

September 8, 2008

Dear Principals:

The Arc of Maryland, Inc., in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education and the Maryland Department of Disabilities is pleased to announce the Eighth Annual National Inclusive Schools Week during December 1-5, 2008. This year we will again offer the “Together We’re Better” contest for elementary, middle and high school students and are pleased to announce that we are expanding the contest whereby elementary students may enter not only a poster, but poetry as well. Additionally, middle and high school students may enter essays, art projects, or video (ex: YouTube) presentations.

National Inclusive Schools Week provides an opportunity for schools across the nation to celebrate the diverse abilities of all students. In addition, it signals the importance of providing equal opportunities for children with disabilities. Inclusive Schools are characterized as those that:

- Make every student feel welcome and provide the supports they need to learn.
- Embrace the understanding that every student is unique, and therefore, learns differently.
- Understand that all children learn better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interests.
- Collaborate with families.
- Hold high expectations for student success.

We believe the Contest, along with the Celebration Kit, will enhance school-wide awareness of inclusive practices, while engaging the students in an activity that will create a sense of caring and community. At the same time, students will have the opportunity to collaborate in a meaningful way with one another while reflecting on what they believe inclusion means.

Details of the “Together We’re Better” Contest are enclosed, and we invite you to go the www.marylandpublicschools.org or www.thearcmd.org website to download a copy of this year’s Celebration Kit. For more information on the contest please contact The Arc of Maryland at (410) 974-6139 and ask for Erin Gibson or email Ms. Gibson at egibson@thearcmd.org.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Cathy Raggio
Secretary, Department of Disabilities

2008 TOGETHER WE'RE BETTER

Elementary School Poster and Poem Contest

About our Contest

The theme for the contest is "Together We're Better." The purpose of the contest is to raise awareness of the value and importance of inclusion during National Inclusive Schools Week, December 1-5, 2008.

What are "Inclusive Schools?"

Schools that use inclusive education practices accept and embrace students of all abilities and disabilities as members of their age-appropriate general education classes. Students with disabilities in the school belong there because they live in the neighborhood jurisdiction; there is no group or regional "special" program based on a disability type or label. Special education services are delivered through a collaborative instructional model in which special educators and general educators plan to provide services within the general education curriculum. Students who have disabilities – no matter how significant – receive their special education services in general education settings; there is no group program that they must attend in order to receive instruction. Inclusive schools seek to find solutions when students are challenging; use collaborative problem-solving in team work; welcome students who traditionally have been sent to separate special programs; and work with families to develop truly individualized services for each student.

TWB Posters and Poems

We are asking students to create a class poster or poem that explores:

- why inclusive schools are so important,
- how ALL students of various abilities are active members of the general education community,
- characteristics of their schools that makes all students feel valued, and
- how students with and without disabilities value each other.

Here's an opportunity for your students to think about the uniqueness and importance of kids with and without disabilities being friends and helping each other.

Who May Enter

Grades K – 5 in a public, parochial, or private elementary school in Maryland may submit a class poster. Home-schooled children who reside in Maryland, grades K- 5 are also eligible. This includes children with and without disabilities.

Contest Deadline

The deadline for receiving entries is **November 7, 2008**. *Any entries received after the stated deadline will be automatically disqualified.* Entries must be mailed or delivered to:

"Together We're Better Essay" Contest
C/o The Arc of Maryland
49 Old Solomon's Island Road, Suite 205
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

All entries are the property of The Arc of Maryland, Inc. Winners will be notified by phone. Entries may be used in public forums. *If class posters include photographs of students, please submit an authorized release signed by the parent/guardian of each pictured child. Failure to provide authorization may disqualify entries.*

Rules

Class entries must include the words "Together We're Better" somewhere on the poster or in the poem. This contest is a whole class project, so everyone should be involved in some part of the process and an explanation of the process should be completed on the entry form. The sky is the limit on your class's creative participation. A copy of the included entry form must be filled out and securely attached to the back of the poster or poem. Print all information clearly and fill the form out completely. All necessary accommodations and modifications will be provided for students with disabilities to participate.

Judging

Judging of the entries will begin the week of November 17th. The winners will be announced during the week of National Inclusive Schools Week which is December 1-5, 2008. A first place, second place, third place and honorable mention prize will be awarded for each contest. The judging committee may consist of members of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, The Maryland Department of Disabilities, The Arc of Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, individuals with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, the coordinator of the Contest, and members of the community. Judging will be by the committee and will be carried out in a fair and professional manner.

The entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- The guidelines set forth in the rules
- The class ability to effectively convey the theme “Together We’re Better”
- The originality of the poster concept
- The use of media
- Creativity
- Overall impact of the class poster or poem

Winning Entries/Prizes

Winning entries will be displayed at the Awards Reception and schools and classes will be posted on the website: www.inclusiveschools.org. Winners will receive a class party and teacher gift cards/certificates to Learning How. Schools who have a winning class in the contest will receive House and Senate Citations. The prize levels are as follows.

Elementary Class Poster Contest		
First Prize	Class Party - \$50.00 gift card	Teacher prize: \$250.00 gift certificate
Second Prize	Class Party - \$50.00 gift card	Teacher prize: \$150.00 gift certificate
Third Prize	Class Party - \$50.00 gift card	Teacher prize: \$100.00 gift certificate
Honorable Mentions	Class Party - \$50.00 gift card	

Elementary Class Poem Contest		
First Prize	Class Party- \$50.00 gift card	Teacher prize: \$250.00 gift certificate
Second Prize	Class Party- \$50.00 gift card	Teacher Prize: \$150.00 gift certificate
Third Prize	Class Party- \$50.00 gift card	Teacher prize: \$100.00 gift certificate
Honorable Mentions	Class Party- \$50.00 gift card	

Additional Information

- PLEASE PACK POSTERS FLAT. **DO NOT ROLL!**
- Posters and poems will not be returned.
- We reserve the right to disqualify a poster and/or poem that contains artwork of a negative nature, or does not conform to the guidelines set forth in this letter.
- Please email egibson@thearcmd.org with any questions about the class contest or contact Ms. Gibson at The Arc of Maryland at (410) 974-6139.

“Together We’re Better” 2008 Elementary Class Contest

Entry Form

Deadline: November 7, 2008.

Any entries received after the stated deadline will be automatically disqualified.

Please fill out completely and attach this form to the back of the entry.

School: _____ Grade: _____

County: _____ Teacher: _____

School Phone Number: _____

Entry Type (please circle): CLASS POSTER CLASS POEM

Explanation Statement of how entry was conceptualized and the process of how the students worked together to create the entry: _____

By signing this form, the teacher gives The Arc of Maryland, Inc. permission to use your information and class poster at their discretion to publicize and promote the class poster contest and inclusive lives. **

Signature of Teacher: _____

*** If photographs of children are used, please have each student’s parent/legal guardian sign an authorization and release and provide said release with the entry. Failure to do so may disqualify the entry.*

<i>Please do not write in this box. Official use only.</i>	
ENTRY NUMBER:	_____
DATE RECEIVED:	_____
JUDGE’S SCORE:	_____

The Arc of Maryland
49 Old Solomon’s Island Road
Suite 205
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-571-9320

2008 TOGETHER WE'RE BETTER Middle and High School Contest

About our Contest

The theme for the contest is "Together We're Better." The purpose of the contest is to raise awareness of the value and importance of inclusion during National Inclusive Schools Week, December 1-5, 2008

What are "Inclusive Schools?"

Schools that use inclusive education practices accept and embrace students of all abilities and disabilities as members of their age-appropriate general education classes. Students with disabilities in the school belong there because they live in the neighborhood jurisdiction; there is no group or regional "special" program based on a disability type or label. Special education services are delivered through a collaborative instructional model in which special educators and general educators plan to provide services within the general education curriculum. Students who have disabilities – no matter how significant – receive their special education services in general education settings; there is no group program that they must attend in order to receive instruction. Inclusive schools seek to find solutions when students are challenging; use collaborative problem-solving in team work; welcome students who traditionally have been sent to separate special programs; and work with families to develop truly individualized services for each student.

TWB Essay, Art Project or Video presentation

We are asking students to provide entries that explore:

- why inclusive schools are so important,
- how ALL students of various abilities are active members of the general education community,
- characteristics of their schools that makes all students feel valued, and
- how students with and without disabilities value each other.

Here's an opportunity for your students to think about the uniqueness and importance of kids with and without disabilities being friends and helping each other.

Who May Enter

Any student, grades 6-12, who is enrolled in a public, parochial, or private middle and high school in Maryland or who is home schooled, may submit entries. This includes children and youth with and without disabilities.

Contest Deadline

The deadline for receiving entries is **November 7th, 2008**. *Any entries received after the stated deadline will be automatically disqualified.* Entries must be mailed or delivered to:

"Together We're Better" Contest
c/o The Arc of Maryland, Inc.
49 Old Solomon's Island Road, Suite 205
Annapolis, MD 21401

Entries are non-returnable. All entries are the property of The Arc of Maryland, Inc. Winners will be notified by phone. Entries may be used in public forums. *If entries include photographs and or videos of students, please submit an authorization and release signed by the parent/guardian of each student whose likeness is represented. Failure to provide said authorization may disqualify entries.*

Rules

The theme of all contests is, "Together We're Better." All entries should address why inclusive schools are so important and how students with disabilities contribute to their schools and communities. Creativity of all levels is encouraged. A copy of the entry form must be filled out and securely attached to the entry. Print all information clearly and fill the form out completely. Age and grade level both must be included. All necessary accommodations and modifications will be provided for students with disabilities to participate. All entries must be original and completed entirely by the student submitting the entry. Entries CAN NOT be emailed.

ESSAYS: Essay must be 500 words or less. Essays must be typed.

ART PROJECTS: Art projects must weigh no more than 10 pounds and be no greater in size than 4x6 feet. An explanatory statement must accompany any art project.

VIDEOS: Video presentations must be 3 minutes or less.

“Together We’re Better” 2008 Middle and High School Contest

Entry Form

Deadline: November 7, 2008

Please fill out completely and attach an entry form to the back of your entry. Please make sure that your name only appears on this cover sheet and nowhere else on your entry.

Name: _____ County: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

County: _____ Teacher: _____

Home Phone Number: _____

Entry Type (please circle): ESSAY ART PROJECT VIDEO

Explanation Statement of how entry was conceptualized and the process of how you created the entry:

By signing this form, **you (and your parent or legal guardian if you are under 18)** give The Arc of Maryland, Inc. permission to use your information and essay at their discretion to publicize and promote the essay contest and inclusive lives. Please check one of the boxes below and sign:

- If my entry is used in any way, you **may** include my full name and likeness with it.
- If my entry is used in any way, you **may not** include my full name and likeness with it.

Signature(s): _____

Student

Parent or Guardian (**required** if student is under age 18)

Please do not write in this box. Official use only.

ENTRY NUMBER: _____

DATE RECEIVED: _____

JUDGE’S SCORE: _____

JUDGING

Entries will be separated into two categories for judging. A first place, second place, third place and honorable mention prize will be awarded for each category. The judging categories are: Middle School and High School. The entry types are essay, art project, and video.

Please be sure to indicate the correct category and entry type clearly on the entry form.

Judging of the entries will begin the week of November 17th. The winners will be announced during the week of National Inclusive Schools Week which is December 1-5, 2008. The judging committee may consist of members of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, The Maryland Department of Disabilities, The Arc of Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, individuals with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, the coordinator of the Essay Contest, and members of the community. Judging will be by the committee and will be carried out in a fair and professional manner. The entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- The guidelines set forth in the rules
- The student's ability to effectively convey the theme "Together We're Better"
- The originality of the concept
- Creativity
- Overall impact of the entry

Winning Entries/Prizes

Winning entries will be displayed at the Awards Reception and posted on the website:

www.inclusiveschools.org. Winners will receive gift cards/certificates. House and Senate Citations will be given and prizes awarded for first, second, and third place in each of the two grade groups. Schools who have the greatest percentage of student participants in the contest will receive a certificate. There will also be special recognition for the schools and teachers who have the greatest percentage of student participants in the contest. The prize levels for each type of entry are as follows.

Prize Levels For Each Type of Entry	Middle School	High School
First Prize	\$100.00	\$150.00
Second Prize	\$ 75.00	\$100.00
Third Prize	\$ 50.00	\$ 75.00
Honorable Mention	\$ 25.00	\$ 50.00

Additional Information

- Entries will not be returned.
- We reserve the right to disqualify an entry that is of a negative nature, or does not conform to the guidelines set forth in this letter.
- Please email egibson@thearcmd.org with any questions about the contest or contact Ms. Gibson at The Arc of Maryland at (410) 974-6139.