

Why Inclusion Matters

My Past, Present, and the Future of Inclusion

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“Born into the Field”

- At ten months old, my mother began working as a DD Waiver Provider for adults and children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- From the age of seven, I began volunteering and coaching in the local Special Olympics team.
- I became the leader of an organization called Best Buddies in High School.



Special Olympics
Soccer with the
Jackson Broncs
Team



Special Olympics
Basketball with the
Teton Timberwolves



Running with my buddy
Leonard during a kickball
game

Integrating Past with Present

- As I began my college career at University of Wyoming, I began my studies in Health Sciences and also began my venture into the Disability Studies program, a path that widened my horizons greatly.
- I started a Best Buddies chapter at the University of Wyoming, targeted at bridging a social divide I saw on the campus and in the Laramie community.
- We created many connections to student groups around campus and in Laramie. Not only were health students influenced, but students from all different colleges.

What does a World without Inclusion feel like?

- Problems arise rooted from long lasting ableism, small social networks, and isolation.
- “There were a lot of times that I didn’t feel like I fit in. Like times where I couldn’t talk to anybody about how I was feeling... I had no idea that I could fit in with people that don’t have disabilities.”
- We must address these issues with efforts like Best Buddies and inclusion practices in everyday life.

“What does Inclusion mean to you?”

“Why is it important?”

- “Inclusion is acceptance. Acceptance of all the things that may make us different, but knowing that we are more alike than we are different.”
- “Inclusion is so important because its easy to only look through my eyes, but although it is tough, we need to be able to walk in other people’s shoes.”
- “Inclusion means friends, it means laughs, it means fun. Inclusion means I don’t have to be alone, it means I can talk to my buddy when I need someone.”



Right after Best Buddies
Movie Night

Group Photo after a Best
Buddies Meeting &
Thanksgiving Potluck



Best Buddies Bowling Night

Questions for You

- When did inclusion, in its many different forms, not just disability inclusion, make an impact on you and in what ways?
- Why is inclusion important to you? How could it positively affect your lives or the lives of your students?
- How do you feel when you feel like your voice is heard and you are included in social groups? Can you imagine or remember a time when this was not the case?

Classroom Inclusion is Natural and Efficient

- True inclusion relies on the principle of equal participation of all members of society
- Inclusive social integration benefits students with and without Special Education Needs (SEN).
- An inclusive classroom with its natural supports, in the long run can actually be more efficient, both to cost and time.

Inclusion Works Smarter not Harder

- Difference between Diverse workplace and an Inclusive workplace
- The Power of an Inclusive Workforce and of Natural Supports
- Personal Case Study: **Vertical Harvest**

How Inclusion is Fueling my Future

- Unfortunately, the Medical field is often one which marginalizes many groups of people, excluding them from receiving the care they may need.
- My life experiences have impassioned me towards a career in medicine where I can work to provide healthcare to ALL persons who need it in Wyoming.
- How can you build inclusion in your future path?

Citations

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