

Life After the Last Bell

The Importance of Extracurricular Inclusion, Social Skills, Friendships, and Relationships for persons with disabilities

What is Full Inclusion?

- ✦ Inclusion is the the act of including a person with a disability in the “Total School Experience”. This includes, and is not limited to the following:
- ✦ General Education Curriculum
- ✦ Academic Classes
- ✦ Elective Classes
- ✦ School Activities
- ✦ Extracurricular Activities

What is Extracurricular Inclusion?

Extracurricular Inclusion is the act of including people with disabilities in the “fun half of school”, and the social opportunities that go along with it.

Imagine life without such things! Boring!

- ★ Clubs
- ★ Dances
- ★ Plays
- ★ Sports
- ★ Community Activities
- ★ Getting to Understand Others
- ★ Friendships
- ★ Relationships

Student Benefits From Extracurricular Inclusion

- ★ More Socially Aware of what is going on in their community
- ★ Builds Friendships and Relationships
- ★ Get to know more of the customs and correct behaviors for common activities in various settings
- ★ Exposes students to the world of arts, sciences, fitness, sports, recreational , and leisure activities
- ★ Students learn the common culture of being a student their age

More Benefits!

- ★ Generally improves academic performance in many areas from reading to math to science from learning real world applications and use of the skills they learned in class
- ★ It encourages students to “fit in” better with their community, so they get picked on and teased less.

Extracurricular Inclusion in Elementary School

- ✦ Field Trips
- ✦ Recess
- ✦ Playground Activities
- ✦ After School Clubs
- ✦ Lunchtime Sports
- ✦ Dances
- ✦ Carnivals
- ✦ Field Day
- ✦ Special Dress Up Days
- ✦ Talent Shows
- ✦ Concerts
- ✦ Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts
- ✦ Open House
- ✦ Birthday Parties
- ✦ Pizza Parties

Extracurricular Inclusion in Middle School

- ★ Clubs
- ★ Dances
- ★ Sports
- ★ Field Trips
- ★ 6th Grade Camp
- ★ Concerts
- ★ Drama Productions
- ★ Yearbook
- ★ Lunchtime Fun
- ★ After School Activities
- ★ Technical Theatre
- ★ Art
- ★ Friends Over for the night
- ★ Parties
- ★ Going Places

Extracurricular Inclusion In High School

- ✦ Football Games
- ✦ Dances
- ✦ Clubs
- ✦ Interscholastic Sports
- ✦ Yearbook
- ✦ Drama
- ✦ Choir
- ✦ Band
- ✦ Cheerleading
- ✦ Lunchtime Events
- ✦ Pep Rallies
- ✦ ASB / Student Government
- ✦ Academic League
- ✦ Prom
- ✦ Grad Night
- ✦ And More!

It's Important for Kids to Know How to Get Involved with Extracurricular Activities!

- ✦ Kids should be taught there is so much more to school other than reading, writing, and arithmetic!
- ✦ Kids should learn where to go and how to get involved with extracurricular activities, and someone should help the kids if needed.
- ✦ Kids with disabilities should not be excluded from participation in extracurricular activities.

Skills Commonly Learned Outside of a Textbook!

- ✦ Arts and Crafts
- ✦ Music
- ✦ Dance
- ✦ Martial Arts
- ✦ Swimming
- ✦ Fitness
- ✦ Sports
- ✦ Creativity
- ✦ Social Relationships
- ✦ Cooking
- ✦ Outdoor Activities
- ✦ Board Games
- ✦ Entertainment
- ✦ Computers
- ✦ Hobbies
- ✦ Who says these and more aren't educational?

Homework and Other Activities

- ✦ A Child should not have so much homework that he/she has almost no free time to his/her self
- ✦ There needs to be more in a kids life than schoolwork in class and homework
- ✦ Kids should have the opportunity for many activities he/she loves in his/her life, both during the school year and during summer break.
- ✦ More homework does not always produce better academic performance. Too much can have an opposite effect.
- ✦ Too much homework can overstress children
- ✦ A recommended amount is 10 minutes times the grade up to 5th grade. High School (academic day plus homework should not exceed more than 40 hours/week)
- ✦ Schools should work with kids if they claim they are overstressed, or have no time left to themselves.

Ways to get kids involved

- ★ Teach them about the many activities that are available to them, and when they meet and what they are
- ★ Get another student who is really involved in the fun to introduce them
- ★ Assign them an activity they love as a “homework assignment” (In my case, I was “assigned” to go to the homecoming dance, and that night changed by life!)

Generation Me

There is a generation which is out of touch with the social norms and common courtesies and is focused on themselves. According to several sources, even many “Normal” kids today could benefit from social skills and etiquette instruction.

Kids today are:

- More Original ways of doing things
- Often lacking the manners and customs of yesterday
- Not taught correct etiquette
- Think they can be all they want to be
- Are more into the wants and needs of themselves than to others

Signs Teachers Should Watch For That May Indicate a Child has a Social Skills Deficit

- ✦ Child is always by himself/herself at lunch time
- ✦ Child has very few or no friends his/her own age
- ✦ Child does not know the common things of youth culture of their peers know
- ✦ Has trouble connecting with others in their community
- ✦ Child participates in very few or no extracurricular activities
- ✦ Child has trouble fitting in with other children in school
- ✦ Poor performance in reading and processing of narrative/story type reading, while understanding factual material very well

Teaching Social and Friendship Skills

- ★ Body Language
- ★ Gestures
- ★ Behaviors and Procedures for various social situations
- ★ Relationships
- ★ Subtle Cues
- ★ Peer Relationships
- ★ Interact with other students their age
- ★ Circle of Friends
- ★ How to make and be a friend
- ★ Clubs and Fun Activities
- ★ How to extend a relationship outside of school
- ★ Friends for life



Parents vs School's Responsibility To Teach Social Skills?

Who's responsibility is it to teach kids social and friendship skills?

Some will say the school, and others say it is the parents responsibility. I personally think it is both.

Schools should play an important role in teaching social skills because not all parents are experts at this themselves. Also, not everyone lives in an ideal two parent family, and everyone's home culture is different. Also, teachers should recognize when one has a deficit and not let one go through school year after year without doing something to teach it.

The Changing Structure of Today's Families

The Family as a unit is radically different from the days of the 1950s, where most people had two parents. In today's world of alternative living configurations, it has altered the social values. Some of the situations that have lead to the "breakup" of the family unit include:

- ☀ Intercultural Marriages due to desegregation
- ☀ Divorce
- ☀ Roommates living together
- ☀ Young Adults living with their parents longer, until late 20's, even some in their 30's
- ☀ Gay and Lesbian Marriages
- ☀ And other non-traditional living configurations

Factors that I Believe Contributed to the Manners Decline in Society Today

- ✦ People working longer hours
- ✦ Less formal Dress today in the workplace
- ✦ Less Family Meals Together
- ✦ Not as many formal events required in today's lifestyle
- ✦ Corporate Greed and impoliteness in Customer Service
- ✦ Bad Ethics in TV, Movies, Radio, and other types of media
- ✦ Breakup of the Family Unit
- ✦ Church Attendance is down
- ✦ School is more competitive than ever before, partly due to NCLB
- ✦ The Emerging Digital World and communicating from a distance has become mainstream
- ✦ Lawyers and others so scared that everything that is a risk or challenge needs to be restricted due to fear of being sued.

Manners and Skills Kids and Pre-Teens Should Know

- ★ Common Courtesies
- ★ Table Manners
- ★ What do in specific situations
- ★ The correct way to invite another child to a school or other kids event
- ★ Correct Dress for various types of casual events
- ★ How to carry on a conversation between 2 or more people
- ★ When and when not something is a “joke” or “slang”, and when are such jokes appropriate
- ★ Correct Rules for various common social situations
- ★ How to be one’s friend
- ★ Who is and who is not a “stranger” in regards to people outside of ones family
- ★ How to invite other kids they know to parties and other kids events
- ★ How to distinguish teasing from being serious
- ★ How to break up and handle when someone is no longer your friend
- ★ When it is appropriate to tell adults of bad experiences and when will it hurt you socially.

Manners and Skills Every Teenager Should Know

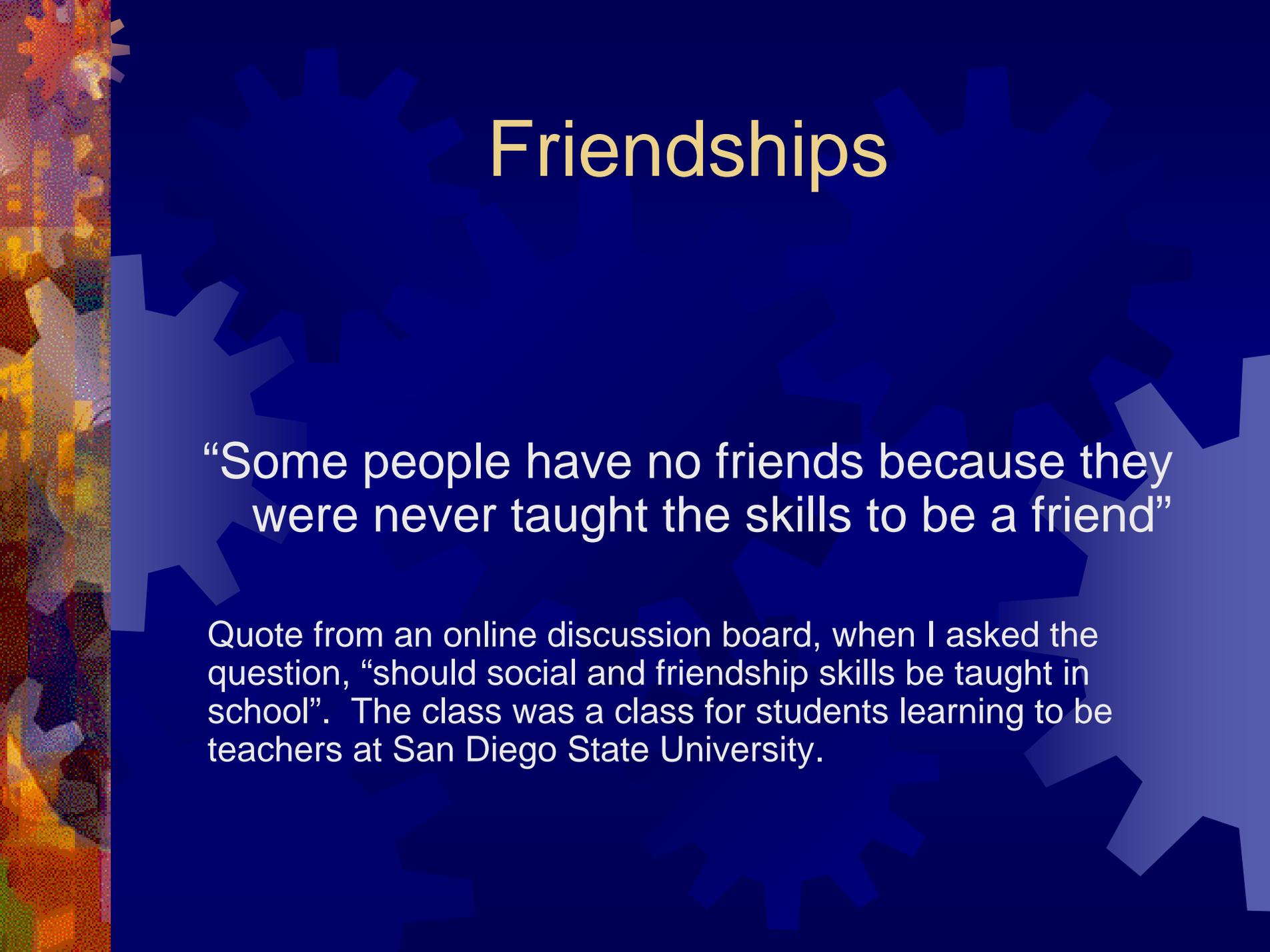
- ✦ Introduction to dating for school dances and other events
- ✦ Dress Codes for more formal events
- ✦ Behaviors for various types of common events in their community, both casual and formal.
- ✦ Introduction to Job Ethics
- ✦ More close relationships such as boyfriends / girlfriends
- ✦ Learn Basic Skills to learn how to live on their own
- ✦ Telephone Ethics
- ✦ Internet Ethics such as privacy, correct communication, safety, copyright, etc
- ✦ How to make a presentation to an audience
- ✦ The social culture of teenage life
- ✦ How not to cross the line between being a teen and an adult
- ✦ How to represent yourself without an adult present when going places on your own in your community

Manners and Skills Every Adult Should Know

- ★ Correct Behavior For the Workforce
- ★ Understand formal events such as weddings, showers, banquets, corporate events, conferences, and others
- ★ Understand correct dress for various situations
- ★ How to respond to invitations
- ★ How to write letters correctly
- ★ Tipping – who gets tipped and who doesn't and why
- ★ How to make “Small Talk” in conversations
- ★ How to get involved in activities in the community they are living in
- ★ Long Term Relationships
- ★ Dealing with Clients
- ★ Spouse and Roommate Cooperation
- ★ How to get along with others who don't agree with you on many issues
- ★ How to deal with financial issues
- ★ Basic skills for living on their own
- ★ How one should leave a room they way they found it
- ★ Dating and intimate relationships
- ★ Sexuality

Who is not a “stranger” and who is it OK to safely talk to who is outside your family generally?

- ★ Ones Personal Friend
- ★ Classmates in school
- ★ Others your age you meet at camp, after school activities, and youth programs
- ★ Kids you are introduced to by your parents
- ★ Occasionally other kids you meet in the park and other places in the community



Friendships

“Some people have no friends because they were never taught the skills to be a friend”

Quote from an online discussion board, when I asked the question, “should social and friendship skills be taught in school”. The class was a class for students learning to be teachers at San Diego State University.

Acquaintances Versus Friends

Acquaintances:

- ★ Are People in your life who you don't associate with on a personal level, except through certain settings, places, or events (for example, co-workers, people in your classes at school that you don't hang out with, people paid to be in your life, clients, etc)

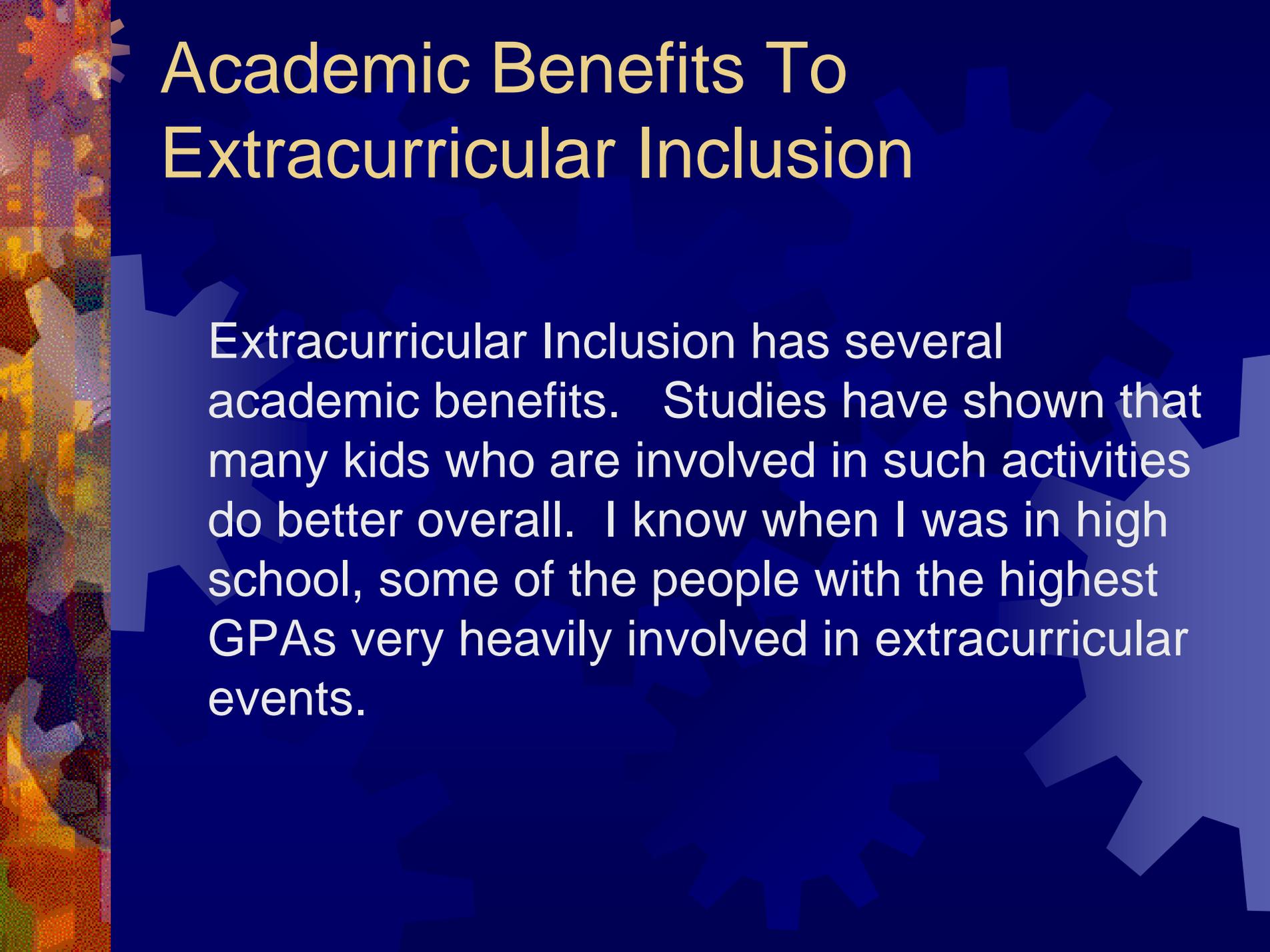
Friends:

- ★ Friends are people who trust each other, and have relationships with outside of the context and place you met them, and often those relationships go on to a personal level. Friends never receive payment, compensation, or reward for doing things nice to each other.

What is a True Friend?

A true friend is someone who really knows you, trusts you, you can trust them, and do things with them, and friends help each other out with no compensation or rewards for doing so, and are not organized or facilitated by someone or some entity.

- ☀ Friends are persons in ones life that are not family, and are not paid to be there.
- ☀ Friends really care for each other
- ☀ Friends are people one can talk to for a different opinion on issues in their life



Academic Benefits To Extracurricular Inclusion

Extracurricular Inclusion has several academic benefits. Studies have shown that many kids who are involved in such activities do better overall. I know when I was in high school, some of the people with the highest GPAs very heavily involved in extracurricular events.

Academic Benefits To Extracurricular Inclusion

- ★ Reading: Many stories and novels often refer to “close relationships” and problems within. With no actual experience in these areas, it causes many students with disabilities to be bad at this. Extracurricular inclusion can help, by them learning relationships.

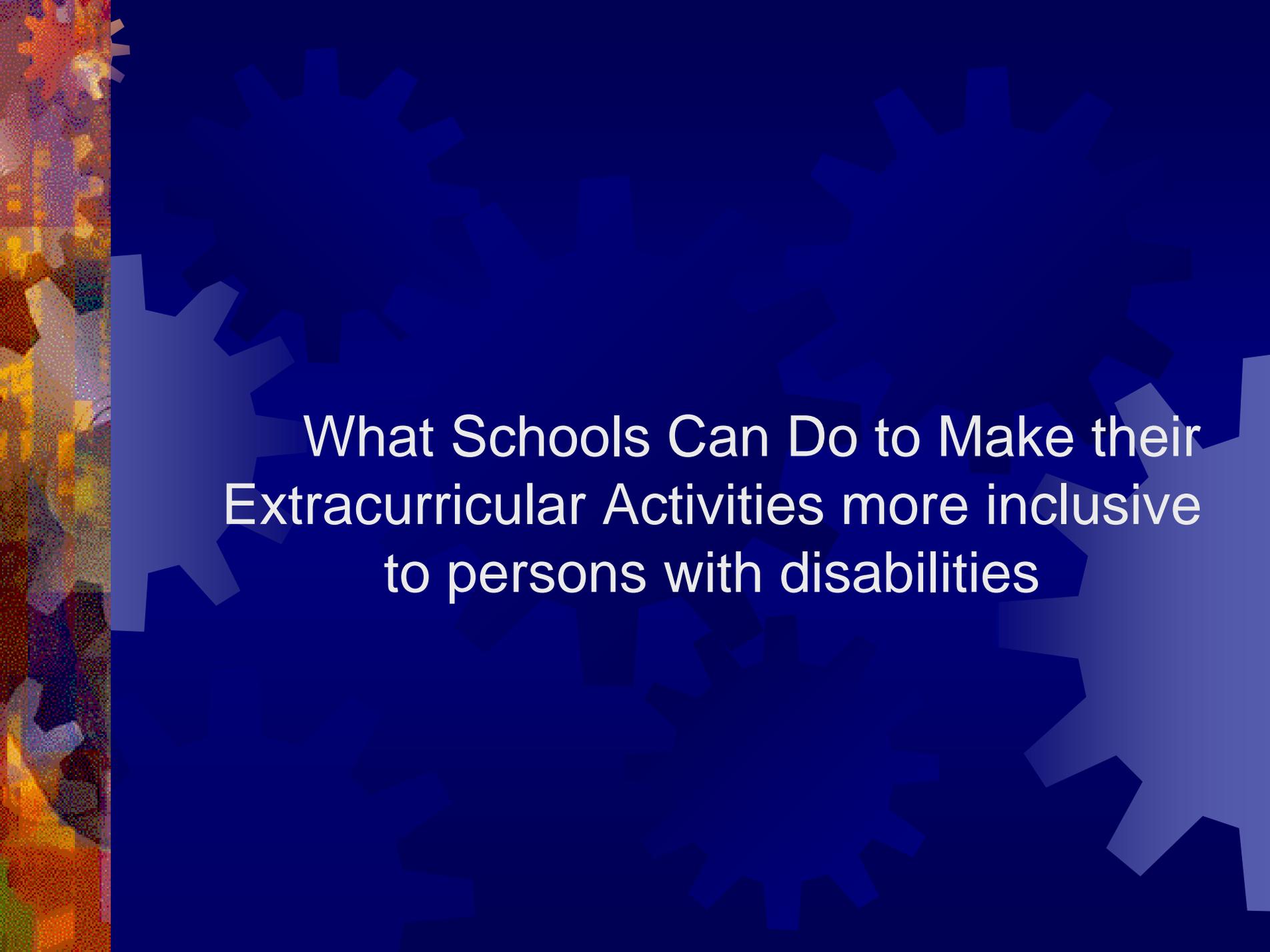
Academic Benefits

- ✦ Science / math: Exploring many types of activities or joining clubs or competitions in this area can improve a student's knowledge in science and math. In addition, putting knowledge you learned in class to work in the real world, helps the student remember it better.

Academic Improvements

- ★ Social Studies:

Exploring museums via field trips, and getting out in the world to explore historical facts face-to-face gives a better understanding of the text you read in class. There is a lot more to history than what you can get out a textbook!

The background features a dark blue field with several large, semi-transparent blue gears of varying sizes. On the left side, there is a vertical strip containing a collage of colorful gears in shades of orange, yellow, and red, some with a textured, metallic appearance.

What Schools Can Do to Make their Extracurricular Activities more inclusive to persons with disabilities

Barriers to Extracurricular Inclusion - Student

- ★ Student is not aware that the activities exist, much less know what they are, or how to get involved
- ★ Lack of behavior knowledge to participate in the activities
- ★ Student gets no invitations to events from peers or classmates
- ★ Student does not know if they can participate or not, given their disabilities

Barriers to Extracurricular Inclusion - Administrative

- ★ Low Expectations
- ★ District will not fund aides or supports because it is “overtime”
- ★ Teaching the student the skills needed to participate in the activity
- ★ GPA / Academic Requirements
- ★ Parents Scared of child participating
- ★ Liability / Insurance / Safety issues

Remember: IDEA says all kids with disabilities have full access to all extracurricular activities!

What can be done to overcome the barriers?

- ★ Teach children social and friendship skills such as interaction, relationships, manners, etc
- ★ Educate the students about what the different activities are, and encourage participation, and how to get involved
- ★ Teach students the skills needed to participate in different activities
- ★ Help kids get involved and fit in in their school culture

What can be done to overcome the barriers?

- ✦ Get to know a student's interests, and point them in the right direction with activities they might like, and offer to take them to clubs, sports, dances, etc that they might like.
- ✦ Get students who are involved in a lot of extracurricular activities to learn the "Student culture", and "what it takes to be a cool kid" in the school, and ask them to help get them involved.

What can be done to overcome the barriers?

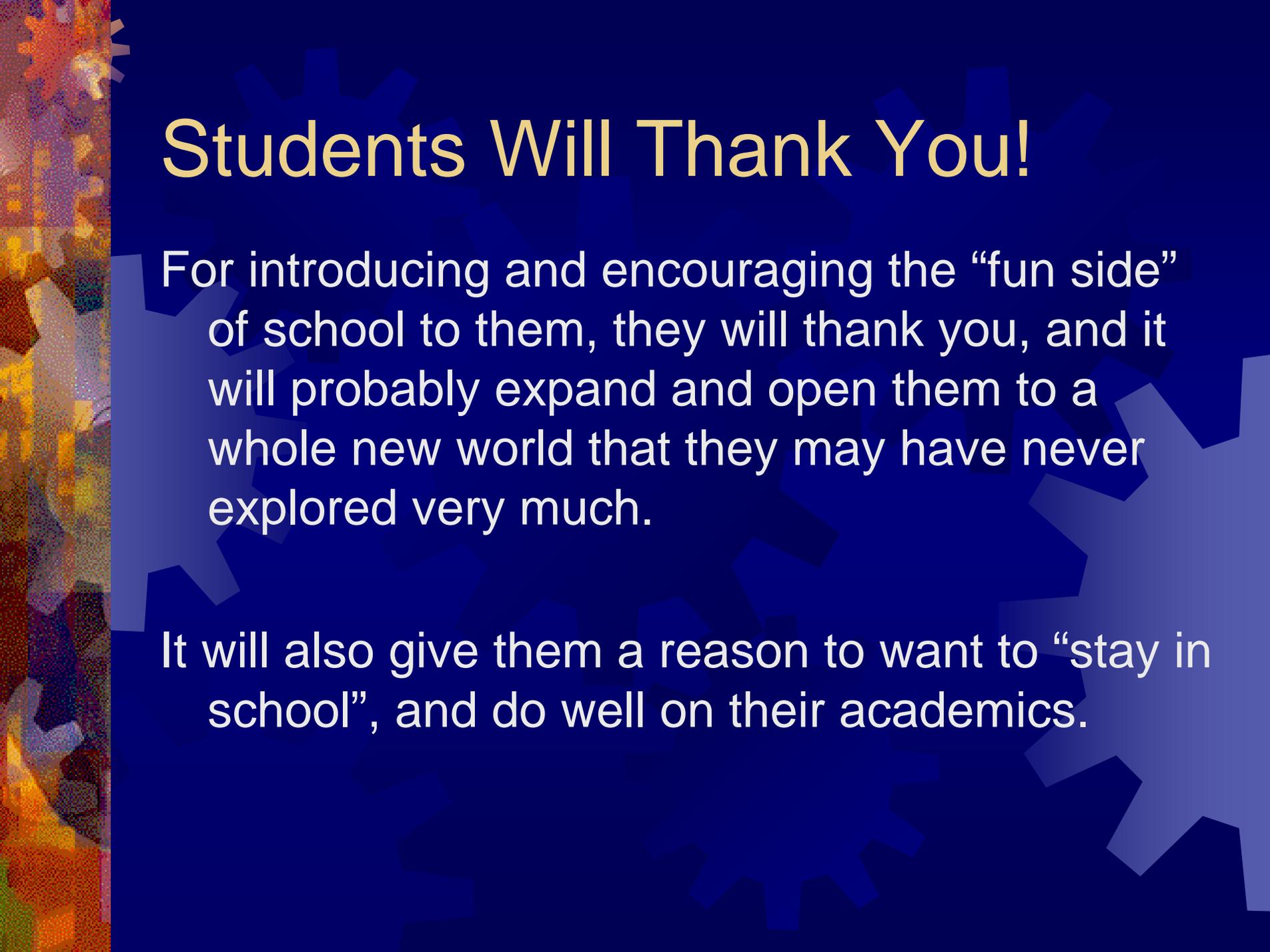
- ☀ Include children with disabilities in electives such as PE, music, drama, art, industrial arts shop, Consumer Family Science, etc
- ☀ Explain to them what assemblies and school spirit type activities are for, and introduce them to the customs and terminology

Educating Faculty and Staff

- ★ Teach chaperones, PTAs, and other activity staff how to handle people with disabilities in the extracurricular setting, and have the activities in accessible rooms.
- ★ Aides and Paraprofessionals should have extracurricular support as part of their job description, if needed
- ★ Teachers and office staff should do whatever it takes to prepare students for extracurricular activities
- ★ Physical Plant, PTA, ASB, vendors, and the like should design and setup extracurricular activities in accessible settings if possible

Educating Faculty and Staff

- ✦ Security and others should look for kids with social skills deficits at lunch, recess, before school and after school
- ✦ Teachers should make it a priority to teach social skills, etiquette, and how to be a friend in school
- ✦ Kids should be taught how to speak out if they see social issues in their school or community, and adults should let their voice be heard
- ✦ When a child has a social skills deficit, it should be acted on ASAP, because it can harm them later on.



Students Will Thank You!

For introducing and encouraging the “fun side” of school to them, they will thank you, and it will probably expand and open them to a whole new world that they may have never explored very much.

It will also give them a reason to want to “stay in school”, and do well on their academics.