naps at school). She also thinks she's been doing a good job helping him learn new things. But she figures the professionals at the segregated special ed preschool must know best.

Charity View of Disability

Issues related to impairment need specialized approaches from qualified, trained professionals. Disabled people need to rely on non-disabled people to help them and promote their cause.

Disability is pitiable.

Disability is tragic and renders one helpless.

Non-disabled are viewed as saviors.

Special Education Services

Unique blend of medical and charity views of disability

Medical

- Diagnosis
- Comparison (normal v. abnormal)
- Specialized services or therapies
- Focus on deficits
- Evaluation of progress
- Specially trained professionals
- Segregated educational settings

Charity

- Special services/professionals
- Special classrooms
- Mainstreaming
- Individualized Education Programs
- Special transportation
- Peer programs

A Social View of Disability

Disability is a socially created problem not a problem within the individual that is due to unaccommodating physical environments brought about by attitudes and other features of the social environment.

Disability is socially constructed.	Impairment exists but disability happens due to lack of accessibility.	Barriers are attitudinal, physical, and institutional.

Barriers to Inclusion

- Attitudinal
  - Negative stereotypes
  - Normal v. abnormal
  - Needs are too extensive
  - Needs are too unique and different
- Physical
  - Access to spaces
  - Access to places
  - Access to learning, socializing, playing
  - Access to experiences (sights, sounds, textures, etc.)

The Social View of Disability

- Changed the ways we "talk" about disability and the words we use.
  - Person-first
  - Identity-first
- Changed the ways we "think" about disability.
  - Natural part of human diversity
  - Not exceptional - inevitable
- Changed the focus to access and participation.
  - IDEA
  - ADA
  - Section 504
- Raises expectations for inclusion.

Stella Young

Disability doesn't make you exceptional, but questioning what you think you know about it does.

— Stella Young —

AZ QUOTES

Why the way we view disability is important.

Medical/Charity View	Social View
• Child is faulty • Diagnosis is the focus • Labeling is important • Impairment becomes focus of attention • Assessments, monitoring, therapies • Segregation/alternative placements • Ordinary needs put on hold • Re-entry allowed if 'normal' enough	• Child is valued • Strengths and needs defined by self and others • Identify barriers and develop solutions • Outcomes based programs provided • Resources made available to ordinary services • Training for families and professionals • Relationships nurtured • Diversity welcomed and society evolves

The Benefits of a Social View

Promotes a more inclusive mindset.
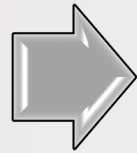
Promotes an understanding that disability is a natural part of being human.

This model actively works to destigmatize disability.

Supports designing spaces and places with disabled people in mind.

Can change the way you see yourself and others in this world.

Do you believe that disabled children/people...

- Are people first
- Need real friendships
- Are entitled to communicate in whatever form works for them
- Must be able to enjoy full mobility and access
- Be assured continuity in their lives through connections
- Must be treated with respect and dignity
- Must have the freedom to choose how they want to live their lives
- Must be able to exercise choice and control
- Must be able to live in the homes of their choosing with appropriate supports
- Should enjoy the benefits of true productivity through employment or community contributions

Then you are already oriented toward the Social Model of Disability!

Disability Rights Michigan

Disability is the largest minority group that anyone can join at any time temporarily or permanently.

Shouldn't inclusion matter to all of us?

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Additional Resources

Can be accessed through the remaining slides

One of the five apples in the bowl is green, and a green apple is more like red apples than different. One in five Americans is a person with a disability, and people with disabilities are more like people without disabilities than different. Like gender, ethnicity, and other traits, disability is a natural part of being human. And it's time for the light of inclusion to shine on ALL!
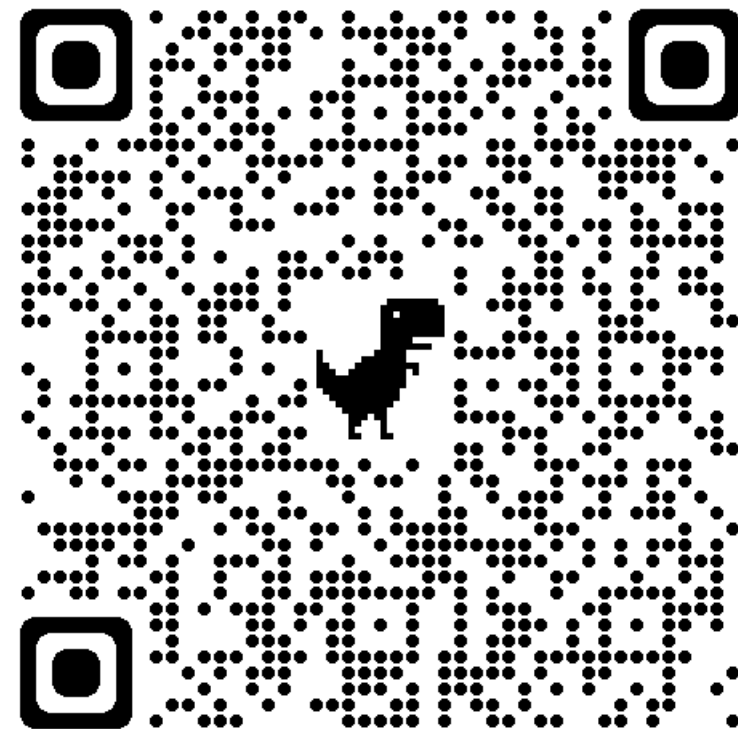
Disability is Natural
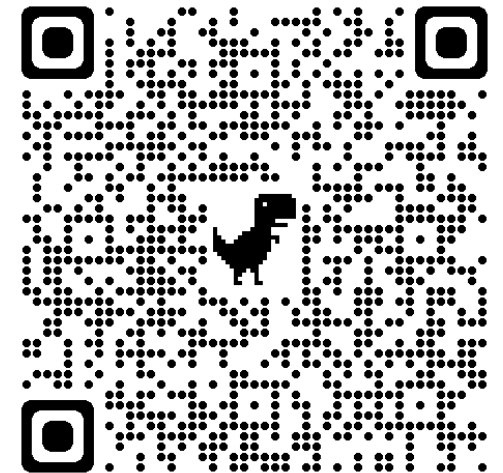
Drake Music: Understanding Disability

- Drake Music is the leading national organization working in music, disability and technology.

- Drake Music is a national arts charity working across the UK with our Head Office in London. We are a National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England and are also funded through Youth Music
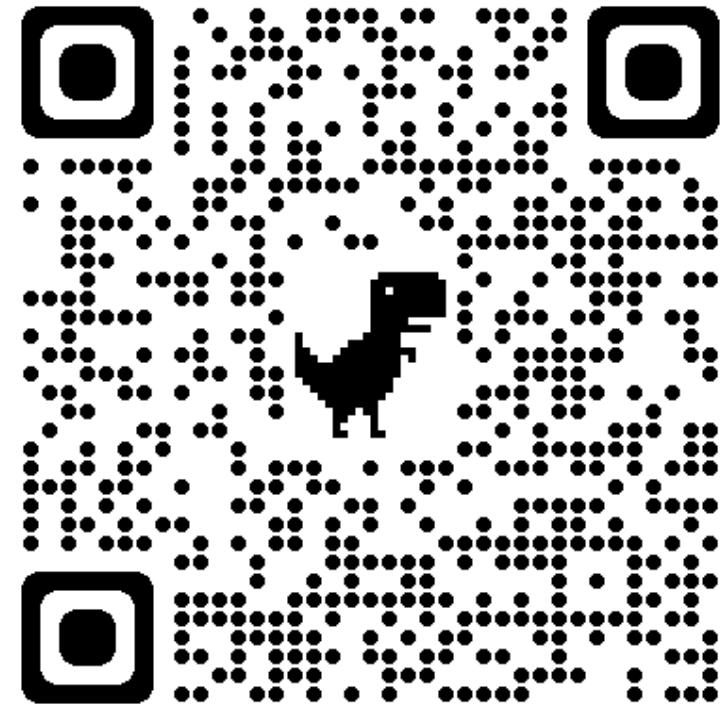
Stella Young

- Stella Young is a comedian and journalist who happens to go about her day in a wheelchair — a fact that doesn't, she'd like to make clear, automatically turn her into a noble inspiration to all humanity. In this very funny talk, Young breaks down society's habit of turning disabled people into "inspiration porn."

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