Changing School Culture

*Changing School Culture* is a workshop that will examine the way that contemporary education practices, policies, and personnel can positively and negatively affect students with disabilities. Participants will be asked to confront the written and unwritten cultural standards in their own schools to help create an environment that optimizes each student’s potential. Nationally recognized programs will be presented as examples of best practices. There will also be a focus on creating a systemic change throughout schools and communities.

**Questions**

What is culture?

Does culture exist in institutions?

**Culture** - The sum of *attitudes, customs, and beliefs* that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next.


**Beliefs/Attitudes** – What are some beliefs/attitudes associated with special education?

**Customs** - What are some customs or traditions associated with special education?

**Questions**

What are things we can do to positively change the negative attitudes and customs associated with special education?

What can we do to reinforce the positive attitudes and customs associated with special education?
Three Approaches to Changing School Culture

1) Meaningful Youth Involvement
   - The IDEA Partnership’s National Community of Practice on Transition
     Since the Partnership’s creation in 2004, Federal, states and local agencies have
     came together around their shared interest in improving school and post-school
     outcomes for youth. These groups focus on issues including: Meaningful Youth
     Role: Increasing Accessible Transportation: Outreach to Child Welfare, Juvenile
     Justice, and Mental Health: Employment; and Post-Secondary Options. More info
     at: www.sharedwork.org

   - The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is dedicated to advancing the
     next generation of disability leaders by:
     - Promotes leadership development, education, employment, independent
       living, and health and wellness among young leaders representing the
       diversity of race, ethnicity and disability in the United States.
     - Communicates about issues important to youth with disabilities and the
       policies and practices that affect their lives. More info at: www.nyln.org

   - The Self-Directed IEP – Dr. James Martin and his team at The University of
     Oklahoma’s Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment have developed a number of
     materials to improving the self determination skills of students with disabilities.
     More info at: www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-
     partnerships/zarrow.html

2) Mentoring
   - The impact of mentoring can be seen in the work of “Eye to Eye”. Eye to Eye is a
     national mentoring program that matches college and high school students with
     LD/ADHD, acting as tutors, role models and mentors, with elementary
     students with LD/ADHD in order to empower these students and help them find success.
     More info at: eyetoeyenational.org

3) Promoting Inclusion
   - One example of how inclusion works is the Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion
     Elementary School. The Henderson School has been a full-inclusion school for
     many years, during which time founding Principal Bill Henderson has repeatedly
     been recognized for his leadership in the field. Through collaboration and
     development of a common language to identify needs and modify curricula, the
     Henderson has been successful at including children of all abilities and helping
     them succeed. More info at: http://boston.k12.ma.us/Henderson/

   - Dr. Henderson’s book about his work and his personal journey as a school
     administrator with a visual impairment: “The Blind Advantage” available in
     print and audio from Harvard Education Press

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www.lederick.com