

Transcript of 'Spirit of Belonging' by Roots of Inclusion:

- [Narrator] When people in the US talk about accessibility, one of the first things we might think of is the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA.

In the world of education, it might be the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA

Both of these laws were created to guarantee that disabled children and adults have the same freedom to participate in our communities as people without disabilities in public life, at work, and in school.

It's a big job with guidelines to make sure it all gets done correctly. The guidelines are usually the parts of disability rights law that people are most familiar with.

A lot of guidelines, so many guidelines that it can be easy to get lost in the letter of the law. And in schools, between IEPs, FAPE, LRE, and more, there are a lot of letters.

But education access is more than acronyms. And while checklists are important and useful, accessibility is fluid, its meaning changing and responsive to our needs and the needs of the people we work with. We give access life when we practice it.

The ADA and the IDEA provide a baseline for what that access includes and where it applies, in policies, in the built environment, in assistive technology, and in the curriculum itself.

We comply with these federal laws, not because they're a gold standard, but because they're the bare minimum of what's required to not violate someone's civil rights.

Making school accessible to students isn't extra, it's foundational.

We all have needs, and we all receive support. Accommodations only become special when we devalue the people who need them.

When we do the work of including everyone from the beginning, we stop viewing inclusion as extra work for later.

The universal human desire to belong is why so many people, with and without disabilities, fought to create laws like the ADA and the IDEA in the first place.

Once you understand that the true spirit of the law is belonging, it's a lot easier to understand all those letters and how they provide just the foundation for an even better world.

Connect with us at www.RootsofInclusion.org.

END OF TRANSCRIPT