

Suffolk Region



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Geri Coleman-Odom

Special Education Chair – Advocacy Team

[ddccmmom@gmail.com](mailto:ddccmmom@gmail.com)

[specialchair@suffolkpta.org](mailto:specialchair@suffolkpta.org)



## **Special Education Report** **October 2019**

Happy October! Growing up our generation often heard and said: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” It such a shame that in today’s times, our children don’t have the option to feel or believe that statement. You see, “sticks and stones may break their bones, but words can break their heart and leave emotional, mental and even behavioral scars. Too many times, people are defined and judged by their disabilities. In an article from the Parenting Special Needs Magazine (Sept/Oct 2019) titled “Disabilities shouldn’t define individuals” by Catherine C. Valcourt-Pearce, talks about how “the bullying of individuals with developmental disabilities is still a huge problem in today’s world”

It is true that individuals with disabilities are still targeted and judged for looking, acting and being different. When and how can we learn and teach others to look beyond one’s disabilities and know that a disability is just that a disability. A person who has a disability is just that, they are not a disabled person.

We need to begin at home with normalization. In the same article, a mother whose child has a rare genetic disorder and is nonverbal talks about children staring at her child. Instead of looking, pointing and making comments, she encourages people to come over, say hi, ask questions. She talks about not excluding children with disabilities from birthday parties, play dates and other “normal” activities. “Normalization often leads to understanding and acceptance”, this is where inclusivity comes into place. All children should be involved and invited to all school functions. I have seen and heard school officials, staff and faculty say that the special education students could not participate in a school dance or be part of an event; this is unacceptable and as advocates we must encourage inclusion. Inclusivity by definition is the practice or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of minority groups.

As parents we need to begin with our own children and ask the right questions when they come home from school. As advocates, as we plan events in schools, be sure to include all the grades in all events. Partner with your district’s SEPTA and do joint events to involve all students. Fear of the unknown is what causes the looks, the negative comments, the teasing and the bullying. Awareness, education and kindness begins at home. By educating our children and ourselves and the community, we can give this and future generations a new statement to live by:  
Choose Kind.