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.

"culture." The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy

**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 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