



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

August 19, 2011

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Disability History and Awareness Month

Senate Joint Resolution 321, designating October as Disability History and Awareness Month (DHAM), was passed in 2009 by the General Assembly. A group of young people with disabilities who are alumni of the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) initiated this resolution. YLF is a program designed to develop leadership skills among youth with disabilities and is sponsored by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.

Public knowledge, awareness and understanding of disabilities will help ensure the full participation of students with disabilities into the life of their schools and communities. Helping others become aware of the contributions that people with disabilities have made and are currently making nationally and in Virginia promotes inclusive communities.

Youth with disabilities, parents, teachers, and staff from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, and the Partnership for People with Disabilities have continued to add to the bank of resources that were developed in 2009. All schools can readily find information, activities, and materials to promote and highlight Disability History and Awareness Month in Virginia during October. These resources may be found at the following Web sites: www.virginiaselfadvocacy.org (under the disability awareness tab) and in the online modules found at www.imdetermined.org

Youth with disabilities who participated in gathering information and materials for the resource bank developed the following Disability History and Awareness Month vision statement:

Disability history education and awareness will promote positive attitudes in schools creating a culture of mutual respect, understanding and equal opportunities for all.

I encourage you to visit these Web sites, have conversations with young people with disabilities and their families, Special Education Advisory Committees, and Parent Resource Centers in your school division and to plan activities that will promote the goals of this initiative and the goals developed by youth.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Marianne Moore, VDOE transition specialist at Marianne.Moore@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225- 2700; Dana Yarbrough, director of community supports, at Virginia Commonwealth University at dvyarbrough@vcu.edu

or (804) 828-0352; or Teri Barker-Morgan, program manager, The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities at Teri.Barker@vbpd.virginia.gov or (804) 786-9381.

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