



THINK INCLUSION

ALFIE

THE ALLIANCE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

NEXT ALFIE MEETING 27TH MARCH 2009 FROM 12NOON TO 2.30PM.
AT LIBERTY RESOURC3ES 714 MARKET ST PHILADELPHIA 19106

ALFIE'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Life goes by fast and it is hard to believe that ALFIE will be five years old this May. As we approach this birthday we have reached a critical stage in ALFIE's mission to give disabled people a voice in inclusion. So what has ALFIE achieved so far and where are we going to next?

DEVELOPING RESOURCES

In order for us to have a true disability perspective ALFIE had to get into schools meet teachers and young people to really understand what it's like today for young people. Over the last two years we have worked in schools developing and testing materials including the Teachers Manual for inclusion, (see page4). We have found good practice and identified barriers. We have presented to principals, ran professional development days and all the while honing our training to make sure it is relevant and up to date. We have created a Book Table with books that are free of stereotypes but include disabled characters.

All this means is that ALFIE now has more to offer than just an opinion.

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

ALFIE is a network of individuals and organizations and in the past year has started to develop strong partnerships with some key organizations on some major issues.

ALFIE is part of the Coalition of Inclusion Advocates, the CIA which is pushing Governor Rendell to come up with a new plan for inclusion.

We are collaborating with the Temple Institute on Disability to take the Teachers Manual forward and we want to develop more relevant partnerships with all our supporters.

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ALFIE'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE CONTINUED

GROWING THE VISION

At the core of ALFIE's vision is a firm belief that disabled people can be part of the solution and need a place in the movement to develop inclusive practice. Disabled people have been "done for" and "done to" for many years and its time we countered this by promoting our ideas and our vision. ALFIE's mission over the next 3 years is to create a base of operations on which we can build. We will be asking school districts and the state how they can continue to move forward without us. How can they develop inclusion while excluding our ideas? How can they pay and fund everyone to practice inclusion but us?

We will also ask them what they imagine we can bring to the table to check out their understanding of the importance of involving us.

Over the next 3 years we have the following objectives::

1. A well funded, well respected coalition.
- 2, An advocacy organization which advocates that disabled people's ideas, perspectives, skills and knowledge be used to develop inclusive practices in education and early childhood settings.
3. A strong research base of disabled people from which to draw on and create materials and resources for educators to promote inclusive practice.
4. The development of consistent, innovative and relevant consulting and training services for educators and childcare workers alike.
5. To Identify disabled people and others who we can train to deliver the above consulting and training increasing ALFIE's capacity.
6. To develop and strengthen its working partnerships with its membership organizations to promote inclusive practice that includes a disability perspective.
7. To successfully market ALFIE to school districts in Pennsylvania starting with those in the Eastern part of the state.
8. To continue to compile a base of resource materials created by disabled people, that is constantly updated.
9. To develop a network of Principals for inclusion which it resources and supports.

To achieve all this, the first step will be to create a brand new organization that will attract funding. This will be discussed further at the ALFIE meeting on March 27. We call on all our allies to come to this meeting and help disabled people find a place in the drive for inclusion.

ALFIE COMPLETES ITS INCLSION MANUAL FOR TEACHERS

ALFIE has developed "*Inclusive Education: A Manual for Teachers*" for Kindergarten to 8th grade teachers as part of its work with the Philadelphia School District. ALFIE and Liberty Resources are grateful to the District and Temple University's Institute on Disability for their support for this work.

The Manual is based on a disability perspective of inclusion and is the result of our work in 9 schools over the last 2 years. We wish to thank all the schools and children for helping us create a realistic and practical tool for Inclusion.

Basically the manual is divided into four sections:

In the PERSPECTIVES section frameworks are outlined regarding how individuals and groups think about disability and impairment.

The importance of language is also discussed and how the use of language affects perceptions regarding disability.

Throughout this section there are exercises to support teachers learning experiences.

The MEASURING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES section includes practical examples that demonstrate how a school can build a progressive action plan to move toward fully inclusive and effective practices in educating disabled students.

In the section INCLUDING DISABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM we give teachers some ideas of lessons that could be carried out in class based on the core curriculum which include the experiences of disabled people.

In the section titled A GENERIC ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOLS there are suggestions for a school action plan which would assist in the development of inclusive practices and which would work together with a school improvement plan.

ALFIE is now planning with its partners how to ensure that the Manual is rolled out to and implemented in all K to 8 schools. The manual will be updated as new practice emerges as well as offer our support to schools in a variety of ways.

For more information on the manual contact adaptand@yahoo.com

COME ON ARLENE

Despite repeated phone calls, emails, letters requesting a meeting with the new CEO of Philadelphia's School Reform Board, Dr. Arlene Ackerman ALFIE has received no communication from her office. This is not just disappointing, it's rude. ALFIE is now publicly asking Dr Ackerman why she refuses not just to meet with ALFIE but why she chooses not to communicate in any way.

Far beyond the work we are currently doing with the School District, ALFIE has some issues for Dr. Ackerman to address directly.

Why she thinks disabled people should be involved in the development of inclusive practice?

What can ALFIE and the district do together to develop inclusive practice.

What is her vision and what are her goals in term of inclusion and how can we help?

How many schools are being made accessible this year and in the next 5 years?

How many special schools/units are being built in Philadelphia?

How can we build on the work that ALFIE has already done in schools in particular high schools?

How can ALFIE be involved in the transitioning of students from school to adult life and employment?

If Dr. Ackerman cannot value a sincere group of people who want to work with her to develop good practices in schools what chance is there for disabled young people in Philadelphia? So come on Arlene meet with ALFIE.





A DISABILITY PERSPECTIVE

The road to hell is littered with good intentions so the saying goes and this epithet is certainly true when it comes to disability. This leads to the question how can so many well intentioned people, charities and other organizations get it so wrong that we end up with a situation where disabled people are still in large numbers locked away in institutions and are a long way off being included in today's society. You would think that after all the work, resources, ideas and organizations efforts, after all the papers and brilliant minds being brought to bear that we would now be living in a society and a school system that includes all. The missing piece of the jigsaw of course is disabled people themselves as part of the solution not the problem.

MISBEHAVED, STUPID AND ILL

When interviewed as part of ALFIE's work in schools 7 to nine year olds in 2008 thought that children in the special education class were misbehaved, stupid or ill. These attitudes translated into adulthood could indicate just why disabled people's ideas, experiences and skills are still being largely ignored or devalued. Go to any meeting on education and you will find teachers, parents educators, para professionals, lawyers but very few if any disabled people. We are still being done for, looked after, patronized pitied and blamed for the situations created by others.

It really wasn't until the late '70s that disabled people finally came together to create a cohesive structure in which to assemble their ideas on inclusion and inclusive education which has been developing ever since. However it is a small voice in the crowd of para professionals, parents and other experts which is too often ignored or undervalued. To demonstrate this go to a conference and see how many disabled speakers there are, or look at the information stand. How much is written about us? How much is written by disabled people. This would not shock you only if you believe we are misbehaved, stupid or ill.

CORE MISSION

ALFIE's core mission is to create a place where this disability perspective exists and can be developed and promoted. Only then can the complex jigsaw that is inclusion become a reality. Without it we repeat the mistakes of the past, waste resources again, and create the same problems for the future.

A DISABILITY PERSPECTIVE continued

ALLIES AND ALFIE

Having established this place it is essential that ALFIE has allies who will work with disabled people to develop inclusion. Without allies our voice will never be heard.

So what is an allies' role in respect to this?

Firstly we believe that Allies need to listen and understand our perspective. This is obvious as we wouldn't want support through ignorance as this would be patronizing.

Second we need respect as we need to know that our opinions and perspectives are valued.

Thirdly we need your commitment to work with us and help us be heard by challenging the current way that advocacy operates without us.

Having established this we can then move forward together in an inclusive way to develop inclusion. We in turn will listen, respect and commit to working together to develop the inclusive education system we all want.

The first step for you maybe to come to the next ALFIE meeting on March 27th see back page for details.

ALFIE JOINS CALL FOR EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM

Pennsylvania last year commissioned a review of education funding which recommended sweeping new changes for special education funding and how it can be directed to promoting inclusion. This would share out the money fairly and target resources for inclusive practice. Despite the recommendations from the agency that they commissioned, new resources for disabled people have been omitted from the Governors' budget at this time.

ALFIE has joined the campaign for a fair distribution of resources and to have increased and targeted resources for disabled people.

We are now sending the message that it's time for the General Assembly to approach special education funding with the same sharp eye its members approached basic education funding in 2008.

For more information go to <http://www.reformspecialeducation.org/>

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELEY?

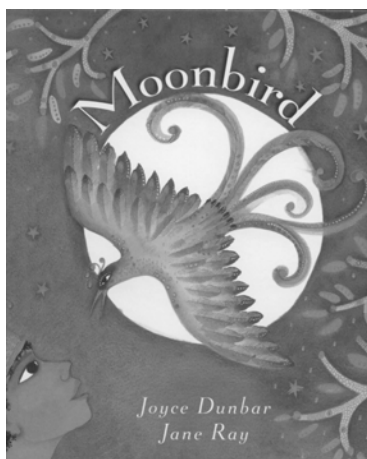
ALFIE has been awarded a grant from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council to research and compile children's books that realistically reflect the lives and experiences of disabled people.

These books are free of the stereotypes and negative images that we see all too often in children's media. Some of the books are written by disabled people and, in some instances, disabled people have been consultants. These are not "how to" books or "what is" books but merely books for children with positive disabled characters and themes.

We are very interested in people suggesting books we can add to our Book Table so send your suggestions to ALFIE at adaptan@yahoo.com or call 215 633 0193 to make your suggestions.

We want to take this exhibition to schools and libraries and advocate for their inclusion. We also want to take them to conferences and meetings to spread the word. Please contact ALFIE if you would like us to bring our Book Table to you.

A catalogue of the books can also be obtained from adaptan@yahoo.com



Moonbird Joyce Dunbar, Jane Ray.

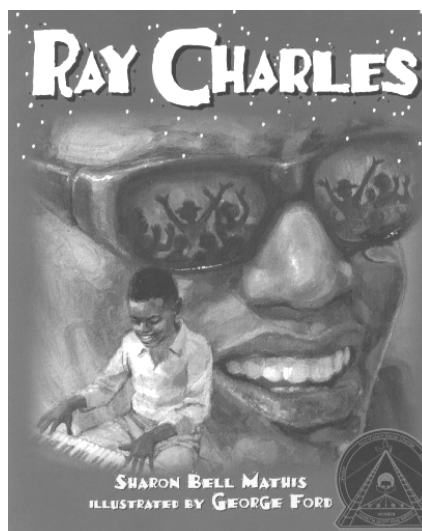
Orla can't hear the sounds of the earth but from the magical moon bird he learns how to speak with his hands.

SOME OF OUR FEATURED BOOKS



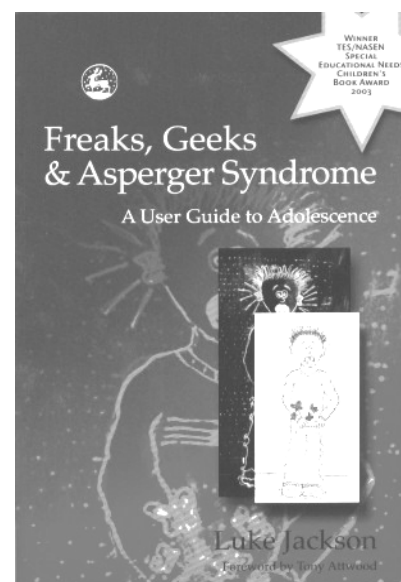
Michael Foreman Children aged 3-8

A boy and his grandfather watch as a baby seal is born on the rocks near their home, and from that day a special friendship is created.



In this short, inspiring biography, Mathis successfully juxtaposes past and current events in the life of Ray Charles...The lively text emphasizes Charles' strength, independence and determination to succeed in spite of his race, blindness and his impoverished childhood.

WINNER OF THE CORETTA SCOTT KING AUTHOR AWARD



Luke Jackson

Written by a thirteen year old with Asperger syndrome.

A good read for students.

**Keeping in touch with ALFIE the Alliance
for Inclusive Education**

Please come to the next ALFIE meeting

March 27th 2009 from 12noon to 2.30 at
Liberty Resources 714 Market St. Philadelphia 19106

ALL WELCOME

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