# FIVE PHRASES

to help Educators navigate the tension between inclusion and behavior

When Inclusion Feels Hard, Words Matter

Supporting inclusion in the face of challenging behavior is complex—and emotionally exhausting at times. When frustration builds, it's easy to slip into blame or burnout. But sometimes, the right words can interrupt the spiral, ground a conversation, or simply remind us why we're in this work.

These five phrases are meant to do just that. They don't dismiss the difficulty—they offer clarity, compassion, and language to help teams stay rooted in their values while finding a path forward. Use them to reframe, reconnect, and keep inclusion purposeful, even when it feels hard.

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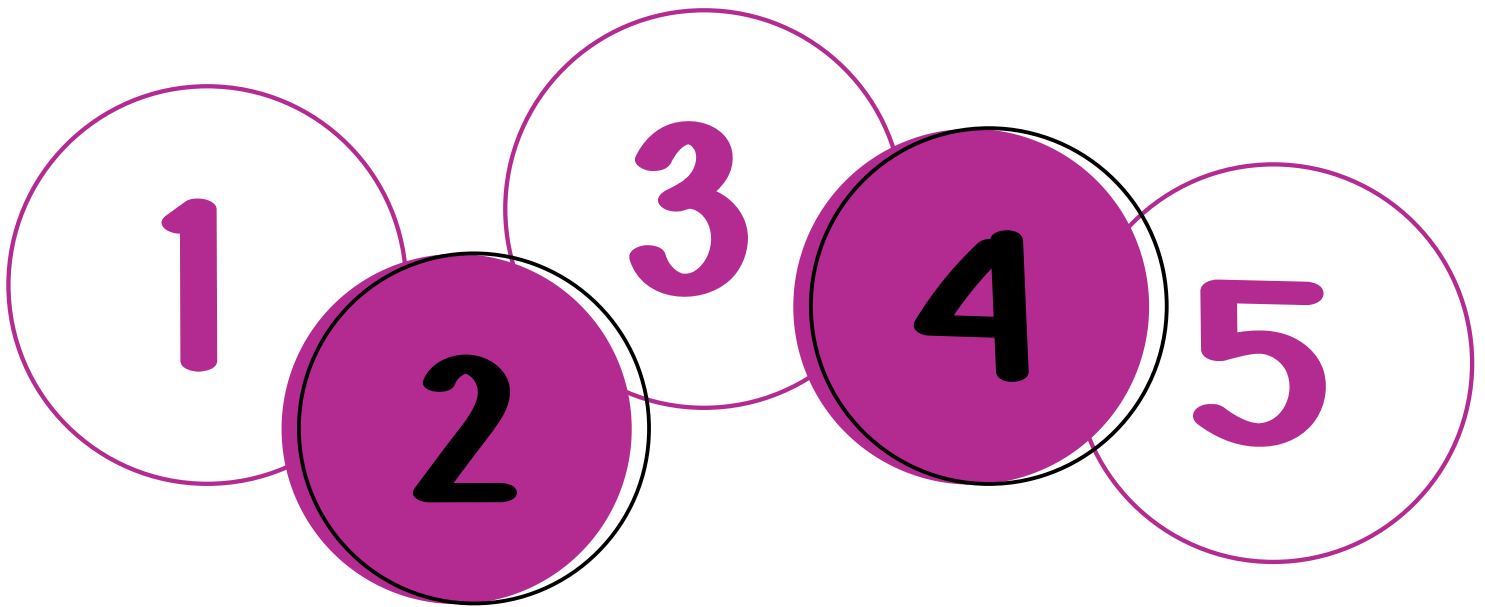
1. "WE DON'T INCLUDE STUDENTS BECAUSE IT'S EASY. WE INCLUDE THEM BECAUSE IT'S RIGHT."

This centers moral clarity and helps shift focus from convenience to values. It doesn't mean the frustration isn't real —it just means we don't stop there.

2. "WHEN BEHAVIOR OVERWHELMS US, IT'S A CUE—NOT TO EXCLUDE, BUT TO ASK: WHAT ELSE COULD HELP?"

This reframes behavior as a signal, not a barrier. It gently nudges teams toward solution-focused thinking.

3. "EVERY STUDENT TEACHES US SOMETHING. SOME JUST ARRIVE WITH LOUDER LESSONS."

Adds a bit of levity and empathy, and reminds staff that growth often comes from discomfort.

4. "INSTEAD OF ASKING WHO DOESN'T BELONG, LET'S ASK: WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS WORK BETTER FOR EVERYONE?"

A powerful reframe that redirects blame from the student to systems and structures.

5. "WE'RE NOT DOING INCLUSION PERFECTLY—BUT WE'RE COMMITTED TO DOING IT PURPOSEFULLY."

Acknowledge the imperfection while reinforcing your collective commitment to progress. When people feel seen in their struggle, they're more open to staying in the work.

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