

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESOLUTION 2025-11

DISABILITY AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE

WHEREAS, nationally, 7.3 million students aged 3–21 receive special education and/or related services as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), constituting 15 percent of the total public-school student population in the United States; and

WHEREAS, during the 2023-2024 school year, twenty-three percent of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District students are on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for IDEA eligible disabilities, and three percent of students are on Section 504 plans for accommodations to meet their needs, also recognizing some students may be receiving services from both, and acknowledging the paramount importance of fostering societal awareness and acceptance of disabilities as an integral aspect of human existence; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities encounter unique challenges in accessing quality education, employment opportunities, and integration into community life; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to acknowledge that fostering acceptance and belonging requires not only the provision of special education and related services and supports within our schools but also necessitates open communication and the discussion of held biases through ongoing facilitated professional development and continued education on inclusive best practices aimed at educating both educators and students on disabilities as inherent aspects of the human experience; and

WHEREAS, in recognizing the importance of cultivating a truly inclusive environment within our schools and district, it is essential to reevaluate the practice of educating certain students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that all students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible, thus reaffirming their status as full members of our school communities; and

WHEREAS, it is recognized that the educational experiences and support provided to students with disabilities during their school years significantly influence their future opportunities, well-being, and overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS, early intervention and support services play a pivotal role in mitigating challenges and fostering the development of students with disabilities, laying a foundation for their future success and societal integration; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the indispensable role of families and caregivers in advocating for and supporting the educational journey of students with disabilities, fostering collaborative partnerships between schools and families to ensure the holistic development and success of these students; and

WHEREAS, acknowledging the valuable contributions and perspectives of staff members with disabilities is essential in creating inclusive educational environments and promoting diverse representation within the school community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Board of Education hereby designates and will promote January as Disabilities Awareness & Acceptance Month, urging educators, students, and the community to actively participate in activities, initiatives, and professional development through school-wide events, educational workshops, and awareness campaigns to foster understanding, empathy, and acceptance of individuals with disabilities among students, educators, staff, and the broader community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, to ensure all students and employees experience a positive and respectful work and learning environment, the Fairbanks North Star Borough Board of Education will increase awareness of disabilities while promoting acceptance and open dialogue about the ongoing challenges faced by the disabled community in their pursuit of meaningful inclusion within our schools and the broader community. The board will support the Administration's collaborations with community organizations, advocacy groups, and local businesses to create internship and employment opportunities tailored to the unique skills and abilities of individuals with disabilities, thereby promoting meaningful employment and economic independence. The Board will request regular reporting on the progress of outcomes of initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and equitable opportunities for students and staff with disabilities, as well as evaluation of any existing and implementation of new, if necessary, training programs for educators and staff focused on inclusive best practices while ensuring staffing has adequate support, effective communication strategies, and an understanding of the unique learning needs of students with disabilities. Further, the Board will support ongoing engagement with families and caregivers of students with disabilities through regular communication channels, support groups, and informational sessions to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed effectively within the educational system.

Passed and Approved: October 15, 2024



Brandy Harty, President
Board of Education

ATTEST:



Carmella Richardson
Board of Education Executive Assistant

