The Arc Maryland, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Disabilities, and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council have partnered on the statewide “Together We’re Better” (TWB) inclusive education campaign since 2004. What started as a classroom poster contest, has grown into a multi-pronged program where students are engaged through in-person learning and extension activities in their schools and local communities.

The TWB campaign exists to raise awareness and increase acceptance of everyone, highlighting the value and importance of meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities. The primary components of the program are:

**Diversity Celebration Toolkit**
- Contains activity ideas, sample lesson plans for teachers, videos, books, and other resources to promote inclusion and full participation for all students. Available for electronic download on The Arc Maryland’s website.

**Disability Awareness & Acceptance Presentations**
- An interactive celebration of individual differences and commonalities for schools across the State of Maryland! Visit The Arc Maryland’s website to learn more about scheduling as assembly at your school.

**Elementary and Middle School Artwork Contest**
- Students create pieces of unique artwork based on 2022 National Inclusive Schools Week theme, “Unity Within Our Community.”

**High School Drawing Contest**
- Students submit original drawings that show how inclusion benefits us all. These drawings are used as pages in a coloring book for younger children to enjoy.
- Special funding this year, to support the growth of the TWB Art Contests and the creation and distribution of the coloring book, comes from the Maryland State Arts Council.

**Public Displays of Artwork Throughout Maryland**
- Artwork is showcased at State Government buildings, County libraries, public venues, local Parks and Recreation centers, and on social media.

Together, we can create a more inclusive world for everyone; where children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) are fully included in all aspects of life and have equal access to opportunities to succeed!

This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $1,201,464 with 100% funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.
BY THE NUMBERS

10 schools
41 assemblies and special events
4,486 students PreK–12th Grade

135 artwork and drawing contest submissions
100+ toolkits distributed
15 displays at public venues and libraries

IMPACT ON LEARNING COMMUNITIES

92% Students enjoyed the assemblies.

82% Students learned something new about people with disabilities.

94% Students agree that schools are better when students with disabilities learn and play together.

93% Students agree that kids with disabilities "are just like me." They want to play, learn, and make friends.
Thank you to Dominique, Justin, Adrian, and Josh for sharing their stories and lived experience with disability to over 4,000 students in Maryland this year!

Dominique Palmer
Howard County

Justin Valenti
Montgomery County

Adrian Forsythe
Prince George's County

Josh Delclos
Baltimore County

Together, we have made a considerable positive impact on schools across across the state.
The assembly was wonderful. I loved hearing Dominique’s story and watching the students identify all of their common interests.

- 5th Grade Teacher, Fulton Elementary School

As a person with a sibling who has a disability, I find this powerful. Thank you for hosting this (at our school!)

- 5th Grade Teacher, HCPSS

Thank you, staff and students!

Centennial Lane Elementary School
Deerfield Elementary School
Diamond Elementary School
Fulton Elementary School
Garrett Park Elementary School
Goshen Elementary School
Martin Boulevard Elementary School
Mt. View Middle School
As part of the fourth grade language arts curriculum, students read “Out of My Mind,” a story about a girl with cerebral palsy and how she experiences the world. The fourth graders enjoyed this book, calling it one of their “favorites” and wanted to learn more about people with disabilities. Josh, who also happens to have cerebral palsy, talked to the students about his own life and how all students can be included in activities, regardless of a person’s disability or physical limitations. Fourth graders learned about Josh’s interests and hobbies, making connections with each other. Together we’re better!

"Out of My Mind" is also featured in the Diversity Celebration toolkit, which can be downloaded on The Arc Maryland’s website, and includes clickable links to books and videos for continued learning.

In advance of the school’s assemblies, fourth grade classes collected arts and crafts supplies for their local chapter of The Arc, in Harford County, The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region (NCR). Students presented boxes of supplies for day program participants to Josh Delclos, who facilitated the assembly and is also on The Arc NCR’s Board of Directors. The Arc Maryland would like to acknowledge this act of kindness and thank the students for their donation!

“We believe all children benefit from having the opportunity to learn and play together in their neighborhood schools. Together We’re Better is an incredible program to support school communities with the information and tools they need to make meaningful inclusion happen.”

- Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc Maryland
The Arc Maryland partnered with Centennial High School’s Best Buddies Club during National Assistive Technology Month to host an accessible gaming event, featuring adaptive video gaming equipment provided by the Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP). Students tried out the adaptive controllers (featuring larger buttons which can be connected to switches), part of the gaming kits that can be rented out from MD TAP and are available for purchase online. PlayStation, Nintendo, and XBOX have all released accessible controllers that are more functional for players with limited mobility.

Congratulations to CHS Best Buddies who was awarded Chapter of the Year by Best Buddies Maryland!

Thank you so much to The Arc Maryland for our November in-school event, we had so much fun playing games together.

- @BestBuddiesCentennial Instagram post
Thank you for providing an opportunity for our school community to engage in an educational and reflective learning experience to celebrate the inclusive culture of our community. Several staff members were very moved by our students’ response to the information presented, and it was a perfect way to begin our observation of National Inclusive Schools Week.

- Lynnette Moore, Principal, Mt. View Middle School (Howard County Public Schools)
This year’s contest theme, “Unity Within Our Community,” follows the theme of National Inclusive Schools Week which allowed students to explore what inclusion and belonging "looks" like.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year’s contests! The Arc Maryland received a total of 135 contest submissions:

- 65 pieces from elementary school students - including 3, 3D pieces
- 49 pieces from middle school students
- 21 pieces from high school students

Student artwork included representation from 9 counties in Maryland:

Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, & Washington

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We want Maryland to be a place where people with and without disabilities live, learn, work, and play together. It is exciting to see how the artwork shows all of the different ways everyone can do those things. We look forward to seeing what the students come up with every year.

- Rachel London, Executive Director, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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(Pictured - Left to Right): Together We’re Better statewide partner organizations and representatives Paula Gonce (Maryland State Department of Education), Rachel London (Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council), Ande Kolp (The Arc Maryland), Lori Scott (The Arc Maryland - Board President), and Kim McKay (Maryland Department of Disabilities).
**ARTWORK AND DRAWING CONTEST AWARDS CELEBRATION**

*Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature*

**February 2023**

**Congratulations to the winning students and schools!**

**Elementary School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Place</th>
<th>Maggie H., 4th Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cascade Elementary School, Washington County</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd Place</th>
<th>Noa L., 3rd Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garrett Park Elementary School, Montgomery County</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd Place</th>
<th>Nicholas F., 1st Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary H. Matula Elementary School, Charles County</td>
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</table>

**Honorable Mention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addie C., 5th Grade</th>
<th>Home School, Montgomery County</th>
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**Middle School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Place</th>
<th>Crystal M., 7th Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folly Quarter Middle School, Howard County</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd Place</th>
<th>Josie C., 7th Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home School, Montgomery County</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIE 3rd Place</th>
<th>Hannah L., 6th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urbana Middle School, Frederick County</td>
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**TIE 3rd Place**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quinn R., 7th Grade</th>
<th>North Bethesda Middle School, Montgomery County</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Honorable Mention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Krysten R., 7th Grade</th>
<th>Urbana Middle School, Frederick County</th>
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</thead>
</table>

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(Pictured): Dr. Deann Collins, Deputy State Superintendent, Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Office from the Maryland State Department of Education, and Secretary Carol Beatty from the Maryland Department of Disabilities presented certificates and school checks to award winners during the ceremony.

Another terrific collaboration that we have is with The Arc Maryland, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, and our sister agency, the Maryland State Department of Education, on the “Together We’re Better” program throughout the school year.” I am very honored to recognize this very talented group of students.

- Secretary Beatty, Maryland Department of Disabilities

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22–23 “Together We’re Better” Impact Report
COLORING BOOK
Premiere at ArtScene Event in Queen Anne’s County
with Kent Island High School April 2023

High school students artwork from across Maryland came to life in the production of this year’s coloring book. Pages included 21 original drawings for children to enjoy! Congratulations to students from Kent Island High School in Ms. Andrea Schulte’s art class who were awarded 1st place, 2nd place, 3rd place, and honorable mention for the drawing contest.

Take a look inside the coloring book!

Check out the ArtScene podcast on Spotify: anchor.fm/artscene
Thank you so much for raising our awareness of Disability Book Week with a wonderful display of art and book recommendations.

- Nancy Targett, Instructor and Research Specialist (Howard County Library System)
THANK YOU TO THE TOGETHER WE'RE BETTERPARTNERS AND FUNDERSWe could not accomplish this without your support!

The Arc Maryland

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Early Intervention and Special Education

Maryland State Arts Council

Jessica C. Tuthill Memorial Foundation

Maryland Department of Disabilities

If you are interested in supporting the sustainment of the Together We're Better Program to make meaningful inclusion a reality for students across Maryland, please contact Natalie Dohner, Director of Education Initiatives and Partnerships, at NDohner@thearcmd.org.