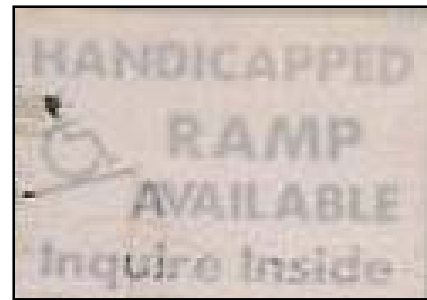
The background features a stylized illustration. At the top, a quill pen is shown with a white feather and a blue base. Below it, a wooden gavel with a light-colored head and a dark handle lies on a surface. In the foreground, a document with cursive handwriting is visible, though the text is illegible. The overall color palette is muted, with earthy tones and soft lighting.

**F.A.P.E.**  
**Free and Appropriate  
Public Education**

Understanding PJ's Law  
2009 New York State Education Department  
Driver and Attendant Refresher

# Forms of Exclusion

- Demonizing
- Eugenics
- Institutionalization
- Segregation
- Patronizing and pitying
- Heroes
- “Neutral” rules that discriminate



# Gaining Understanding Today

- Backdrop of history
- PJ's life and law
- What's (a) right?
- Sensitivity
- Communication
- Language
- Embracing difference



# PJ's Life



- Child with Autism
- Non-verbal
- Self-abusive
- Abusive to bus staff
- Mom placed recorder in backpack
- Push for new training legislation

# PJ's Law (part 1)

- THE COMMISSIONER...SHALL PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS REQUIRING EVERY SCHOOL BUS DRIVER OPERATING A SCHOOL BUS WHICH HAS OR WILL HAVE ONE OR MORE STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY AS PASSENGERS TO RECEIVE TRAINING AND **INSTRUCTION RELATING TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF, AND ATTENTION TO, THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF SUCH STUDENTS.**

## PJ's Law (part 2)

- SUCH TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION MAY BE INCLUDED WITH THE (CURRENT) TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION REQUIRED AND **SHALL BE PROVIDED AT LEAST ONCE PER YEAR OR MORE...ANY PERSON EMPLOYED AS A SCHOOL BUS DRIVER ON JANUARY 1, 2009 WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBDIVISION SHALL COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SUBDIVISION BY JULY 1, 2009.**

## PJ's Law (part 3)

- ANY SCHOOL BUS DRIVER HIRED AFTER JANUARY 1, 2009 WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SUBDIVISION SHALL COMPLETE SUCH TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION **PRIOR TO ASSUMING HIS OR HER DUTIES.**
- **80% of Students with Disabilities ride the regular bus. Every bus driver and attendant is probably transporting these students.**

# Legal Requirements

## Federal

- IDEA
  - FAPE, LRE
  - Related Service of Transportation (LRTE)
  - Student-specific training
- FERPA
  - Confidentiality
- ADA
  - Rights of PWD guaranteed

## State

- NYS Part 200 (mirrors IDEA)
  - Special Education Regulations
- Ed Law Section 4402 (7)
  - Related service staff access to information
- Reg. 156.3 (b) and (c)
  - Pre-service
  - Refreshers
  - Basic Courses



## NYSED VESID

“Transportation personnel...should be informed of:

- the reasons a student requires special transportation;
- health needs that might necessitate ongoing or emergency intervention;
- student behavioral issues or fears that might raise health or safety concerns; and
- **specialized training required for bus drivers and/or attendants.”**

# Parent and Student Rights

- Safe, current, working equipment and vehicles
- Appropriate staffing on vehicle
- Consistent staff assignments
- Staff knowing student-specific needs
- Staff receiving student-specific training
- Student-specific emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment
- **Are these reasonable?**

# Parent and Student Rights

- Safe, current, well-maintained buses and vehicles
- Appropriate seating and climate control
- Consistent routes and schedules
- Staff trained in student needs
- Staff trained in emergency training
- Student participation in emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment

**Aren't these  
your rights  
too?**

# Driver and Attendant Rights



- Safe, current, working equipment and vehicles
- Appropriate staffing on vehicle
- Consistent staff assignments
- Staff knowing student-specific needs
- Staff receiving student-specific training
- Student-specific emergency plans
- Respectful, friendly bus environment

# Life for Families

- Stigma
- Isolation
- Unknowledgeable advice
- Perception of selfishness
- Conflicting agency rules
- Inter-disability tensions
- Constantly changing service providers
- Available versus needed services
- Tension between LRE and special services



# Teaming with Parents

- Recognize family as information source
- Be an active listener
- Give accurate info about transportation
- Help parents understand system
- Let them know you care about their child

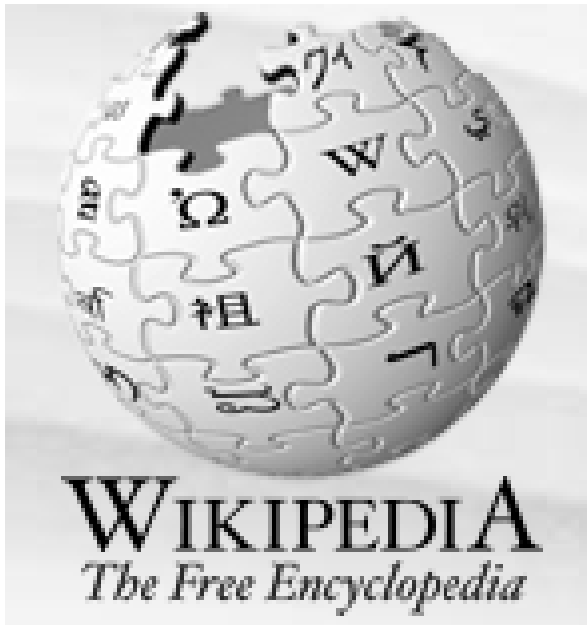


# What's it like for the kids?



“Everyone knew what a short bus was for. When I got off that short bus with those wheelchair kids, everyone knew I was a retard. I came to hate that stupid, ugly, dopey short bus. I guess I hated it so much because those of us who went to school on it were teased by the other kids. We were the ‘short bus kids,’ which was like calling us ‘retards,’ only even more unkind, it seemed to me for some reason.”

(William Helmuth, 1995)



“‘Short buses’ can be used by smaller school districts on routes with few students to pick up. However, a more prominent use is to transport small numbers of children to and from vocational school, those in a special education class within a mainstream school, or schools for children who are mentally retarded.”

# Disability as Different not Bad

- Different is “The quality or condition of being unlike or dissimilar.”
  - Round/Square Lift-equipped/not lift-equipped
  - Value neutral – one not better than the other
- Deviant is “One that differs from a norm, especially a person whose behavior and attitudes **differ from accepted standards.**”
  - Moral/immoral Like me/not like me  
Normal bus/Handicapped bus
  - Value judgment -- not as good as

# We assume and so create

- We assume that students with disabilities cannot learn to ride the bus safely **SO**
- We teach them safety half-heartedly or not at all **AND**
- **OF COURSE** They don't learn bus safety! **WHY?**
- Our behavior made our assumptions real **WHY NOT?**
- Assume they can learn 😊



# Different ways to communicate

- Speech (in all its variations)
- Sign language
- Gestures/Behaviors
- Touch screens
- Storyboards
- Typing machines
- Facilitated communication



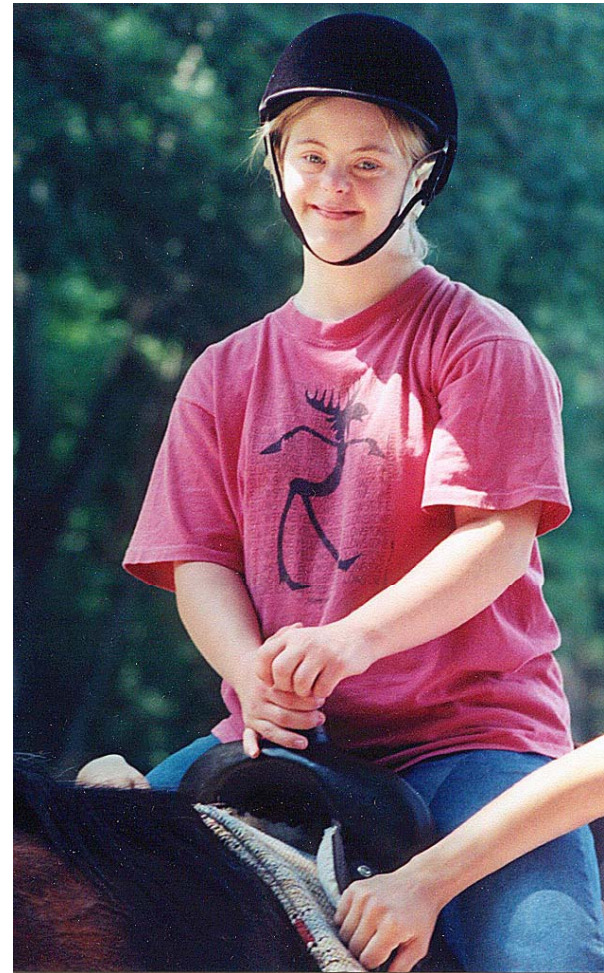
# Effective communication is...

- Establishing positive relationships
- Talking their language at their level
- Respecting their space
- Build on their abilities
- Offering choice
- Teach one thing at a time
- Modeling
- Practicing
- Repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition



“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this something, at whatever cost, must be attained.”

Marie Curie



“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that?

We must have

perseverance and,

above all, courage.

Our

believe that

gift

and that

something

cost, must be obtained.”

Marie Curie

Have you ever known  
a person with a  
disability who has a  
special gift?



# Language of Respect

- Use language that recognizes the student as more than a person with a disability. Use their name, or grade, or being a Yankees fan to speak about who they are.
- Use person-first language – “student with a disability” not “disabled student,” “students with Cerebral Palsy” not CP kids”



Don't use words that demean having a disability by referring to ignorance as “blindness,” not listening as “deafness,” unable to progress as “crippled,” or confused as “crazy” or “psycho”

# Language of Respect

- Don't refer to students by their generic label or their equipment. We do not transport "autistics," "wheelchairs," or "the blind"
- Don't use language that assumes students with disabilities have an awful life, like - "afflicted with" "suffers from" "confined to"
- Don't use euphemisms to describe persons with disabilities such as "physically challenged" or "differently able"



# Pick the wrong answers

## The girl is:

1. A fourth grader
2. Mary Howard
3. Confined to a wheelchair
4. Wheelchair user
5. Wearing pink
6. Stupid



## This is a:

1. Handicapped bus
2. 16 passenger bus
3. Type A school bus
4. Botard bus
5. Lift equipped bus
6. Short bus



# Pick the wrong answers

## The girl is:

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## This is a:

1. Handicapped bus
2. 16 passenger bus
3. Type A school bus
4. "Botard" bus
5. Lift equipped bus
6. Short bus



# Pick the right answers

## **A child with a disability might need:**

- A warm bus
- A cool bus
- High light
- Low light
- Radio playing
- Quiet
- To sit alone
- To sit with someone
- A comfort object
- Nothing within reach
- To stay in their WC
- To transfer to a bus seat
- Sugar
- No sugar

# Pick the right answers 😊

## A child with a disability might need:

- A warm bus **yes**
- A cool bus **yes**
- High light **yes**
- Low light **yes**
- Radio playing **yes**
- Quiet **yes**
- To sit alone **yes**
- To sit with someone **yes**
- A comfort object **yes**
- Nothing within reach **yes**
- To stay in their WC **yes**
- To transfer to a bus seat **yes**
- Sugar **yes**
- No sugar **yes**
- **Etc. You get it – know your students!**

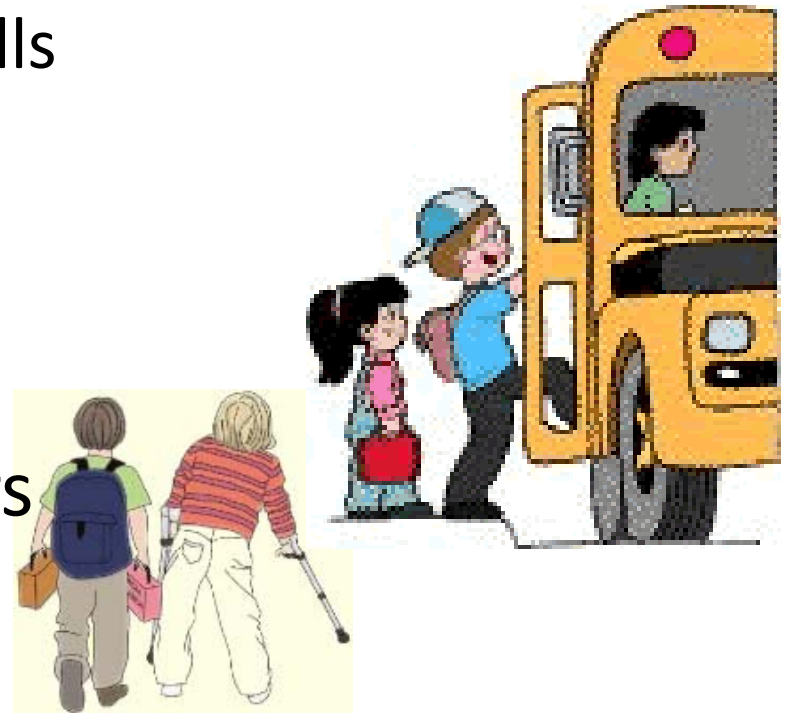
# Embracing Difference

- Everyone has needs
- Everyone can choose
- Societal attitudes are disabling
- No lift is a handicap – not wheelchair use
- Bus changes to accommodate student
- Stigma abandoned



# Next steps

- Annual PJ's Law training
  - Disability-specific issues
  - Working with students
  - Developing bus riding life skills
- Working towards transportation inclusion
- Partnering with students, their families, and educators



# THANKS

- For listening
- For considering
- For getting outside of the box for a few minutes
- For caring



*"Please God, let them see Cheyenne for who she is."*