



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
URBAN SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT



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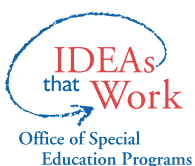
3RD ANNUAL NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK TO FOCUS ON FAMILIES!

Denver, CO - The *3rd Annual National Inclusive Schools Week* will be celebrated December 1-5, 2003, in classrooms, schools, and communities throughout the country to highlight the nation's progress in providing a quality education to an increasingly diverse student population, particularly to those who have disabilities.

During the last two years, *National Inclusive Schools Week* has involved tens of thousands of participants in more than 5,000 schools and school districts in nearly all 50 states. The *Week* is sponsored by the National Institute for Urban School Improvement, a project of the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. The National Institute characterizes inclusive schools as those that

- ▼ make sure each and every student feels welcome and is learning,
- ▼ embrace the understanding that every student is unique and, therefore, learns differently,
- ▼ understand that all children—students with and without disabilities, English language learners, those with special talents—learn better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interests,
- ▼ collaborate with families,
- ▼ hold high expectations for student success, and
- ▼ keep improving.

National Inclusive Schools Week emphasizes the message "Inclusive Schools: Good for Kids, Families, & Communities." This year, the *Week* will focus on families, and the importance of developing inclusive schools where families are welcomed, respected, and engaged. We know from a decade of research that family members play significant roles in the education of children and youth. A growing number of studies show that when family members talk to their children about schooling, participate with school personnel, and support their children's efforts those students achieve more, attend more regularly, and are more motivated and engaged as learners. At the same time, we also know that many urban schools struggle to get parents to come to meetings and events. Schools may be unwelcoming and/or intimidating to many parents, especially those whose primary language is



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other than English, are working hard to raise their income level out of poverty, or who may feel shy about developing relationships with teachers. During *National Inclusive Schools Week*, teachers, family members, and others will share their experiences and strategies for connecting schools, families, and communities in ways that contribute to the lives of children and youth both inside and outside of school.

To help schools and communities plan events and activities for the *Week*, the National Institute is offering an updated Celebration Kit containing publications that outline the benefits of inclusive schools, suggested readings for children and adults, celebration ideas and lesson plans, and materials to use in promoting the *Week*. The 2003 Kit also includes “Fostering Effective Family-School Linkages for Inclusive Schools,” a new publication filled with classroom and school celebration ideas that honor the diverse heritages and cultures of the nation’s children and suggestions for improving family-school partnerships.

The free Kit is available for downloading from the National Institute’s Web site: www.inclusiveschools.org. Additionally, the National Institute will be sponsoring events that center on family involvement as a key component to building inclusive schools and communities. Details will be posted on the National Institute Web site soon.

To learn more about the *3rd Annual National Inclusive Schools Week*, visit the National Institute’s Web site: www.inclusiveschools.org or contact Bonnie Johnson Barry at niusi@edc.org.

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