



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

November 18, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Inclusion Project Guide and Toolkit

In June 2012, the I'm Determined Project, a Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) supported project, sponsored a group of school-aged youth with disabilities to attend a leadership institute at the University of Richmond. As part of that training the youth met with agency leaders to ask about their agencies and what they considered issues for today's youth with disabilities. During the meeting, youth were challenged to develop a proposal around an issue they considered key to youth with disabilities in Virginia. They developed a proposal for the "Inclusion Project," an activity-based approach that involves hands-on activities aimed at increasing awareness of and education about disabilities. The VDOE's Division of Special Education and Student Services' Assistant Superintendent, John Eisenberg, accepted the proposal.

Over the past three years, a 12-member steering committee led the project. The committee members consisted of eight youth leaders with disabilities representing the eight superintendent regions in Virginia, along with an educator/administrator and three state agency representatives – the VDOE, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, and Virginia Commonwealth University's Partnership for People with Disabilities. The steering committee and three youth-led workgroups worked to develop 45 hands-on activities for elementary, middle, and high school aged students. They also developed a guide to assist schools and community members in planning a local inclusion event. Additionally, the Guide and Toolkit were piloted in Northumberland Middle School and all Radford City Public Schools.

This guide is intended to be used as a resource, primarily for local school divisions. As you plan an Inclusion Project event, use an integrated approach, to include students with and without disabilities. Take advantage of the wonderful resources in your entire community. Agencies and organizations that you collaborate with could also use this guide to plan and host or co-host an Inclusion Project event. The event can last a day or longer. You can even launch a series of events within the school division or greater community. The activities in this Guide and Toolkit can be used in a single classroom, in an entire school, or as Radford City chose, an entire school division. When activities have concluded, reflect on the activities and learning with participants. The Inclusion Project steering committee envisioned you adding to this work by creating additional activities, modifying activities within the book, and sharing your activities and ideas with us.

The Inclusion Project Guide and Toolkit are available at the following websites, www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/transition_svcs/index.shtml or www.virginiasefadvocacy.org. For more information, contact Marianne Moore, VDOE Specialist, Secondary Transition at Marianne.Moore@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2700 or Jack Brandt, Partnership for People with Disabilities, Disability Policy Specialist at brandtj@vcu.edu or (804) 828-1365.

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