>> Matan Koch: Good morning everyone and welcome to the second in our series of a Road to NDEAM, this one entitled Employing Educators, or you know, Educators with disabilities, and the idea being that it is both an employment solution and an education solution. For those who don't know, NDEAM is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and it actually begins in October, which is why this webinar in September is part of our lead up I am Matan Koch I'm Senior Policy Advisor here at RespectAbility and I will be your host today with these three wonderful panelists. And though there is actually a spot in the presentation for this, I thought we would take a moment and just let the panelists quickly say their names and titles. Sheryl, do you want to introduce first?

>> Sheryl Burgstahler: Sure, I'm Sheryl Burgstahler. I come from the University of Washington in Seattle. And my role is Director of Accessible Technology Services, which includes the IT accessibility team, and perhaps you've heard of the DO-IT Center -- Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking and Technology.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic, and Winston?

>> Winston Sakurai: Aloha, good morning. I'm Winston Sakurai. I'm currently the Director of the Curriculum Innovation Branch for the Hawaii State Department of Education. I'm also the President of the Hawaii Association of Secondary School Administrators. Good to have -- thank you for having me, it's good to be here.

>> Matan Koch: And Nicole -- thank you Winston -- and Nicole?

>> Nicole Homerin: Hi everyone, I'm Nicole Homerin. I am the Inclusion Communities Manager at Partners for Youth with Disabilities, and also I run Homerin Educational Services where I take my own lived experience with a disability and support pre-service teachers and also other children and adults with disabilities from an educator standpoint. And I really appreciate RespectAbility for having me.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. So before we get started, a few sort of suggestions for our audience. One is that if you want to truly digest all of the wonderful information that will be in the slides that you're about to see, you can download the presentation at the link that Eric has put in the chat on our website. There is live captioning here in the webinar, but if you would prefer to see the transcript in a separate window, we have also provided a link for that in the chat. And for those who would like a better view of our sign language interpreter, you can pin his video and then switch to speaker view so that you have only one visible speaker plus our interpreter. There will hopefully be time at the end that is dedicated for Q&A, but I think I speak for myself and the panelists when I say please put your questions in the question box as we go, so that if we have the opportunity to address them in the presentation itself, then we know what you want to know. Thank you. And Eric, are we ready to get started with the presentation? Okay, while we wait for that I'm gonna give some of our introductory material from memory as best I can. Our second -- okay, here we are. And these are our speakers, they've already introduced themselves, but aren't their pictures and titles lovely? Eric, next slide.

And then I wanted to do a brief pitch for our gala, both because our gala is a cool thing in Los Angeles, but also because you may notice that one of our honorees is none other than our panelist today, Nicole Homerin. So if you want to come in Los Angeles to see Nicole be honored, to hear her speech, and these wonderful entertainers and other speakers, please do visit www.respectability.org/Ten, and buy a ticket for our 10th anniversary gala, helping to support us for the next 10 years of wonderful programming. Next slide please, Eric.

So these are people with disabilities, and you'll note there's a lot of faces here you recognize, including famous educators like Judy Heumann, singers, tycoons, moguls -- the point is people with disabilities are everywhere. The President of the United States is a person with a disability. So we are talking about an incredibly capable population. Next slide please. Disabilities can be temporary or permanent, apparent, non-apparent, from birth or acquired later. Next slide please. And most importantly, there are 61 million people in the United States with a disability. But the statistic that I find more powerful is that one in four adults have a disability. That means that everything we're talking about today is relevant at the very least to one in four people. This is not a rare population. Next slide please.

And so what is a disability? I'm not going to read this entire slide, but a person with a disability is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. It includes folks that have a history or a record of such impairment, and also those perceived as disabled even if they're not. And the law requires that an individual not be discriminated against if they can perform the essential functions of their jobs with or without reasonable accommodation. Those are all things we're going to dive more deeply into in the presentation, and we'll move on to the next slide now, you can read this at your leisure. It's intentionally a broad definition, because the idea was not to include or exclude specific disabilities but to make sure the perceptions [indistinct] -- and as you note the "record of" and the "regarded as" exist primarily because people experience discrimination because of their history, they also experience discrimination because of misconceptions about what they can do. The example that I like to use is a gentleman who did not have a disability, but his employer perceived that he did and discriminated against him, and then the employer tried to offer the defense, "well, he didn't actually have a disability." The answer being, "but you thought he did, and that's why you mistreated him, so you are liable." So that's why that breadth -- of definition is there. Next slide please.

And there are two concepts that are really going to underline our discussion today of how to bring our educators into the fold. One is the idea of Universal Design. And you're going to get a lot more on that from Sheryl, but it's the design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design -- that definition coming from the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. Whereas a reasonable accommodation is a change to help an individual perform the essential functions of employment which are those things that are the primary reason the job exists. It does not include a bunch of things that I've listed here that you're welcome to read.

But the next slide -- when we get to the really the important -- the important distinction is the different ways in which those things set people up to succeed. A reasonable accommodation is about specific changes made to specific jobs or roles to help a person deliver their talents to an employer. Universal Design is a framework to proactively design the workplace in such a way that an accommodation isn't needed because people can do the work in there coming as they are. And so here's a thought question for our audience, though I will pause for a minute in case any of the panelists want to speak to it. I. a program has already been designed with natural access for blind and sighted people, is blindness actually a disabling condition at that moment -- or more so than any other feature, meaning, on the flip, is blindness disabling because of some universal factor or because we've chosen to design our world to not be fully accessible to blind people? I don't know if any of the panelists want to respond to the thought question, and unfortunately -- Eric, is there a way you can change my view so I can actually see the panelists? Because I have the Interpreter highlighted which -- let me see, I think I've got it. Yes, okay. So panelists, I can see you now if any of you would like to speak to this question can you like put a finger up [laughs]? The thought question. Okay, not hearing -- oh good, Sheryl, you do in fact want to speak to the question. Sheryl?

>> Sheryl Burgstahler: Okay well, it's -- language can always be confusing the way it's used as a technical term that's been defined versus how we think about that thing, and so this is a good example of that where disability is defined in legislation. However in everyday use, we have different words that are used for being disabled. A disabled car means that maybe your car isn't working in some way or another. And we think of not being able to do something even with people with disabilities, so if a person who is quadriplegic is watching a TV station, a TV show, and that they have full vision, then that situation is not what I would call a disabling situation, you know? So does that person have a disability? Well technically, because the definition. But the way we use terms in other ways, they are not limited by what they're doing. In this presentation today, if we describe any important images on the screen and the text on the screen, someone who can't see the screen -- maybe because they are just driving in their car and they're just listening to this -- then they would not be disabled by that experience. So whether they have a disability or not, it's kind of a different -- like, anyway you can spend a whole afternoon discussing this type of thing.

>> Matan Koch: Absolutely, but I think you've illustrated the point quite well, which is that we can -- build our society, our structures, our institutions, and our activities such that the things that the law might define as a disability are not necessarily disabling in the --

>> Sheryl Burgstahler: Yes!

>> Matan Koch: In the sense of the term. Thank you for that. Eric can we move to the next slide? So now we're looking at some essential roles of educators, and Nicole, I know you'd expressed that you would have some thoughts to share on this slide. So can I invite you to speak on this one?

>> Nicole Homerin: Yeah, absolutely! So here we've highlighted some of the essential roles of educators, and you know, it's not -- it's non-exhaustive list, because there are many roles of educators. But some of them include developing and delivering flexible lesson plans and curricula to different learners -- and with that I always love to highlight that, you know, a lot of educators with disabilities are really able to tap into their own experiences and experiences of their fellow comrades with disabilities to really understand the different needs of different learners. So that can be a really great strength. Also managing the classroom and fostering student connection, communicating with parents about student progress, and ensuring students are thriving inside and outside of the classroom. And with all of these, not just these essential skills, but all end goals, but so many others, you know, we think about what we really need to do in order to support our educators with disabilities in terms of appropriate accommodation. So you know, I think a lot of this is talking about -- the great skills of educators, you know, come from within, like our passion and our dedication and our ability to be planful and creative, and that just all needs to be supported with appropriate accommodations. But with that, as you can see on the bottom, you know, that means that we have this great untapped potential of all these potential educators out there with all of these creative skills and skill sets that can be really used in our classrooms across the country.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you for that Nicole, and so in a moment we're going to begin to jump into discussing how we can tap all of those skills. I just want to make a little space, Winston, anything to add? We have not -- we haven't yet given you the floor, so --

>> Winston Sakurai: No, thank you. I think actually this ties in very well with the next two slides. We need educators, you know, of all backgrounds. And I think having educators in -- that have disabilities that can share some of their successes and struggles within the school really enhances the culture of the school. I think it makes people a little bit more understanding, compassionate, and maybe even kinder to understanding what their students are going to be experiencing in the classroom. So I think -- I think there is a need for that diversity to be there, and also for our parents and for our -- and for our community members. There's a big stigma, and that's where we can break those things down by actually having educators -- great educators, which we know there are many, that really can be role models in the classroom.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. Can we move to the next slide? Alright, so -- and I want to thank Nicole for pointing me to this particular resource, but wanted to sort of outline the opportunity for you. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 45 percent of public schools reported having one or more vacant teaching positions in October of 22 -- we don't have data yet for 23, but we can assume that it is similar. But this website that Nicole provided, https://tsa.ed.gov, you can look up your local area. But so what we know is that there's an incredible demand for teachers. At the same time what we know by looking at the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, which parenthetically is just a great resource for anyone doing workforce work who wants to understand data around disability employment, is that in 2021, which is the last year for which we have this data, only about five percent of folks working in the education industry, a little less than 700,000 people, reported a disability. Some of that is under reporting, I'm sure, but some of that means that we have great potential to get up to that 25 percent that we know should be reflected in the adult population. Next slide please.

We also know, just with some quick math out of that same Compendium, that if we were in fact to take all of the people with disabilities that are out of work that would bring it up to the employment level of folks without disabilities, we would add 7,673,683 workers to the economy. That means that anywhere that you see a labor shortage, you should in the same breath be thinking about the fact that there are 7.5 million or more potential workers with disabilities, that with the right accommodations, preparations, and practice, we can use to address that talent need. So everything we're about to offer you today is a solution to a crying problem that the numbers clearly identify. Next slide please.

>> Winston Sakurai: Yeah, going with that -- even with the the numbers saying that was a point in time, you know, count, being at school level, we know that there is never a time throughout the entire school year where you don't have a vacancy. There's always something that happens, whether someone is out sick, whether someone is -- we've had unfortunately teachers who've had cancer. There's maternity leave which you need to make sure that you fill. And there's just some times where people need some kind of mental break from the job. And so there's a lot of times, even though that's one point in time where 45 percent of -- teachers or when you report there's vacancy for a teacher position, I've never been through a school year in my entire 30 years where there hasn't been one vacancy at a time in the school.

>> Matan Koch: That is really helpful perspective, Winston, just on the magnitude of the need, right? So let's now give some information about how to meet that need. But before that, the interlude is how can we actually improve the overall experience because we've brought in educators with disabilities? And so, just as a preliminary matter, we know that people with disabilities have a much lower turnover rate than folks without, meaning fewer of those vacancies that Winston was talking about, and that according to the Department of Labor, employers that have embraced disability as a part of the strategy represent -- you know, have reported a 90 percent increase in retention, a 72 percent increase in productivity, and, always of interest, a 45 percent increase in workplace safety. I also want to take a moment -- you'll note on a lot of these slides we have pictures of real educators with disabilities along with a caption telling you who's there. So just keep an eye out for that as we go along. Next slide please.

And now we get into the specific benefits, and I did have input on this from all the panelists. So again, after each slide, feel free panelists, if there's something, some color, some idea you want to add to it, this is a good moment. First is that studies have shown that when kids with disabilities see teachers with disabilities, they come to have a much greater understanding of their own potential because, you know, they see themselves in the people that are the adults in their lives and -- that they have a certain comfort in the learning system. Next slide please unless -- [crosstalk]

>> Nicole Homerin: I would love to add that with this, as we talk about the importance of representation, I think celebrating disability as a point of diversity and what we're doing by hiring educators with disabilities is showing all of our students who are receiving special education services or 504 plans or other accommodations that that the possibilities are endless, that it's okay to have different ways of learning, that they can celebrate who they are because they have people in those positions that they see, and just have someone to look up to as a different way to be learning and growing, because everyone's job, right, starts out in the classroom. Like, educators really teach everyone who then go on and do every position that there is in terms of employment. So it really sets the foundation.

>> Matan Koch: Absolutely. And -- I think in a little bit you're each going to share -- or well, I know certainly you -- Nicole, and you, Winston, are going to share personal examples of that particular phenomenon of coming to embrace identity and understand how that helps you, so we're excited for that moment. Next slide please, Eric. So another benefit is because teachers with disabilities are more aware of the types of academic challenges their students might be facing, they seek to implement creative pedagogical practices -- just a fancy way to say the way they teach -- that cater to their students' individual needs. Does anyone have any flavor they want to add to that idea? I'm seeing that as a no, and I will move right on, I think it's pretty straightforward. Next slide please.

And well, interestingly, students who have teachers with disabilities come to be less ableist. They come to having more positive view of disability. They realize that disability is not something to overcome, but something that you succeed with, something that's a part of who you are. And they actually did a study about this in Australia, of all places, and they found out that students developed a much more positive attitude towards disability in general after even just having a TA, a teaching assistant with a disability in the classroom for a semester. And if memory serves, Nicole, you have -- something you want to add at this point, am I remembering that properly or --

>> Nicole Homerin: Yeah, I just want to highlight the importance of participative attitudes about disabilities, and the fact that as an educator, I really never for the longest time identified as an individual with disability, because it wasn't talked about or -- in my family or kind of -- in my community. And it was really only when I started mentoring the college students that I mentor in my fellowship and we were having conversations that I realized that I -- like, they were teaching me that it was normal. And so that's when I started reflecting on it. So it can be so powerful to have those teachers who really help you understand that it's not -- that it -- particularly in school systems, right, that special education is not a place. It's a service, it's support, and that it's not something that we need to change or overcome. It's just -- we all learn differently and we all need different supports in different areas of life, and that's okay.

>> Matan Koch: Winston, I see you nodding along and I wonder if that means you something you want to add there?

>> Winston Sakurai: No, I think that's, again, where the kindness and compassion and empathy comes into play. If they don't see it, they don't -- they don't know, right? And our opportunity each and every day in the classroom with students there is to show what the great things that educators with disabilities can do, and to be that role model in the classroom. And then also -- to allow our students to understand that, you know, there's nothing that can't be accomplished, even if you have a disability, because they might -- not -- think that they might have something, but it also allows them to see -- maybe - I'm like them too, right? A lot of times, students, they're self-conscious about who they are. And they might have the same disability that someone -- that is teaching, someone that's in the classroom supporting might have, and that they might be more willing to seek help and -- provide. And we are able then to provide opportunities for them to be, again, more successful.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you. Next slide please, Eric. So this slide, I feel like we've actually kind of just covered in our discussions on the previous slide. And -- Nicole, I know you and I wrote this slide together, but do you feel that you've covered the material that we had in mind in your previous remarks, or do we want to add anything with it? Your call.

>> Nicole Homerin: Yeah, I mean, I think that we talked a lot about it but I think the biggest thing that I would point out is that still in education, for some reason, disability is not part of the diversity conversation. So we're talking about race, or gender, ethnicity, and some -- for some reason, disability still doesn't get the mark there. And so just encouraging all of us as educators to continue -- having conversations about disability as a part of diversity and how that benefits representation.

>> Matan Koch: Great. I'm going to move us along 'cause we have a lot of good stuff. And now we're going to come to a few of the challenges that educators with disabilities face. Next slide please, Eric. So -- and I'm really just gonna summarize the titles of these. You all can read the details of them, and also I'm going to pause for a second in case any of the panelists want to put on personal color, but educators tend to face special physical barriers, because there's just a lot of inaccessibility in schools. And again, you can see the details of why that is on the slide, but know that physical access lags behind in a lot of our -- schools. Panelists, anything to add on that one? It's okay for the answer to be no. All right, next slide please.

School administrators -- and Winston, here I would like to give you a moment to comment as someone who is a leader among school administrators -- but school administrators often lack awareness of their obligations to their employees.

>> Winston Sakurai: Oh, absolutely. And you know, the story I can share is that I actually previously was under an administrator who openly mocked people with disabilities, and it caused me not to want to share some of the things that I go through. So my story is basically -- I grew up, my parents were very caring, and they wanted to see why their son was struggling in school when I was back in the 70s and 80s. And at that time, I think our special education services wasn't quite up to speed, and we went through, actually as a state, a lawsuit back in 1994. I didn't find out that I had a disability until I was in college, or at least diagnosed with one until I got to college. And that really shaped -- who I was. I have dyslexia, I have ADHD. And when I went -- and at the time I was fortunate at 20 years old to serve on our state board of education. And we're going through this lawsuit one year into my term for students with disabilities. It really shined a light on how far behind we were, not only as a state but also as a nation. And it took 11 years for us to ramp up our special education services here in Hawaii. I'm very proud of the efforts that all of our administrators and Educators have done, but you know, going back to this -- administrator, I had to hide. I had to hide -- that I had disabilities, because I myself didn't want to be mocked as teacher and then later on as an administrator under this administrator. There was no compassion for those kind of things, and -- that's where it became kind of my mission to make sure that people knew that I had some kind of disability, that we provided as many accommodations for our teachers. I'm very proud that we're able to hire different educators from different backgrounds that provide diversity to our school, and -- trying to set a trend -- for -- that this is -- not just something that is okay, it's something to be celebrated. And so -- I'm very fortunate to -- and thank you again for allowing me to be on this panel, because it brings great joy to my heart to see other educators willing to promote -- supporting those with disabilities in and out of the classroom.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you, and thank you for sharing of your story, which makes this powerful in that way as well. I just want to remind people that there's a Q&A box at the bottom of your screen, and if you have questions for our panelists that come up as we are presenting, put them in just so that we know and we can be aware of it. But for now, Eric, can you take us to the next slide? Thanks so much. So I think Winston covered this, that teachers can fear disclosing their disability status. Just to put a little bit of a statistic on it, they did a study in London that 35 percent of teachers with autism never disclose their disability status to, oh, anyone in their school. And of those that did disclose at all, many chose only one or two trusted individuals. And one can perhaps guess that this in part relates to the concerns that Winston shared. Next slide please.

And here is the part where we start to talk about, more excitingly than the challenges, the secrets to success. How do we address some of this so that we have more wonderful educators with disabilities and grab more of this incredible talent pool? [crosstalk]

>> Sheryl Burgstahler: I'm going to focus on the institutional role in this. We've talked about more about accommodations, which we certainly need to do reactively when we have a person with disability as a teacher in a classroom, but what can the institution do? What can they do to make their schools more inclusive of educators with disabilities, but then also students with disabilities probably benefit as well?

So on the next slide we can see a perfect example of this in Universal Design -- applied broadly. You may not think about it as that, but on the screen right now I have a picture, it's out of the front page of The Daily, the University of Washington Student newspaper. It was in 1970, long time ago. There's a young man walking -- he's rolling in a wheelchair, a bunch of people around him look like students too walking around. But what on the back of his wheelchair is a sign, and I imagine him shouting, because all the letters are in capitals. "Ramp the curbs, get me off the street." Back in 1970, that was a very controversial thing on our campuses -- post-secondary campuses and K-12 schools as well. People would say, "well how many people with wheelchairs do we even have at this institution?" Well it didn't matter really, did it? We just need to make sure that what we build is accessible to everyone. And we all know that curb cuts in sidewalks are now best practice in sidewalk design. That's what we'd like to do in terms of education, and the systems and physical places that educators develop, so the common way of building things is accessible. And thinking about accessibility in everything we do.

So on the next slide I have a really quick summary of what we need in Universal Design. What I have here is a slide that got modified a little bit, but I'll correct that. Three sets of principles that underpin Universal Design that give us guidance for all aspects of education. Some of you may have heard the Universal Design for Learning -- there are three principles that help us design pedagogy for students with disabilities. But two other Universal Design principles are really important as well. There are seven of them that go with that definition that we heard about earlier of Universal Design. They can give us guidelines -- guidance on how to design a classroom, physical space, a computer lab, a science lab, and so forth. So we need that as well, besides the pedagogy. And there's a third set that are also extremely important, because they're -- they define the Universal Design of Technology. And with online learning and even when it's hybrid, we all know that online tools need to be accessible as well. Those four principles are those that underpin the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, a complicated set of guidelines for someone developing a website or software or whatever, so it's very technical. And so really in this image, Universal Design should be the whole circle around these two other circles, because it encompasses all types of Universal Design. And then the Universal Design for Learning and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines provide some specificity in those two areas of applications.

The next slide simplifies all this. In my version of what this says, if you apply all those principles in your educational system, you will find that in a nutshell, you'll provide multiple ways -- different ways for people to learn, to demonstrate what they learn, and to engage. An example of learning -- maybe we have something in writing like something on a website to teach a concept, but then we have some images to teach that concept. Maybe we have a video to teach that same concept. And that would be multiple ways for students to learn, so it increases the chance they will learn by applying multiple ways. And for some students with disabilities, they'll really have a preference -- a clear preference for how they can learn. But the second item here should not be ignored, and that is to really apply Universal Design, you have to ensure that the technologies, that the facilities, that the services, the resources, and the strategies are accessible to individuals with a wide variety of disabilities. So don't forget that second one.

On the next slide, we can see that -- what I have here has been kind of a image of the top level of a handout that we actually created through the DO-IT project called Access Advance, and that is actually how to make sure that the environments and departments and institutions of higher education are more accessible and inclusive of faculty with disabilities. Here today we're focusing more on K-12, so I've specifically -- I'm going to show you some of the things that are included in this checklist. One of the reasons I want to show these is that a lot of this stuff isn't hard to do. It's just a matter of thinking about it.

So if you go to the next slide, kind of look at the policies and evaluation in your school, and ensure that diversity, including disability, that's already mentioned, let's make sure disability is a diversity issue -- issues are addressed in all policies and evaluation. Everything you're doing. And so our -- here are examples. Are new hires told of your workplace accommodation process? We have people that complain particularly in higher education because they don't even know they can get accommodations. They think about it in terms of students, not faculty and teachers. Are people with diverse characteristics, including disabilities, engaged or encouraged to engage in planning and advisory committees? Do policies and procedures require that accessibility to be considered in the design development and procurement process? For example, when you're designing a brand new add-on to your building, do you have accessibility specialist or someone to come in and make sure that that's going to be accessible? What about your IT purchases? You know, are you thinking about accessibility, the software that you purchase and so forth. And again, some of the pedagogy that's used in the classroom. Are disability related access issues addressed in internal and external evaluations of the school? There are many different agencies that evaluate programs, but rarely in my experience do they include accessibility as one criteria.

So moving on to the next slide, we can look at things that impact the culture of a classroom. Just how comfortable do students feel in your classroom if you want to look at that. So do schools -- do school diversity equity and inclusion initiatives, any of these very specific initiatives, address issues relevant to employees with disabilities? Those issues often in a DEI program may include racial ethnic minorities and women, but not even include racial ethnic minorities who have disabilities. And so there's the standalone issue the disability should be considered a diversity issue, but it should certainly be a subset in all of these other efforts. Do you include disability issues on climate and other surveys of employees, and compare results of people with disabilities to those of others? So are we gathering information about how well our schools are doing from our communities -- parent surveys for example -- are we including accessibility issues in there as well?

On the next slide, we can look at physical environments. Ensure that the physical access, comfort, and safety within an environment is welcoming to people with a variety of abilities. Are all levels of a facility or facilities connected via wheelchair accessible routes? Have you thought about that? Sometimes there are ramps in a certain part of the building and not in others, and you can't -- get to the ramps because the other part isn't accessible. Are these routes easy to find? There you look at signage. Do all commonly used exterior and restroom doors have sensors or buttons for automatic opening -- all your important doors. You may not be able to afford every door in your building, but what about a few big ones: the restroom and the main entrance and so forth. Are there ample high contrast large print directional signs? Sometimes we've seen signage is really small and it's nice and pretty because it has a pink background and red letters. Now that's a little extreme, but they're not really designed thinking of people who have visual impairments in mind, and they'll benefit other people as well. And appropriate signage like a particular instrument or something in a computer lab -- does it have Braille signage as well? I have seen Braille signage in one location where it had it on above the door. [chuckles] That's not so useful, but there are appropriate places to put signage. Do elevators have auditory and visual signals and controls accessible for a seated position? Are wheelchair accessible restrooms and well-marked signs available? Sometimes you have an accessible location to go through to enter a facility or a room, but you don't put the signage up close enough -- or back far enough that a person in a wheelchair would know that. So are adjustable height tables, ergonomic chairs, and adequate adjustable light available? When we think about adjustable height tables, what I recommend at our institution is every lab we have, whatever type it is, we have one adjustable table. Even in classrooms, one of our campuses has one adjustable height table. Why is that so important? Well, wheelchair users, often their wheelchair plus themselves, they're too high to go under standard height tables. And they -- the controls should be available to them.

On the next slide we move on to support services. Make sure the support staff are prepared to work with everyone, including those with disabilities. What about out on the playground? Those monitors -- playground monitors, if they're not teachers already -- are they kind of get some instruction on how to work with students with disabilities who are out in the playground? Do staff members know how to respond to requests for disability related accommodations? And the answer is not, "well, I don't know," the answer can be "tell me more what you need and I'll check on that." Get back to that person. Are staff with -- familiar with the availability of alternative document formats? I guess the first thing is do you provide them, and how do you get them? Some teachers might need Braille, They might need large print. And many times that can be using electronic resources, but then the question is are those electronic resources flexible enough to provide access for them? So are staff aware of issues related to communicating with -- communicating with individuals with disabilities? Part of just general training for faculty or teachers in a school -- it doesn't have to be just all about disability, but proper communication between colleagues and between students and staff and between staff and employee -- I mean parents. Are staff responsible for designing and developing websites knowledgeable -- about accessible design? So making sure that those websites that we have -- you might think, well we don't really have any students with disabilities would need that accessibility. How do you know? What about the parents of those children? And so for all of our websites should be accessible. And also our staff, not just for the students. On the last slide here in this area, Information Resources and Technology. I've already mentioned that a bit here, but this sort of underlines what I'm saying. Make sure that important meetings are captioned, recorded, and shared for those who cannot attend or wish to watch them at a later time. Like a meeting like this in your school -- do you think of recording that? One of your teachers might need to look at it again, they might not be at school that day, it'll benefit other people as well as that one -- person that you might be thinking of. Do web pages adhere to the accessibility standards? Remember that, the Web Content Accessibility standards, you know, so look for that. Do key publications and websites include a statement with procedures for requesting disability related accommodations? Is it -- when there's going to be event or something, so as a teacher or a parent or anybody else is joining in would know just by the statement that you are welcome here, because we're telling you where to get an accommodation. Do policy -- policies and procedures require that accessibility be considered in the development of procurement processes? We mentioned that earlier, but so we need to think about procurement, and if we're considering accessibility.

So on the next slide, I give a little short description of how I view Universal Design. I think it's an attitude -- the attitude that whatever you're doing, you think about not just the average person who might participate, the average teacher, but the broad range of teachers that may show up. A goal that we'll probably never reach -- a process that we think about how we can make things more accessible, it values DEI, it promotes best practice, it is not about lowering standards for that teacher. Absolutely not. Best practices for supporting our employees as you look at. It's proactive. It can be implemented incrementally -- that should have some of you saying, oh, you know, great, you don't have to do all this stuff. Do one thing, you know, get started. If we all did one thing, we'd be further along. Benefits everyone, or that's the goal anyway. And it minimizes the need for accommodations in our program today. That would -- be for teachers and other educators who have disability, that they won't have to ask for so many accommodations. Some people will say, "well I don't mind giving accommodations." Well -- but I say, well, how would you like it if -- if you want to use the restroom you had to go to a special place, and if you wanted to do whatever you want to do, you have to ask for specific or you have to get something specific and it might show up the next day. So we want to make things born accessible.

>> Matan Koch: Great. So in a moment we're going to take our last chunk of time here so that each of you can tell a quick personal sort of success story, but what I wanted to do -- there was a question put in about how to implement short-term solutions when you don't have long-term solutions. I think what I'm going to suggest in response to that is that there are a number of solutions on the RespectAbility website, and I'm guessing, Sheryl, that there are probably also solutions that people can find on some of the websites that you've directed them to in your presentation, both that are short-term and long term so --

>> Sheryl Burgstahler: Yes.

>> Matan Koch: So I think we'll answer this question by referring you to the resources. And Winston, Nicole, not to give a detailed answer right now, but if you have any resources you recommend for the question that was posed --

>> Winston Sakurai: I think you have to look at your entire facilities plan, right, and every space that's available and accessible to you to use to provide this either accommodation or to change things up needs to be taken into account. Because really, what you're trying to do is provide for access to those who might not be able to access certain areas. So yeah, on a school campus you have to look at every single facility that you have, and try to make a judgment call of what's going to be best to meet this need.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you.

>> Nicole Homerin: Yeah, and I think, you know, sometimes you just have to really be willing to get creative. I was talking to a partner recently who signed a 10-year lease on a building with no elevator. And so right, they, like, they can't get out of this lease, but what are they going to do? So sometimes you just have to, you know, tap into creative solutions, get if you're -- sometimes a lot of college campuses will work with students in engineering departments. When I was at Boston College we had that where they -- the students actually create creative solutions for accessibility for the school that was inaccessible. So tap into resources like that, young people who have creative minds who, you know, are willing to do all these cool projects for you and just kind of get creative with it.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you everyone. So now, just a few minutes for each of you to share whatever part of your story you feel that you've not yet shared. Each of you has seen success in education, success with educators, and came today prepared to share briefly. And who would like to go first? We didn't actually pick an order, which is an oversight -- okay.

>> Sheryl Burgstahler: I'll go first! I don't have a disability. I've been an educator all my life, I don't personally have a disability, but my first husband did. He was a wheelchair user. The reason he was a wheelchair user is. because he had heavy doses of radiation for Hodgkin's Disease lymphoma, which was very deadly back then -- and they penetrated his spine and basically burned his spine. So he was learning to become a very good wheelchair user. We were actually students here at the University of Washington many many years ago, but it was before there was a disability services office. And what we learned from that -- was, and it was in a day where you, the person with a disability, is like all on you. There weren't people like in this presentation today that thought it was also the part of the institution as well. And so I would -- he would refer to me as the runner, we were both students here, and so he'd figure out what classes he wanted to take, and I'd run around, see if he could get in them. And if he couldn't, then he'd find another class to take. It wasn't something we'd ever get help with. We had -- he would decided to major in accounting. Why? Because he thought there wouldn't be very many barriers to -- to an accountant who sits down all the time, so he didn't want to have extra barriers erected. And he even took a class that was in the business school. They had an elevator in the library, so that was great. But the library opened half an hour after the first classes of the day, and so they had a volunteer that would -- would supposed to open that door for him to get in there later in the elevator and go up to the the classroom. And so that person was a volunteer, so as a lot of volunteers, they showed up maybe three-fourths of the time, but missing a quarter of your classes, the -- the first half, was certainly not the best way to learn something. And so anyway, so you know, time -- there's still a lot of things like that in physical spaces, but we've made great progress in being more aware of those. And now we have other issues as well, different types of disabilities, and so I was glad to see there's more attention in all of those areas.

>> Matan Koch: Okay, and just looking at the order on my screen, and because we only have a few minutes, Winston, can you give us your quick success story moment?

>> Winston Sakurai: Yeah, I think -- so I shared a little bit about -- where I came from, and it was a different time. But as an administrator, one of my great privileges is being able to talk to families. And we did have a prospective student coming to our school, and the reason why is because they had heard that we were doing some things that were helping students. And this mom was very frustrated because she couldn't figure out what was going on with her fifth grader. And after talking with the child for a little bit, I said you know, have you ever thought of getting your child tested and diagnosed? And she had never thought of that. So she went through the whole process, and come to find out that the child had severe dyslexia. And couldn't read, couldn't write, but very brilliant child. That child eventually graduated from our high school and was able to take AP courses, go off to Landmark College. But I think what happened was that Mom was so inspired by what we could do as a school, she became the president of our Hawaii dyslexia branch, and actually took a lot of training to other schools. And so that multiplicative effect of one person, you know, that did something really small, I think, on my part had it affect our entire State, because now we had a parent that was an advocate, that understood the needs of her child, and was able to bring those resources to other schools. And so I'm very proud of that family. They're doing wonderful. And I would hope that, you know, as we share our stories, that more people will be willing to help others be successful in life.

>> Matan Koch: Great, and of course, you have that insight in part because of your own experiences you shared earlier. Nicole, bringing us in to finish out our stories.

>> Nicole Homerin: Yeah. So as I mentioned before, I really wasn't open with my kind of history of disability for most of my teaching career. I just didn't really know that I could be. So I was born with a congenital heart defect, and you know, it affects me in various ways, but I really never talked about it. And it was really only until I started opening up about teacher mental health, like during the pandemic, that I started really talking about, like, not only that disability but my history with all different kinds of mental health challenges and anxiety. And I now do, like, guest lectures and trainings for pre-service teachers around the country on not only teacher mental health, but also supporting your students. And I think just seeing how how we're changing the conversation in still a very, you know, stigmatized world about this. But you know, as Winston kind of pointed out throughout this, like, growing the kindness and compassion in the education world, and just kind of opening up the world to see that, like, you know, it's okay for our students to be -- have different challenges. It's okay for us educators to have different challenges. And the more that we talk about that, the more kind of compassion we can have towards one another. And so that you know, when we approach each other it's not, like, assuming that you're being, I don't know, mean to me or, like, presumptive but, like, maybe you just had a bad day, or you're really anxious about something, or you know, something happened and that we can just approach one another with a different lens, so that's been really rewarding.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic and if we could go to the next slide, Eric, because we gotta close up. I just want to point out that while each person has spoken from their personal experience, these are not unicorns. These are not rare. This is putting a face to the value that educators with disabilities bring every day, and that educators with disabilities could bring to your school, your institution, the place where you are involved in. So we hope that you will embrace some of the practices to get there, because really, not only is it a good employment practice, but you will be delivering better education because of it. Next slide Eric.

I want to again call out that Nicole will be receiving our award, and come to the gala. I think you can all probably already see why Nicole is receiving our Bartlett Award, just given what she shared with us today. But we are very proud of Nicole as an educator, as an alumna of our Fellowship, and yeah, all good things to say. The link for tickets was earlier in the presentation. Next slide please.

And so this brings us to our end. We don't really have time for separate questions, but hopefully you would've put them in the Q&A box if you were experiencing. I want to take a moment again to really thank our panelists for all the pre-work you put in, for all of the wonderful presenting you did here today, and for really taking a moment to convey the value of your experience and your know-how, so that we can indeed access disability talent to not only fill the gaping shortage, but to bring that fuller and that better educational experience to our students. Want to remind everyone that two weeks from today at this same time, we have the third and last webinar in our series: Employing Veterans with Disabilities. And I hope that I will see you all there, and have a nice day.