

The Olmstead Commission’s goal is to move North Dakota towards greater integration and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Statewide Independent Living Council

August 6th and 7th

State Council on Developmental Disabilities

August 13th at 10am

Money Follows the Person External Partners

August 19th at 1pm

Caring for the Caregiver Summit

August 20th at 9am

Brain Injury Advisory Council

August 20th at 12pm

Walking Beside You, Family and Caregiver Support Group

August 25th at 6:30pm

Cross Disability Advisory Council

August 27th at 1pm

NEXT OLMSTEAD
MEETING:

Wednesday, August 12th
1–3pm in the
Peace Garden Room
at the Capitol

Discussion Topic:
Goal #4– Housing

Join meeting [here](#).

FROM CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY:
THE PROMISE OF INCLUSION



Inclusion begins with belonging and for many individuals with disabilities, that journey starts in the classroom. Schools are often a child's first experience of belonging to a community. That’s where students build friendships, learn to work with others, discover their strengths, and develop the skills they'll use throughout their lives. Inclusive education isn't just about where a student sits during class, it's about creating opportunities for every student to participate, contribute, and succeed.

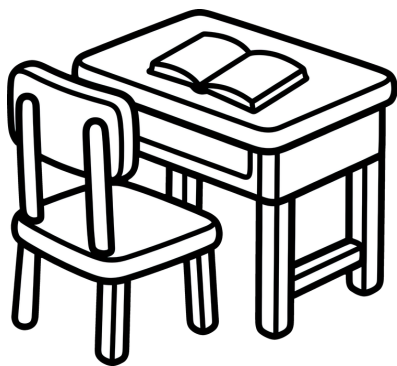
The principles of inclusion are reflected in both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Olmstead decision. IDEA ensures that eligible students with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), meaning they should learn alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, with the supports and services they need to be successful. Similarly, Olmstead affirmed that unnecessary segregation of individuals with disabilities is a form of discrimination. While the decision focused on community living, its message extends beyond housing. Individuals with disabilities should have meaningful opportunities to participate in all aspects of community life and inclusive schools help make that vision a reality.

When students learn together, everyone benefits. Students with disabilities gain access to grade-level curriculum, build social connections, and develop greater independence and self-confidence. Their classmates without disabilities also benefit by learning collaboration, empathy, respect, and an appreciation for the strengths and perspectives that each person brings. Inclusion also helps prepare students for life beyond graduation. Communities are strongest when everyone has the ability to live, work, learn, and participate together. Children who experience inclusive classrooms are better prepared for inclusive colleges, workplaces, and communities.



Of course, inclusion is about more than simply sharing a classroom. Students must have meaningful opportunities to participate in academics, extracurricular activities, school events, and social experiences. Appropriate accommodations, specialized instruction, assistive technology, and related services help ensure that every student can fully engage in the school experience. Families are important partners in making inclusion successful. Understanding your child's educational rights, including IDEA, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 Plans, discipline protections, and the right to education in the Least Restrictive Environment, can help ensure students receive the supports they need to thrive.

As another school year begins, remember that every inclusive classroom helps build a more inclusive community. By supporting meaningful participation, high expectations, and equal opportunities for students with disabilities, we're doing more than improving educational outcomes, we're creating a future where everyone belongs.



The promise of inclusion extends far beyond the classroom. It continues in our workplaces and communities, where everyone deserves the opportunity to live, learn, work, and thrive with independence, dignity, and belonging.

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