



Statewide Independent Living Council

For Immediate Release

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Include! is an online k-12 curriculum promoting inclusion in schools.

SILC introduces an educational tool for Vermont schools to use *free of charge*.

(South Burlington): The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) has introduced an online curriculum that promotes inclusion and one which is intended for the entire school community. Include! (IncludeVT.org) is an online curriculum that was developed by the SILC with the help of teachers, family members, and individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the program is to bring disability pride to students with and without disabilities. Include! materials are available free to interested schools. Schools and educators can use Include! as a separate curriculum; but many choose specific lesson plans and materials that they incorporate into their anti-bias and diversity activities.

The curriculum was developed by the SILC with the goal of inspiring students of all ages to promote the principles of equality, dignity and respect for all in their classrooms, homes and communities.

The Include! Curriculum:

- Complies with Vermont Learning Standards;
- Includes ready to use lesson plans for elementary, middle and high school classes;
- Is easily integrated into different grade levels and subject areas;
- Provides additional resources and activities to enhance classroom experiences;
- Links disability awareness work to other diversity and anti-bias education;
- Encourages student, parent and community involvement in school-based disability awareness activities;
- Explores disability as a social experience similar to other multicultural, women's rights, and civil rights movements in America.

“We regularly find that students want to talk about disability issues and (Include!) creates a safe environment in which they can ask questions and get good answers. They also develop a clear sense of

the civil rights movement for people with disabilities. We have seen real improvement and sensitivity in our students' interactions with people with disabilities.”

-- *Stuart Strothman, 6/7/8 Language Arts, Guilford Central School, Guilford*

This 2nd Edition (formerly entitled PRIDE) was principally authored by Deborah Lisi-Baker, a longtime advocate for disability rights and former Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living. Under direction from the SILC education committee, Deborah and her team integrated over 180 pictures and illustrations into four distinct units of learning, each with applications and activities for all ages. The four Learning Units are entitled *Identity and Belonging*, *Disability and Awareness*, *Civil Rights and Social Change* and *Exploring Disability Experience through Literature*.

Interested schools are urged to contact SILC Executive Director Peter Kriff at vtsilcpeter@gmail.com for information on how to get started with Include!.

About the SILC

The mission of the SILC is that the Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) exists to enhance the equality with which people with disabilities enjoy, participate in and contribute to the lives of their communities, family and friends.

The Federal Rehabilitation Act requires each state to maintain a Statewide Independent Living Council to monitor programs that help disabled people live with independence and dignity in their own homes (as opposed to nursing homes or other institutions). In Vermont, as in the other states, the 17 voting members (number of voting members varies by state) are appointed by the Governor and the majority of them must be persons with significant disabilities. Collectively, they must represent all regions of the state as well as a broad spectrum of disabilities. The executive director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living is a voting member of the SILC; the directors of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired are non-voting (“ex-officio”) members.

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