

# Creating a Culture of Authentic Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

How Equity Initiatives Impacted Our Inclusive  
Practices

Excellence for Equity RCOE Conference



- Board Of Education
  - Linda Lunn, Board Member
- District
  - Faythe Mutchnick, Assistant Superintendent
  - Dr. Zhanna Preston, Executive Director, Special Education
  - Tamara Dewey, Coordinator of Equity and Engagement
  - Dustin Punzel, Senior Program Specialist
- School Site
  - Scott Richards, Principal, Murrieta Mesa HS
  - Ryan Tukua, Principal, Murrieta Valley HS
  - Celeste Scallion, Principal, Vista Murrieta HS
  - Brandi Heise, Teacher, Peer Mentoring Program
- Family
  - Jacquie Acosta, Parent
  - Josh Acosta, Student
  - Jennie LaBriola, Parent
  - Jennifer LaBriola, Student

# Presentation Team



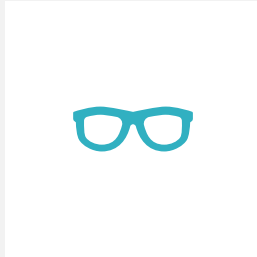




# Equity & Inclusion

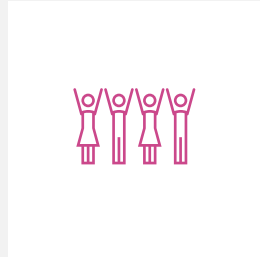
## Support from Multiple Perspectives

# What We Will Cover Today



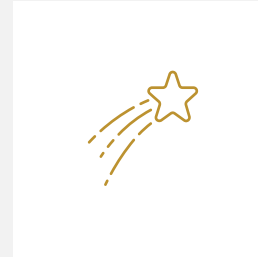
## Equity & Inclusion

What it looks like  
from Multiple  
Perspectives



## Culture of Inclusion

Program highlights  
from our high schools



## Thoughts Moving Forward

Reflection of our  
efforts

# Executive Director: Dr. Zhanna Preston

## What is Inclusion?

- Inclusion means students with disabilities attending, learning, and growing in general education classes and co-curricular activities alongside their general education peers.
- Inclusion is NOT simply just placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom



## Why Inclusion?

- The WHY of inclusion in Murrieta Valley Unified School District is tied to the core values and district key focus areas founded on equitable approaches to student education and community partnerships.
- Inclusion is beneficial for all students offering growth in multiple domains.



## Impacts of Inclusion

- Students
  - Academic
  - Social – Emotional
  - Post-School Life
- Organization
  - School Culture
  - District-Wide Culture
  - Community

“Take care of flowers  
and don’t chase  
after butterflies and  
then butterflies will  
fly to you.”

- Matthew  
McConaughey



# Equity and Inclusion a District Priority

## Governance and School Board

- California School Board Association

## Support of Equity Coordinator

- Full-time Position created in 2020
- Created common definition and merged into district vision statement
  - Service and commitment to every student, every day without predictions
- Collaboration
  - Breaking down silos and bridging gap between departments to align efforts
- Authentic Voice and Feedback
  - District Parent Advisories
  - Student Advisories





# Culture of Inclusion

Program Highlights from  
our High Schools



# Murrieta Mesa High School

*“You don’t know, but when you’re a new mom and don’t have a clue your son will have Down Syndrome, you only hope and pray kids will be nice to him and not hurt him. Your biggest worry is that your kid won’t have friends, etc. If I only knew how it would be, my mama heart would be so much better back then. XXXOO”*

Tristen’s mom





# Special Olympics









# Spectacular Prom





# Murrieta Valley High School

Crossing the Divide



# NEST Nighthawks Engaging Students Together

Our Nighthawks Engaging Students Together (NEST) Club is a sanctioned Unified Champion School through Special Olympics Southern California. Since becoming a Unified Champion School in 2017, MVHS has been recognized by Special Olympics as a National Unified Champion School for our commitment to inclusion. MVHS has also received ESPN Honors for what we have accomplished as a Unified Champion School and our Unified Sports Program.





# Unified Programs



- Unified Sports



- Unified Physical Education



# Inclusive Youth Leadership



## Unified Leadership Class:

Plan and organize Unified and Special Olympics events.

The Unified Southwestern league is the product of the MVHS Unified Leadership Class. The Unified Southwestern League was thought of by the class of 2021 and has been brought to light by the class of 2022 and current students of the MV Unified Leadership Class.

## Sister School Program:

The sister school program is also a product of the MV Unified Leadership Class. This program is between MVHS and Clovis East High School in Clovis, California.

In this program youth leaders meet to brainstorm ideas of inclusion, discuss implementation strategies, and work together to help each program grow.

In 2022/2023 a delegation from Mexico will be included into the Sister School Program.



# Vista Murrieta High School

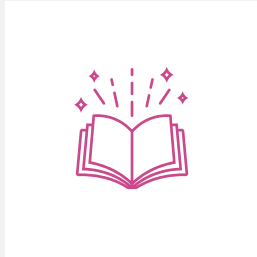
2021-2022



# VMHS Cheer Seniors

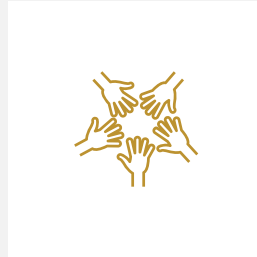


# The Benefits of Inclusive Peer Mentoring?



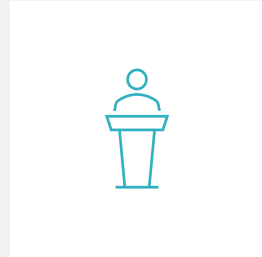
## Equal Access

Provides students with needs equal access to classes they would not be able to attend without support, least restrictive environment.



## Social Inclusion

Having peers as a support instead of an adult will help students be more integrated to the class social structure and feel more included in the overall school culture.



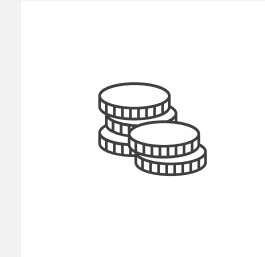
## Relevant Experience

Peer mentors get the opportunity to help a fellow student, learn about the field of education, social services, and counseling.



## Data Collection

Peer mentors will be able to gather simple data for case carriers.



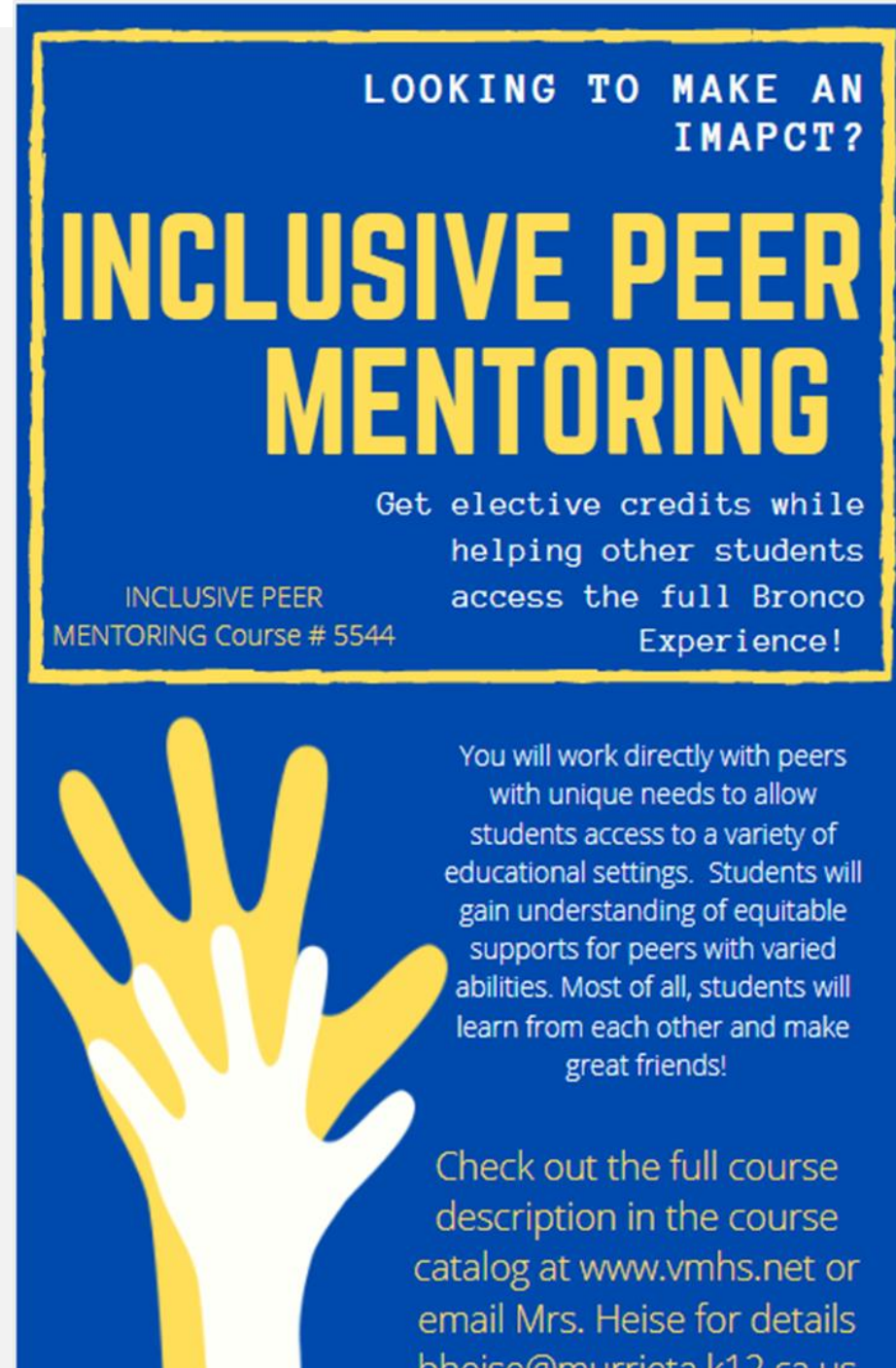
## Cost Effective

Its' free!! No paid adult needed.



# Bronco Buddies

- What is it?
  - General education elective
- How did it start?
  - Weren't trying to fix a problem but provide opportunities for students to work together to gain equal access
  - Adopted program from Dr. Rebecca Brooks who ran successful programs at San Diego High Schools
- Who is the teacher of record?
  - Peer mentors will be on Inclusive Peer Mentoring teacher's roster, not the roster of the class they are supporting.
- Who should take Inclusive Peer Mentoring?
  - Advertised on school news, put in course catalog, flyers and word of mouth
- How did you recruit students?
  - Anyone with a heart to help others.
  - Anyone looking to go into education, social services, counseling, etc.



LOOKING TO MAKE AN IMPACT?

## INCLUSIVE PEER MENTORING

Get elective credits while helping other students access the full Bronco Experience!

INCLUSIVE PEER MENTORING Course # 5544

You will work directly with peers with unique needs to allow students access to a variety of educational settings. Students will gain understanding of equitable supports for peers with varied abilities. Most of all, students will learn from each other and make great friends!

Check out the full course description in the course catalog at [www.vmhs.net](http://www.vmhs.net) or email Mrs. Heise for details [bheise@murrieta.k12.ca.us](mailto:bheise@murrieta.k12.ca.us)



# How We Water Our Garden...

Culminating Project, end of year celebration

- Each mentor creates a project of their choice highlighting what the Bronco Buddies accomplished over the year in their class together.
  - PowerPoint, iMovie, Poster, Scrapbook, etc.
- Buddies present their project together in an end of year showcase.



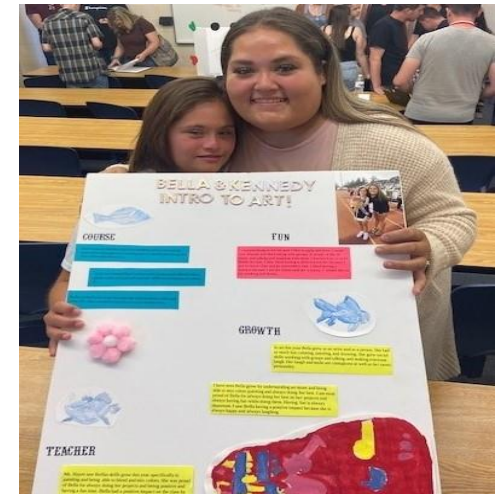
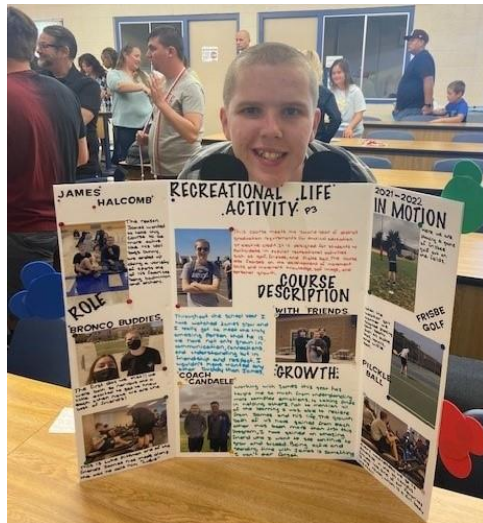
**Inclusive Peer Mentoring**

## BRONCO BUDDIES PRESENTATION

Come see all the amazing things we have accomplished this year

26 May 5pm | Vista Murrieta High School Science Lecture Hall

RSVP TO BRANDI HEISE  
BHEISE@MURRIETA.K12.CA.US



YouTube link to iMovie  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTbwxQY9iak>

# Parent Perspective: Jacquie Acosta

- Parent since 1999 and seen steady growth & progression towards inclusion
- Inclusion is about trust, confidence and relationships
- Part of SEPAC
  - Critical player in discussing how inclusion expands and grows
- Collective Effort
  - Families, staff, students and the community all have to do the work





# Student Experience

Josh Acosta & Colie Heise



Jennifer Labriola





# Parent Perspective: Jennie Labriola





# Thoughts Moving Forward

Reflections of our Efforts

**Murieta  
Valley**

Unified School  
District



# Assistant Superintendent Faythe Mutchnick & Senior Program Specialist Dustin Punzel

*What strengths of our district led to the acceleration of inclusion in the past five years?*

- *Equity initiative + Inclusion focus area*
- *Strong partnership with special education families/SEPAC*
- *High value is placed on school culture and student engagement*

*What are the biggest challenges our district faces as it further expands inclusion?*

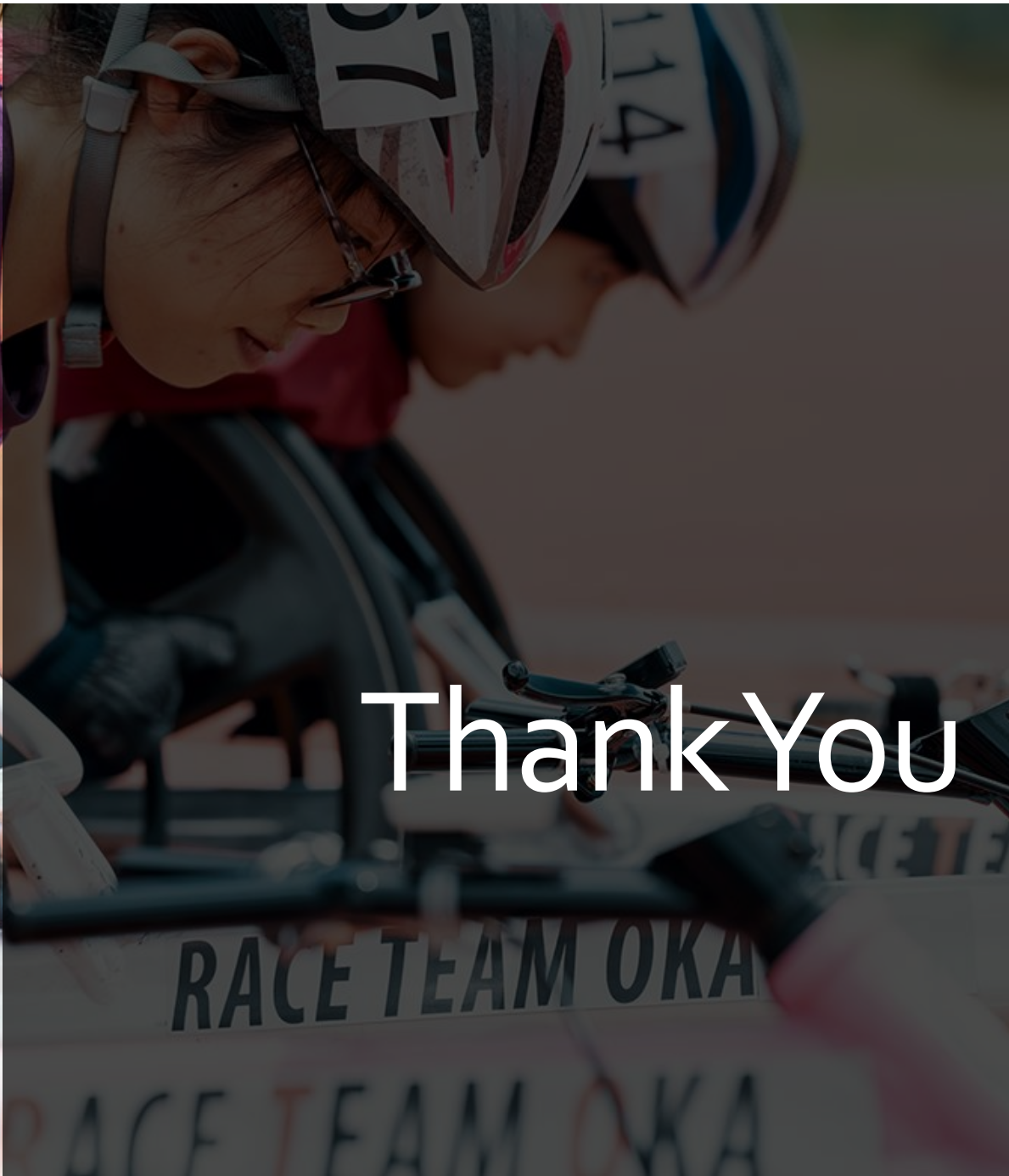
- *Meeting the academic needs are a challenge*
- *Inclusion may be seem to be more work*
- *Inclusion is a social issue and, therefore, emotional and sensitive*
- *Has an impact on budget*



# Resources to Replicate Programs

- Peer Mentoring
  - Peer Tutoring and Support: Making Inclusive Education Work by Dr. Brooks
  - Appendix of Reproducibles
    - Peer Tutor Survey
    - Weekly Journal
    - Homework Log
    - Peer Tutor Evaluation
    - Tips for Being a Successful Tutor
    - People First Language Worksheet
    - And much more!!
- Site Visits
  - Unified Sports
  - Unified PE
  - Unified Leadership
  - Spectacular Prom
  - Peer Mentoring
  - PAC Meeting
- Parent Advisories
  - Sample PAC Agendas





Thank You