

# Your Child Belongs

## AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERIES FOR FAMILIES

### Your Child Belongs: Introduction

Hello families and caregivers and educators to our series called Your Child Belongs, An Inclusive Education Series for Families. We are so excited to put this series out just for families because we want to answer all your questions, any of your concerns, and really help you understand and be inspired by what's possible for your specific child. So we've got our welcomes and you'll learn a little bit about who we are and why we're here to talk to you about inclusive education.

You'll get to learn about our work at Inclusive Schooling and why and how we help school systems all over the world become more inclusive. We will share the three parts of your video series and you'll get a special sneak peek at your dashboard, the three videos, and all the bonus resources. And then we'll just take a little bit of time at the end of this recording to introduce you to how Julie and I define inclusive education.

We talk about it being the work of a mindset or our beliefs, the heart set, and the skill set. And then we'll end with an invitation to watch a short animated video that Julie made for PBS. So here we go, Julie.

Okay, here we go. A quick bit about me. I'm also a parent of two children.

They're very cute. This is Sam and Sam also happens to have a disability. He's legally blind.

Ella is away at college and Sam has graduated from college. This is my wife, Ellen. And the reason we kind of want to situate you with our families is just to know so you can know a bit about who we are and where we come from.

We've written many, many, many books all about inclusive education. We'll talk specifically today about the way to inclusion for a minute. I taught elementary, middle, and high school special education.

I was also a full professor at Syracuse University for 14 years. And there I ran the inclusive elementary program. So I taught educators how to create inclusive schools.

I also have very cute pets and you can see them there. And now you will meet my colleague, Kristie. So welcome again, everyone.

I'm Kristie and my family is a little bit smaller, both in terms of humans and animals. This is my husband, Mike, and my Pomeranian, Whizzy. Like Julie, I have had many different hats and roles before we combined forces here at Inclusive Schooling, which we'll tell you about in a minute.

I was an early interventionist and early childhood special education teacher. So my area was really birth to school age. I was a full professor at Kent State University.

I live in Ohio. And so I was the director of the early childhood intervention program at Kent State for 16 years. And so together, Julie and I work and run an online company called Inclusive Schooling.

And so on the next slide, we're just going to show you a little bit. Yeah. So this book, just so you know, it's not that you need it or anything, but many of your school systems will be reading this book.

Many of your leaders will be reading this book. And the reason is we're really experts in how do we restructure schools to be more inclusive. And then how do we make sure that educators know and understand deeply how to make classrooms lessons inclusive.

The other thing that we wanted to make sure you knew about is we have a podcast that's free to you. And really, we welcome you to listen to any of the episodes that seem interesting to you. It's called the inclusion podcast.

You can get it anywhere where you can get your podcasts. And then Kristie, do you want to explain about our blog and other ways we support folks? Yeah. So this last picture is a little bit about our on demand offerings.

So in addition to the podcast and the blog, where Julie and I give practical tips daily, we also create on demand trainings, meaning that school districts can invest in professional development to gain the strategies needed to become more inclusive. So when you get to our website, you will see all of those things. We're going to move on to your dashboard where you will find all of the resources for this series and then how to connect with us beyond.

So I'm going to share my screen and I'm going to navigate and just highlight a couple of quick things. When you go to our dashboard, it's pretty simple. You get there, you'll see the title of the series, you'll scroll down, you'll see there's an introduction, and there's three part videos.

Right now, we're talking about the introduction. So you'll have the video. The closing of this introduction will be that invitation to watch that short animated film.

Here's where you'll find it. And then each session has a toggle where all of the resources that Julie and I mentioned, from our podcast, to our blog, to our book, you can get links directly to those. Next up is going to be us grounding our work in the definition of inclusive education, one of the podcasts related to that, and that mindset, heart set, skill set, inclusive education compass.

So your dashboard has the table of contents. Each video has the actual video, any additional videos, and any additional resources. So if you scroll down, you'll see the first video in the series, the second video in the series, the third video in the series, and then a whole bunch of bonus resources, which we're going to talk through from our PowerPoint, but wanting you to know they're all right here on your dashboard.

Okay, so just a couple highlights. Make sure you know that the orange rectangle opens. So you want to click on that.

That's where you'll get all of those resources. And just know that there's bonus material. But right now, we're just introducing you to the concept of what we're doing, which is we really want to welcome you all to think about more inclusive settings for your students.

And we're going to help you understand why that's important and help you understand what that looks like. The first video will be answering this big question, what does inclusive education really mean for my child? So if you're excited about getting the answers to what it will look like, what will it mean for us, skip over to video one. The next video in this series is how can my child access, participate, and succeed in the classroom.

So lots of times there's worry or concern that whatever's written on the individualized education plan or whatever the team has decided our supports and services may be something that needs to be in a separate place or by different people. And so we're going to talk about how can we ensure success. And that leads us to the third video, which is how can schools help my child become more independent and make progress.

So we're going to unpack answers and solutions to how we accomplish those things through inclusive education. And then the last part is the bonus content. But basically we've partnered with a father of a student who you'll meet in one of our video series, Mark Radle.

His dad is Pat Radle, is a special education lawyer, and he talks about secrets about what families need to know about inclusion and some of the myths out there. So the third one is this Peel article, and it's a really, really good article. If you'd like to just pause and go read it, it's going to help you understand, oh, why would we create inclusive schools for kids? Why is it beneficial for my student, my child to be educated inclusively? And then how schools do that.

The other thing is our resource page. We've got a little, we've got quite a few resources on our website just for families. So to recap, the work we do at Inclusive Schooling is really mostly for school systems.

And today we're helping families understand what does it look like when your school is becoming more inclusive and what's possible for my child in an inclusive setting. And then of course the district dashboard. So many of you, your school system will already be working with us.

And so you'll have a district dashboard and you can check in with your district partners to see if you can get access to that. Some schools may say yes, some schools may say no, but everything you need is right here in your family dashboard. Okay.

So now we're going to dive into just a little bit of content that sets the stage. Julie and I usually talk about this as grounding. Okay.

So Kristie and I have done so much work in school systems, each of us for 25 years, really helping schools become more inclusive. And a lot of people think they know what we mean. They hear the word inclusion and they think, oh, we know what that is, or we tried it, or I've heard of it, or I don't believe in it, or, or, or.

A lot of questions. So many times families might say, when I went to school, kids with disabilities were down the hall. They were separate.

They were in a different room. And what are you talking about? How's this going to look? What is it about? So we just want to share our definition and we wrote it together based on doing tons of research in school systems around the best practices of inclusive education. As I read this, Kristie mentioned already that this exact handout is right on your dashboard.

So you can take a look at that. You can open it. You can look at it while I'm reading.

What the first two paragraphs really do is clearly explain the heart set of inclusive education. So the heart set of it is inclusive education means we no longer accept that separate classrooms, separate schools, and separate lives are in the best interest of any student. Separating people by ability disadvantages everyone.

Belonging is a human need. Our educational system practices and spaces need to be reimaged. Inclusive education means every student is valued because of their strengths, gifts, and even challenges.

As disability is simply diversity. Everyone benefits from meaningful participation and opportunities to learn grade level content with diverse peers. We must trust that all students come to us as incredible whole people who do not need to be fixed.

So this definition is oftentimes what we think about our mindset and our heart set. The next slide is going to take it another level. So this is just giving you a sense of how we believe, how we approach, what we think about the work in terms of creating more inclusive opportunities for students.

Then we talk about that there are nine ingredients or nine components or things that need to be in place. You'll notice the star on number six and that's where you all come in is that there needs to be a strong partnership between schools and families. And so this series is really an effort to make sure that we are partnering, that we are all having a common understanding, that if we're concerned about something or as Julie said, oh we've tried that and it didn't work.

Maybe you've tried to advocate for inclusion and it hasn't gone the way that you wanted. Oftentimes we will say, oh that's because one of these ingredients is missing. So we want to make sure that in all the work we do, school districts and families are thinking about their structures, their personnel, what barriers might be creating or disabling people.

Are students welcome? Are we co-teaching and collaborating? Certainly are we partnering? Are we creating access points? How and when are we providing supports? And then how do we support students when there are behaviors that challenge us? So in this short series we're going to touch on many of these things, but in particular we want to make sure that you leave with just a compass, an idea of where we want districts to go. So Kristie mentioned this inclusive education compass and you can see right here this compass and we want you to think about a compass largely in the broader sense. So like you use a compass when you're not quite sure where to go or when you're lost or you're trying to find a place in this world.

Of course most of us use our GPS's, but we think it's actually pretty cool to think about these ideas as a north star or a way to find what works best for students. And so Kristie, do you want to explain the inclusive education compass? Yep, so I'll take you, so again down the bottom you'll see on the slide if mindset is the direction, this is our belief, what Julie read to us about inclusive education, and heart set is our purpose, the desire to achieve that direction, and skill set is the day-to-day things that we need to do, then we want to make sure that our whole culture, our way of showing up, our way of doing business embodies all of that. So on the handout, super quickly, this handout's on your dashboard, it'll further define mindset, heart set, and skill set.

Again we want us to be partnering and understanding where we're going, so this compass might be something that you share with your IEP team or with your child's teachers to really be thinking about how are we engaging in professional development, what is the culture and the system like, are we really making the goals that we want for our children. So again, there's that strong family partnership again. Okay, so your last task in this introduction is to take a look at this video called the circle makers, and it's a five-minute video like Kristie said that we made for PBS, and it really explains the thinking behind this work, and will be very important for you to watch as you move forward.

So enjoy the video, and then we'll see you in the next video.