



NEWS RELEASE

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JOURNEY TO INCLUSION PROJECT

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) announced today the start of Inclusive Schools Week. Inclusive Schools Week is an annual event held each year during the first week of December to celebrate the progress that schools have made in providing a supportive and quality education to an increasingly diverse student population, including students with disabilities. NDE has been recognized as a trailblazer in its efforts to create inclusive schools through its [Journey to Inclusion project](#).

“When we looked at our state level data, it became clear that we needed to look more closely at the education that students with disabilities were experiencing in our schools. Only 26% of our 4th grade students with disabilities were proficient on the ELA assessment as compared to 54% of our 4th graders without disabilities,” said Amy Rhone, Special Education Administrator from the NDE. “As we dug deeper, we realized the need to focus on the unique needs of students with disabilities in accessing grade-level learning.”

The Journey to Inclusion project does just that. It is based on the premise that all students, including students with disabilities, deserve access to a high-quality education that prepares them for future success. The NDE recognizes that students are best served when they have access to effective instruction on a high-quality, grade-level curriculum that is tailored to their learning needs.

“Nebraska is leading the nation in increasing the capacity of districts to provide teachers with high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials. The Journey to Inclusion project supports that work to ensure all students are able to access these materials”, said Dr. Deborah Frison, Deputy Commissioner of The Nebraska Department of Education.

Through the Journey to Inclusion project, NDE released its [Equity for All Learners: Inclusion at Every Level](#) guide. This guide is designed to provide districts, school leaders, educators, and families with evidence-based strategies that support inclusive services for students with disabilities that can be leveraged during their planning process.

The project also includes two pilot sites where schools from Scottsbluff Public Schools and Blair Community Schools have been engaged in professional learning and ongoing support to look at shifts that can be made to school structures and classroom practices to create opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers. For example, prioritizing common planning for general and special education teachers to collaborate can inform the type of support students might need during general education instruction so that they can remain in the classroom, rather than being pulled out to another setting.

“The in-person trainings have just been hands down phenomenal- some of the best training my teachers will say that they’ve

received”, said Megan Harding, principal of Blair Primary School.

As a result of the pilot participation, SBPS and BCS are experiencing encouraging signs of meaningful change. School teams are coming together to address the needs of students with disabilities in new and innovative ways. NDE plans to build on these successes and provide training to additional schools in the future. Find updates about this work on [our website](#) and through our social media channels.

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