

AUTISM TRAINING AND TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE PROJECT

The Language of Disability and The Inclusion Revolution

Presented by
Haley Moss

The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project

The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA) develops and presents resources that assist individuals with autism in their transition from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment.

ATTA provides training and support to important stakeholders as they work to provide an equitable experience for individuals on the spectrum.

The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support

The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPPS) creates, supports, and delivers professional development for education professionals across Illinois. ICSPPS provides technical assistance, develops publications, and facilitates program improvement strategies for our partners as they relate to college transition, recruitment, retention, and completion—encouraging achievement of special populations learners. ICSPPS was founded in 1977 at Illinois State University and is housed in the Educational Administration and Foundations department in the College of Education.





Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA)

<https://autismcollegeandcareer.com>



Illinois State Board of Education

icsps impacting
educational
equity



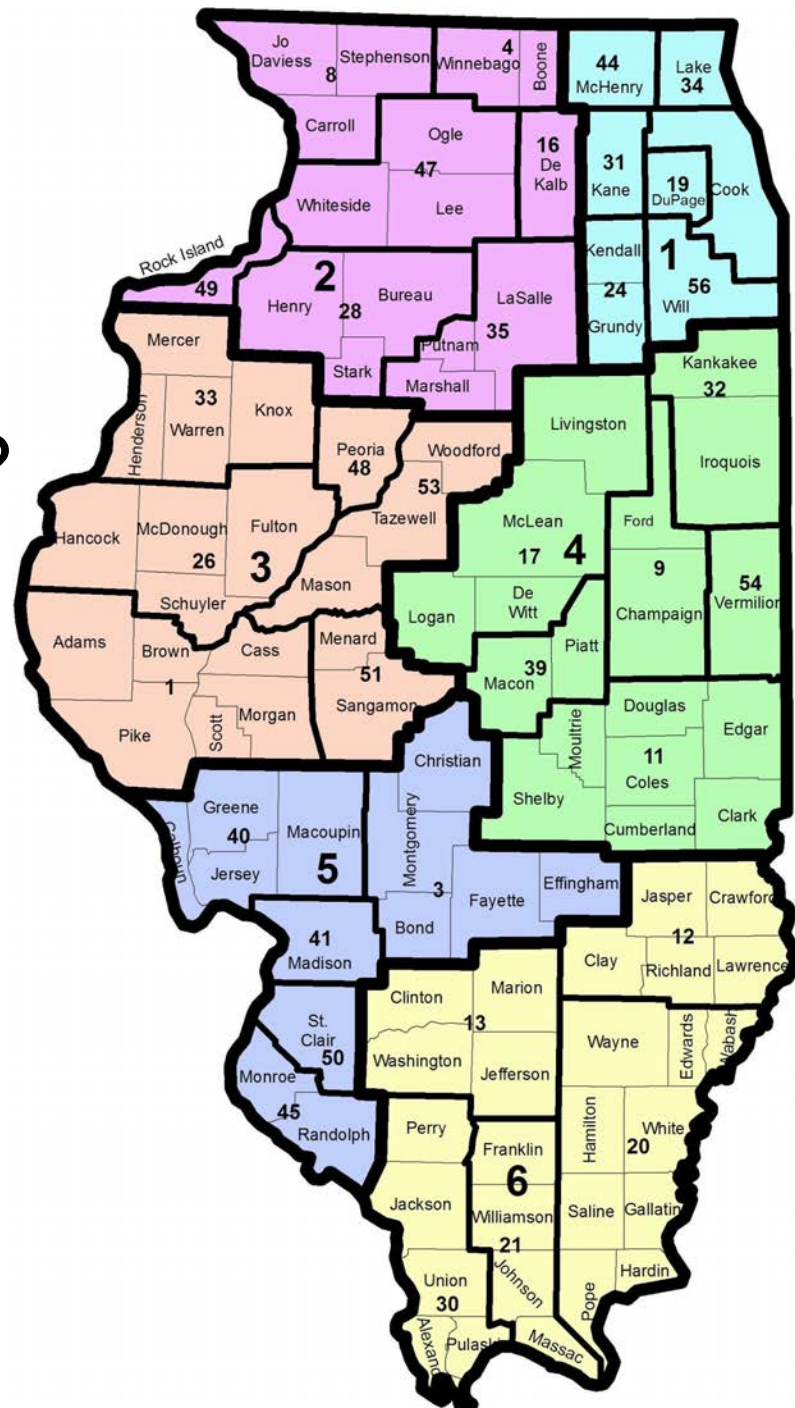
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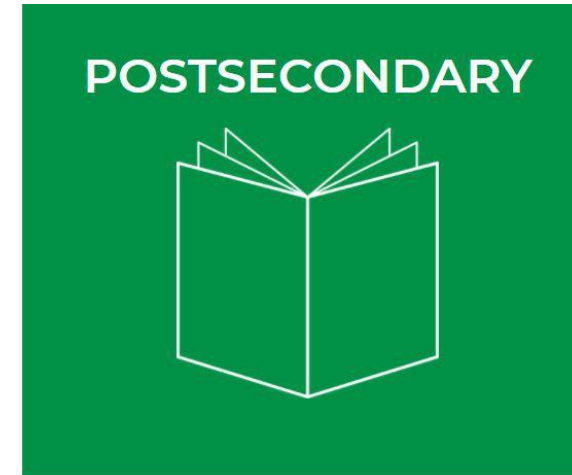
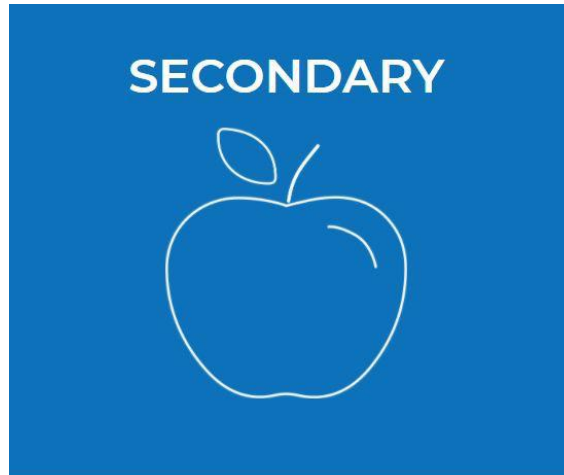
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Which Region are you Located in?

1. Chicago
2. Northeast
3. Northwest
4. East Central
5. Southwest
6. Southeast



Which ATTA Stakeholder do you Represent?



Moderator Information



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Roadmap to Revolutionizing Inclusion

1

Encourage
disability
conversations

2

Reframe and
rethink differences

3

Show allyship and
solidarity

1

Encourage Disability Conversations

Why We Feel Uncomfortable Talking About Disability?

- Fear of the unknown
- Unsure of what to say
- Childhood experiences
- Preconceptions surrounding accommodations
- Afraid to offend someone and say the “wrong” thing
- Unsure what is – and is not – considered a disability

So, What Even *Is* Disability?

□ According to the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- A **physical or mental impairment** which **substantially limits a major life activity**. Major life activities are functions important to most people's daily lives, which can include:
 - Concentrating
 - Communicating
 - Reading
 - Moving



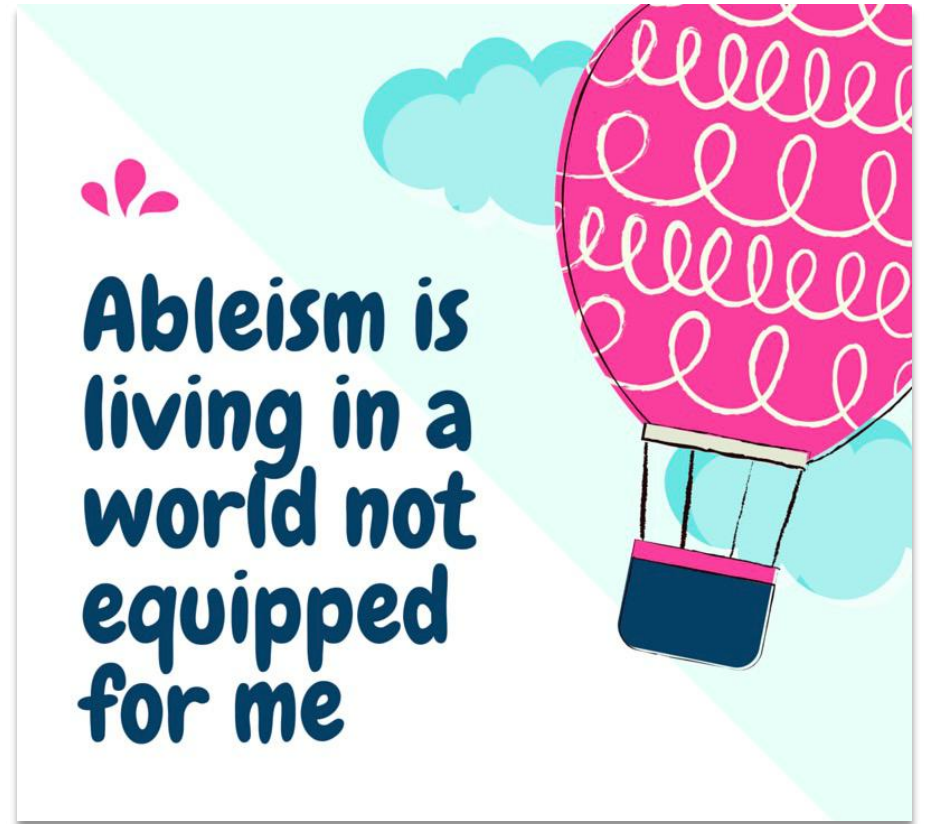
Defining Ableism

“A set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other. Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean, how nondisabled people learn to treat people with disabilities and how we are often not included at the table for key decisions.”

– Center for Disability Rights

Understanding Ableism

- ❑ **Ableism** is a prejudice against people with disabilities
- ❑ Includes stereotyping and discriminating against people or treating them negatively because of their disabilities
- ❑ Ableism can be internal or external, conscious or not
 - Think about your events, places you go, what is and isn't accessible for disabled folks



Some Non-Disability Related Challenges We Face

- ❑ You might have neurotypical or able-bodied privilege if:
 - People don't stare at you because of your disability
 - People talk to you in a typical manner, not like a little kid
 - You hop in the car to "just go somewhere" without anxiety, distraction, physical inability, etc.
 - Not being viewed as a burden to your family because of your disability
 - Choosing a life partner and having children without fear of discrimination or worrying about losing disability benefits
 - Being in control of your life

Adapted from Everyday Feminism

The Language We Use Matters

- Person-first language
 - “She has autism”
- Identity-first language
 - “She is autistic”
- **How do we decide on language?**
- **How do we choose what to say?**
- **Which words are harmful?**



Open the Door to Promote Self-Advocacy

- ❑ Self-advocacy is both a set of skills and a movement
- ❑ Self-advocacy skills empower people with disabilities to make choices that affect their daily lives and allow for greater independence
- ❑ “Self-advocacy – as a personal and political philosophy – is a movement primarily of and by [people with disabilities] who are making their own decisions, speaking for themselves and for others with disabilities, and taking control over their lives.”
- ❑ Accommodations as a conversation to empower both parties

1

Encourage disability
conversations

2

Reframe and rethink differences

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation. Differences that fall under neurodiversity include autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, Tourette Syndrome, intellectual disabilities, and mental health disabilities.



How can we celebrate having different kinds of minds, today and everyday?

Disability Culture and Celebrating Differences

- ❑ Many people identify as “disabled” or “neurodivergent”
- ❑ Active sense of community
- ❑ “Different, not less” and other shifts towards acceptance

What about autistic culture?



A Re-Imagining of Different Traits



Attention to Detail

- Thoroughness
- Accuracy



Deep Focus

- Concentration
- Freedom from distraction



Absorb & Retain Facts

- Excellent long term memory and recall



Expertise

- In-depth knowledge
- High level of skills



Integrity

- Honesty, loyalty
- Commitment



Creativity

- Distinctive Imagination
- Expression of ideas

Source: UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

- Differences are not the same as deficits
- Respect there are different ways to communicate and experience the world
- Focus on the strengths of neurodiversity
- “Different is neither better nor worse”

Fitting Into an Inaccessible World

- Some barriers in the world are more disabling than the disability itself (this is the **social model of disability**).
- But the world often views disability as something to be fixed (the **medical model of disability**).
- No single approach is entirely correct.

In what ways do you feel like you have to fit into a world that's not built for you?

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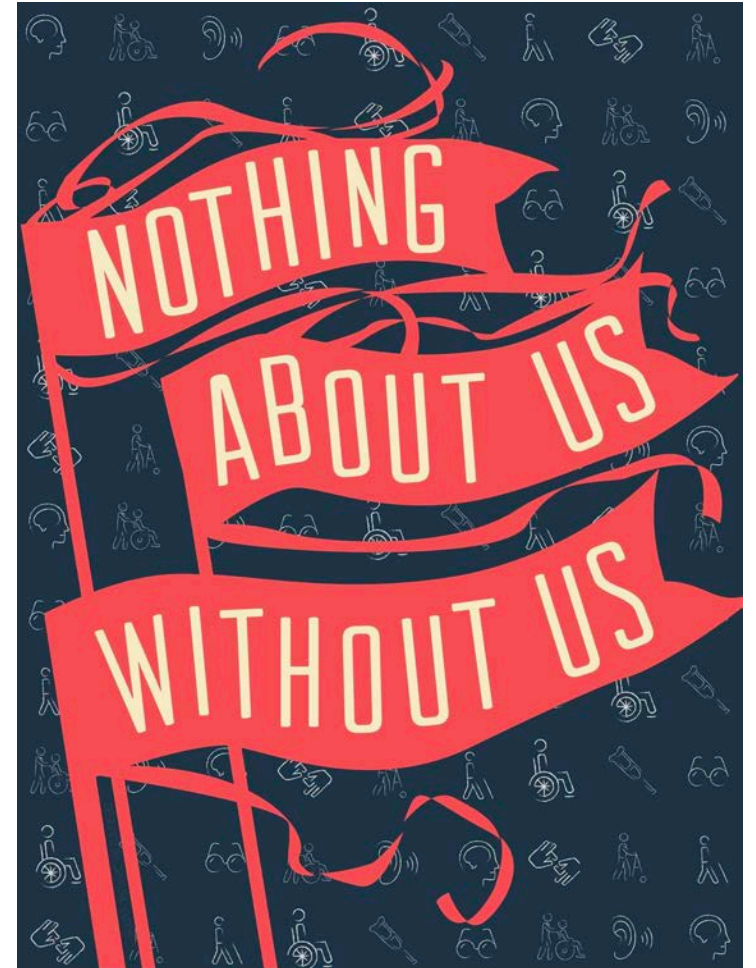
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**Show allyship and
solidarity**

Showing Allyship

- ❑ “Nothing About Us Without Us”
- ❑ Listen and learn from people with disabilities
- ❑ Speak up against injustice
- ❑ Use your power for good

LEARNING
IS A BLESSING
BLAIRIMANI



Being Inclusive of Disability & Neurodiversity

- ❑ Starting from the top down with openness and vulnerability
- ❑ Aligning people to their strengths
- ❑ Having open and meaningful communication
- ❑ Implementing universal design:
“Design of buildings, products or environments to make them accessible to all people, regardless of age, disability or other factors”
- ❑ Encouraging mentorship and leadership





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Questions and Discussion