

Navigating IEPs and Evaluations: Empowering Parents for Educational Success



ROOTS OF
INCLUSION

Introductions



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Gratitude & Acknowledgment

Acknowledge The People
Who...

Appreciation for This Time
Together





Creating Connection

Share your name, and your preferred pronouns if you wish

Share briefly **what is your connection to the disability community?**



Learning Goals:

Begin to unpack the role of evaluations and IEPs in inclusive education

Identify barriers in the system of education and Special Education and envision system solutions

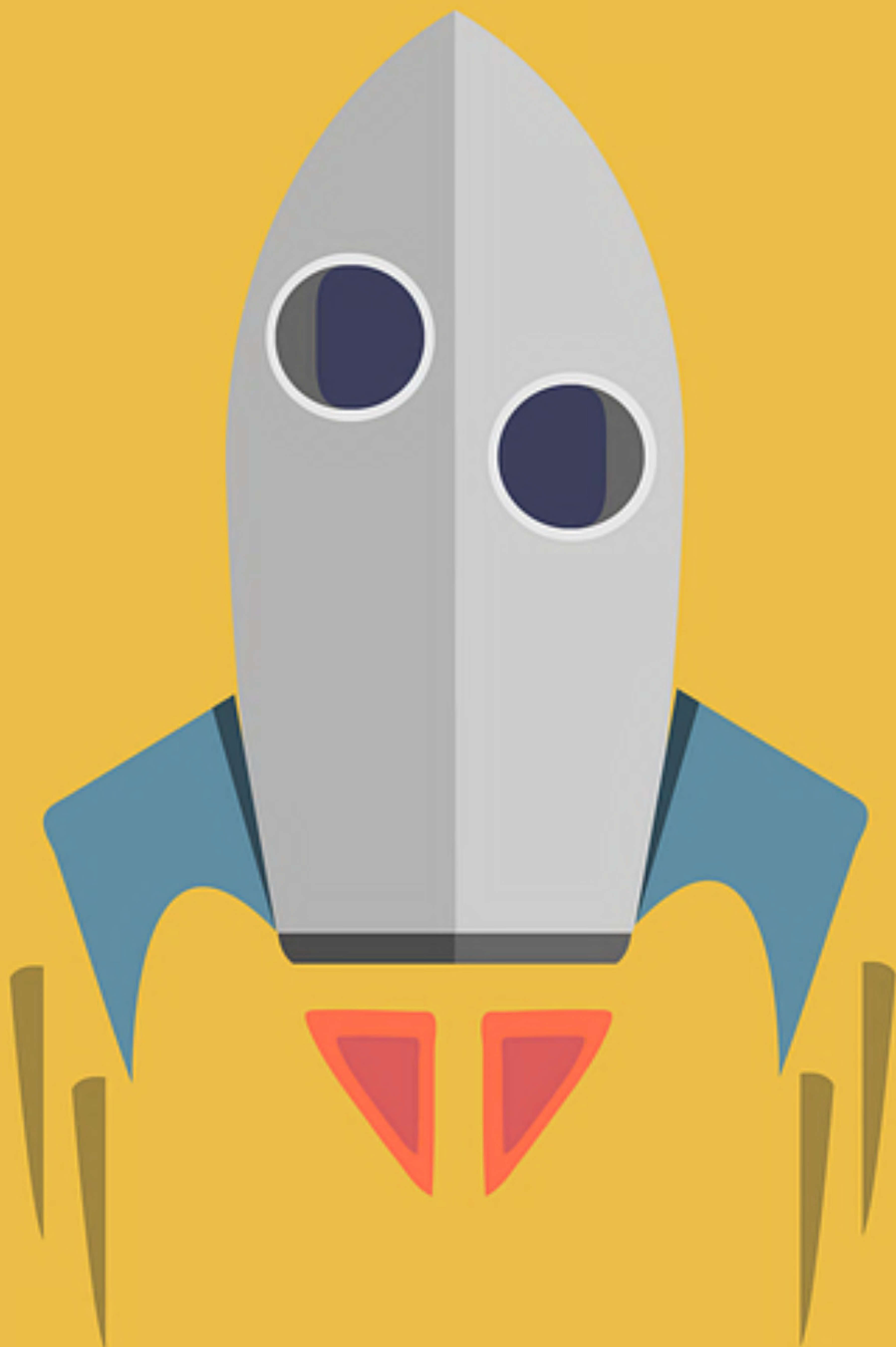
Discuss strategies to support meaningful educational access and improve outcomes

BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY, TOGETHER

We amplify the voices of youth and families to promote equity, inclusion, and belonging in our schools and communities. We work in relationship with others to understand the systems and structures that perpetuate exclusion while ensuring that systems are moving toward inclusion.



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Launching Inclusive Education

- ① Everyone has an important role.
- ② Policies, practices, rules, structures, and relationships must facilitate inclusion and eliminate exclusion.
- ③ Teamwork, transparency, and consistent communication are key.
- ④ Engaging and partnering with families and communities is essential.

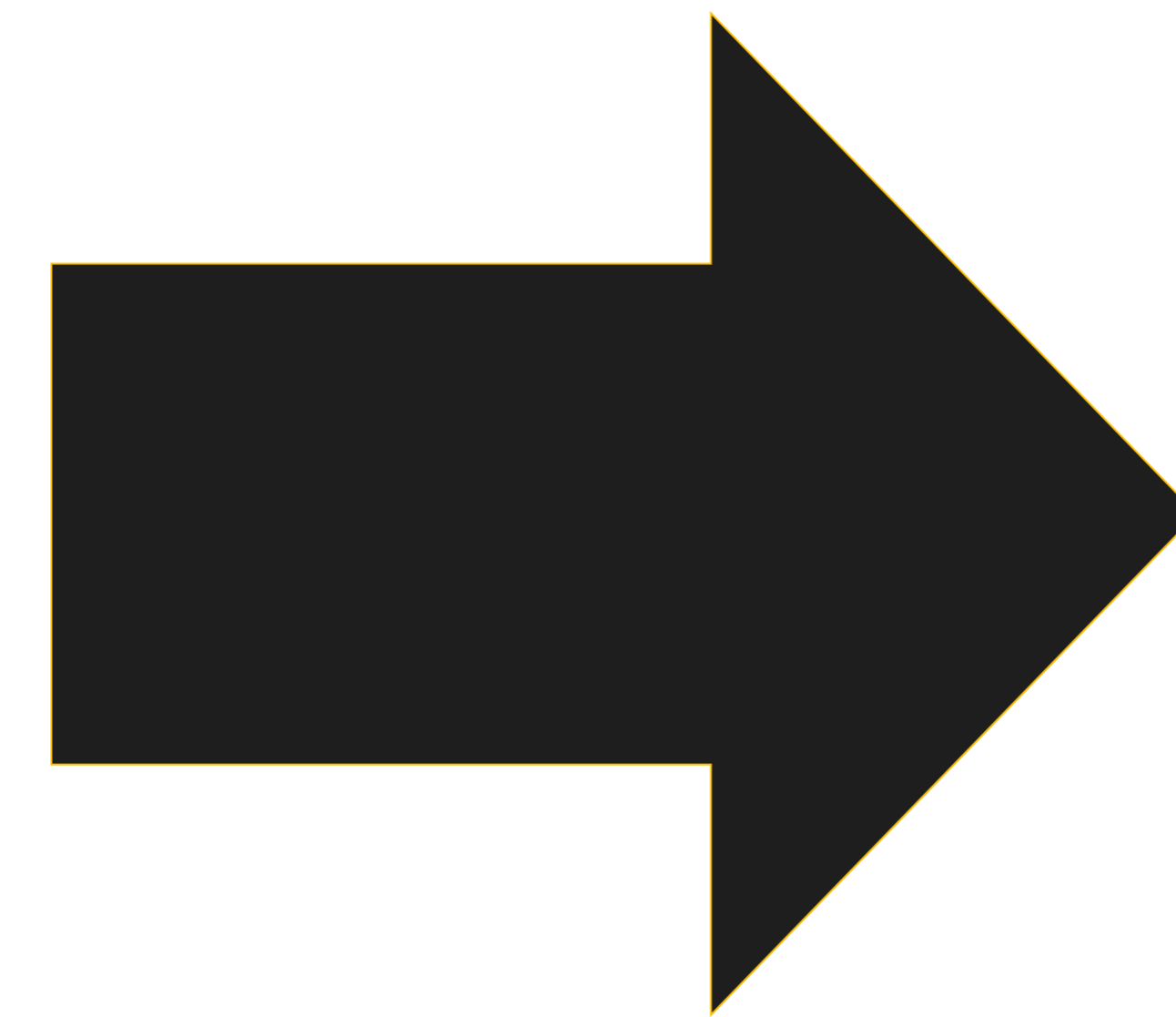
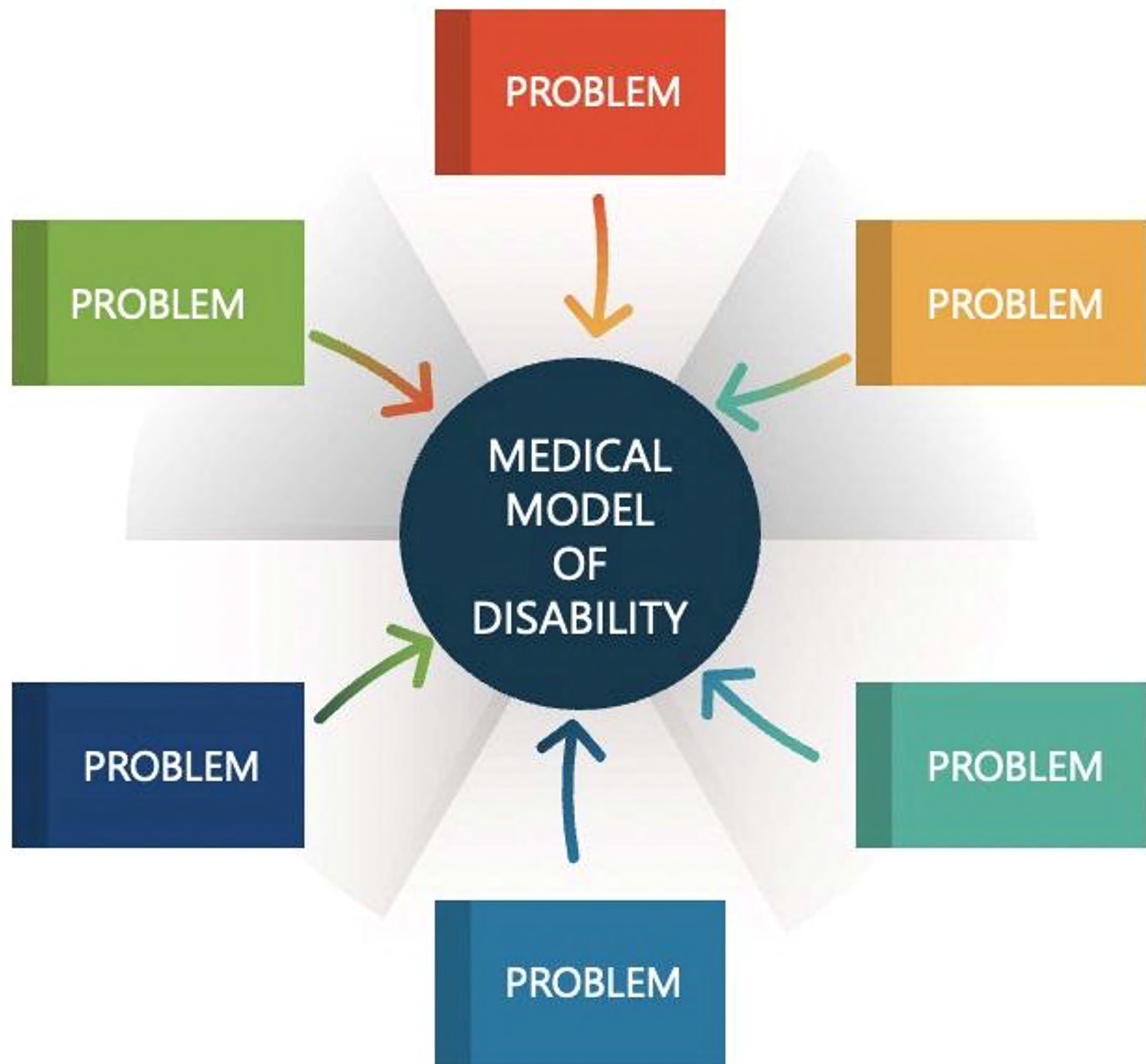
Evolution of Special Education: A Brief Overview

- Special Education emerged from the Medical Model of Disability
- Governed by FAPE, LRE, compliance
- Fix and/ or remediate individual impairments
- Therapy/ rehabilitation model vs. supports and services
- Evaluations as merely establishing eligibility, through identifying deficits and statistical divergence
- Spirit of IDEA vs. logistical remnants that allow for status quo

IEPs, especially complex ones, show signs of becoming a barrier to inclusive education when they:

- Focus on deficits
- Are written for staffing, scheduling, and compliance
- Lack communication supports
- Portray “unique needs” as extraordinary and thus requiring something “special” or as skills that nondisabled students do not learn at school (e.g. toileting, bicycling, grocery shopping, yoga)
- Become the student’s curriculum (allowing for a segregated placement) effectively preventing access to grade-level general education curriculum and standards
- Are written based on a poor or eligibility-focused evaluation
- Exclude authentic, structured, and meaningful student and guardian participation leaving them as mere recipients of ‘an offer’

Working Towards Equity and Inclusion



Understanding Ableism

Ableism is rooted in the belief that disabled people require fixing.

It involves treating people with disabilities unfairly and with less respect because of their disability.



▪

“A system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This systemic oppression that leads to people and society determining people's value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, "health/wellness", and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, "excel" and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.”

-Talila A. Lewis

Ableism informs our basic
education structures,
policies, and practices.



Ableism can manifest in various ways:

Belief that disabled students are less capable

Lack of accommodations and accessibility

Segregation of students with disabilities

Excluding students with disabilities from activities

Concentration on aspects of disability at the expense of access to grade level curriculum

Use of Restraint and Isolation

Lack of recognition of disability culture

Presuming competence means...

- Giving people the benefit of the doubt
- Offering support & providing opportunities for individuals to show their skills & their potential
- Not making assumptions based on their challenges, weaknesses, disabilities, &/or diagnostic label
- Treating people with respect
- Valuing everyone's unique strengths, abilities, & contributions

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Empowering

Gives people a chance

Fosters independence

Boosts self-esteem

"Least dangerous assumption"

Supports inclusion

Why presuming competence is important

Reduces stigmas

Respectful

Improves communication

Provides opportunities

Strengthens relationships

Rejects stereotypes

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How Did You Get Here? Students with Disabilities and Their Journeys to

Harvard Thomas Hehir Laura A. Schifter

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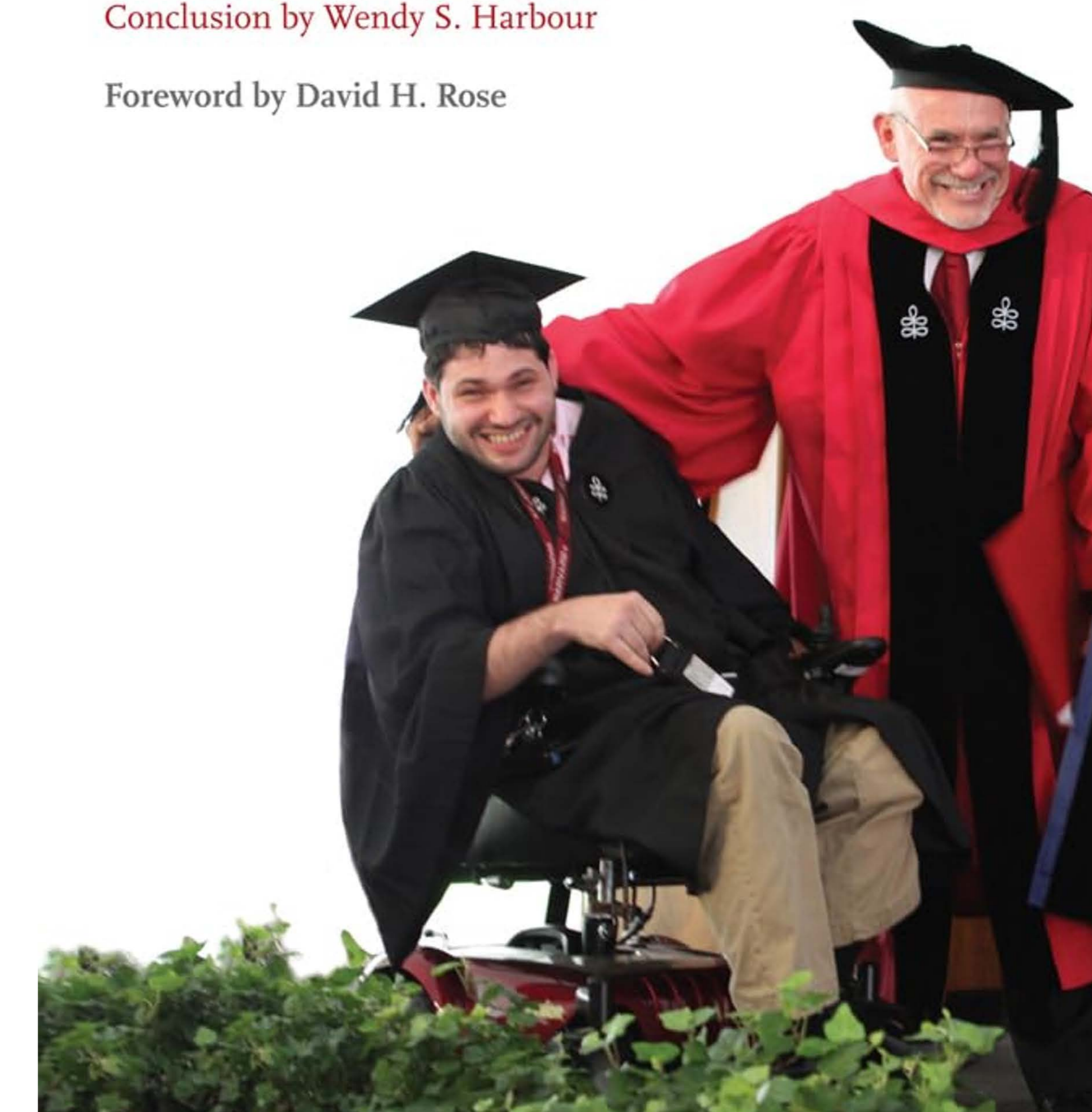
How Did You Get Here?

Students with Disabilities and Their Journeys to Harvard

THOMAS HEHIR AND LAURA A. SCHIFTER

Conclusion by Wendy S. Harbour

Foreword by David H. Rose





THINK
ABOUT
THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

Evaluations as the Roadmap to Educational Access and Success

- Identifying anti-ableist, respectful, effective, student-led supports foundational to a helpful IEP
- Centering students and their families throughout the evaluation process
- Leveraging anti-ableist, strengths-based, and respectful contribution tools both for students and caregivers

IEP Teams as a Point of Partnership

Leveraging strategies for Parents/
Caregivers to Navigate Evaluations
and IEPs Effectively

Embracing systems change and an
approach of solidarity and
collaboration vs. Individualized
advocacy



Evaluations and IEPs as:

- Strength- and interest-driven
- Student-centered and empowering, recognizing students and their families as experts on the student and their learning
- Anti-ableist
- Written for access and meaningful engagement
- “Unique needs” as access needs
- A better fit for the dynamic classrooms of today: practices of UDL, co-design, collaboration, MTSS with embedded SDI, noncategorical delivery, embracing and valuing of difference and Disability
- Aligned with grade-level general education standards
- Tools that guide us on achieving Belonging



Questions?

Reach out to us at info@rootsofinclusion.org

Visit www.RootsofInclusion.org

Stay up to date on our events

- *May 22nd 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Virtual - UDL*

& Family Engagement

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