Making Proms Inclusive

Making Proms Inclusive to people regardless of Race, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, or Disability

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What is Prom

- Formal High School Dance
- Typically Juniors or Seniors
- Proms are generally towards the end of the school year
Why Make Proms Inclusive

- Promotes Diversity
- Allows Tolerance
- Allows the entire class to dance together
- It is a fun way to celebrate being the class of the year WXYZ
Stephen first learned about Prom from an electronics Schematic, but knew nothing About dances! At the time his only definition of the word prom was “Programmable Read-Only Memory!”
Stephen’s Prom Experience

- More of a Learning Experience than a date
- School had to find someone for me to go with due to the fact I wasn’t dating anyone.
- TA had to drive me as I didn’t have a car or my license yet
- TA and speech pathologist and my mom had to prepare me and teach me the steps.
- Learned to dance in the special education office in the back of the library!

Luckily my prom was inclusive!
Sadly Segregated Proms are a still a Very Sad Reality

- School Policies and barriers to special Ed students attending
- Separate proms for people with disabilities
- Exclusion
- Racial Segregation in some schools
- Tim Tebow Foundation’s proms for the disabled
- And More
"We're embarrassed, it's embarrassing, yeah it's kind of embarrassing," Stephanie Sinnott, Mareshia Rucker, Quanesha Wallace, and Keela Bloodworth told WSFA. "We are all friends, that's just kind of not right that we can't go to prom together."
WILCOX COUNTY INTEGRATED PROM

Class of 2013
In the Beginning...

- Wilcox County, GA has hosted racial segregated proms or “private parties” every since the school was established in the 60s.

- Wilcox County High School had its first interracial homecoming court during these seniors last year as well. The Queen was black and the King was white. They unfortunately were not allowed to take pictures together for the yearbook.

- In 2013 a group of high school seniors decided to break tradition, led by a young lady by the name of Mareshia Rucker, who’d had enough of injustice.

- Rucker got together classmates and they created a prom committee for Wilcox County’s very first Integrated Prom.
Both Sides of the Track...

The Pros

- After creating a Facebook page just for the senior to keep track of their duties, they got a message from someone stating that their story was going to go viral
- They got donations from all over the world, and people volunteered from everywhere to help

The Cons

- School changed for the integrated prom students. Teachers tried failing them and classmates were treating them differently
- Some committee members received death threats
- There was also talk of riots
After receiving worldwide attention, the Integrated Prom went off without a hitch. It was a very long and hard process to go through for the students and especially for Ms. Rucker. Their lives had impacted those of others and touched people all over the globe. They proved that love has no color.
Other Examples of Prom Discrimination from the Media

- Charleston High School in Mississippi having Segregated Proms until Morgan Freeman Shows Up to stop it (shown in the film Prom Night in Mississippi).

- Constance McMillen and LGBTQ discrimination in 2010 Prom Night in Mississippi.
Examples of Non-Inclusive Proms

- City Wide ‘Special Proms’
- Tim Tebow Foundation
  - A Night to Shine
‘A Prom to Remember’

- High school student in Mason, OH received $1000 grant to hold a “Special Prom”

- No students with disabilities were asked to share about their experience or interest in attending the event

- Brings light to the ‘feel good’ stories that are misrepresenting inclusion.

- Video
So how can we put an end to these discrimination policies?
Prom and School Dance Organizers should be contractually required to do the following:

- Implement **non-discriminatory admission policies**
- **Comply with ALL civil and disability rights laws**
- **Invite ALL students of the grade level the dance is for**
- Pick an **accessible venue** for the dance to be held
- **Provide any disability accommodations special education students need to attend**
- If catering is being provided, menus or snacks for those students with special dietary needs should be offered.
Let’s Start with a Sample Inclusive Prom Policy

- Schools should implement a policy that **prohibits denying admission to any dance** or **disallows the sale of a dance ticket based** on one’s:

  - Gender
  - Race
  - Color
  - Religion
  - Ethnicity
  - Country of Origin
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Gender Identity
  - Socioeconomic Status
  - Disability
  - Special Education (IEP/504) Status
What about Privately Sponsored, School Affiliated Proms?

Sometimes the school’s dances may be privately operated and/or sponsored by an outside group, such as:

- Parents Private Funding
- School PTA
- School Student Government Organization
- Booster Club
- Student Club
- Non-school Sponsoring Organization
- Local Businesses
- And other groups

Well these should be inclusive too!
Non-School Operated Proms

Require the sponsoring organization hosting the dance or prom to sign a **non-discrimination policy agreement** in order to be able to:

- Use the School’s **name, logo, slogan, or mascot** in their advertising
- **Sell Tickets on school or school district property**
- Advertise or promote the dance on school property, including but not limited to the following ways:
  - school’s or school district’s website, social media accounts, or any district owned or operated site online
  - Display banners, flyers, or bulletin board advertising the dance in the schools hallways, common areas, cafeteria, gym, offices, or classrooms, or other facility.
  - The School or school district’s social media accounts
  - Any school owned or school sponsored publications
  - Distribute Advertising flyers on campus to children
- **Use any school, PTA, or school organization funds** for the dance
- **Use any school or district owned facility for the dance**
Accessible Prom Venue

- Meet ALL ADA Guidelines
- All areas should be accessible, including but not limited to:
  - Dance Floor
  - Stage
  - Tables
  - DJ Booth
  - Food & Beverage Areas
  - Check-in Area
  - Parking Lot
  - Path from Parking Lot to Entrance to Dance Area
  - Elevator (if prom is being held above the first floor)
  - Restrooms
Making your non-discrimination policy harder to circumvent!

- Register school names with US Patent and Trademark office
- Register school logos with US copyright office and/or US Patent and Trademark office
- This makes them enforceable against unauthorized usage.
Prom Ideas to reduce costs for Students of Low Socioeconomic Status

- Dress/Tuxedo Donations
- Sliding Scale Ticket Prices using Free/reduced lunch criteria
- Pick a less expensive venue when organizing
- Seek donations for prom dinners at local restaurants
- Carpooling Together and sharing the cost
Make sure Prom Gets Promoted to Special Ed Students in Addition to Regular Ed Students!

- If SPED classes are on different wings of the school, make sure it is promoted to those rooms.
- You may need to make sure these students can read the banners in the halls.
- Provide support to students who need more help learning about or preparing for prom.
Inclusive Dance Music

- Follow school policy regarding:
  - Parental Advisory labels
  - Explicit Lyrics
  - Controversial songs

- Music played should not be offensive toward any culture at the school

- It is appropriate to play songs from different genres / eras
Inclusive Dance Lighting

- Use of colored lights is acceptable
- If persons with epilepsy are attending:
  - Reduce the use of flashing lights for part of dance if needed
  - Use flash or lighting patterns that do not trigger seizures
  - Use no-flash or minimal flash lighting in severe cases
Inclusive Catering Ideas

Provide meals and/or snacks to accommodate students who have special dietary needs, such as:

- Vegetarian / Vegan
- Gluten Free
- Peanut Free
- Pork Free
- Low Fat
- Kosher
- Etc
Sensory Friendly Ideas

- Have part of dance floor not directly in front of speakers sound path
- Space tables for sitting down a tad bit further away where one can hear to go if needed
Prom Preparation For Beginners

- Getting a Prom Date
- Learning to Dance
- Getting the right Clothes
- Planning the Night
- Going to Dinner (optional)
- Dance The Night Away
- After Prom Party (optional)
Think Like a “Social Beginner”

- Persons with **autism aren’t social vicarious learners**
- It can take **more concentration** for persons with some disabilities to learn social activities
- If **one knows the skills for one activity**, it is **not safe to assume they know another Activity**
- Learning **step-by-step is a good teaching method**
- Persons with autism tend to **take words and directions literally**
Preparing Beginners for Prom

- Finding a Date
- Building Relationships / Mingle if a person doesn’t have a BF / GF relationship
- Prom Preparation
- Colors
- Boutonniere / Corsage
- Dance Lesson
- Prom Etiquette Lesson
Dating and Disability
Common Barrier: Not being in a BF/GF Relationship

- Persons with disabilities are less likely to learn dating vicariously

- There can be others in the school who are stag or in need of a prom date
Romantic Life Skills

- How to get a boyfriend / girlfriend
- Differences from normal friend
- Exclusivity
- Mannerisms to express your desire for deeper relationship
- Intimacy Skills
- Sex Education
- Living Together and sharing a bedroom

Myth: Persons with special needs are asexual or don’t want romance

Fact: They may need support developing romantic relationships, Love, and sexuality
Persons with special needs may be far less versed than their typical peers on what happens “behind the scenes” when dating or romantic relationships form, such as:

- Evening and Late Night Hours
- In Public Together
- Long Talks on the Phone
- Weekends
- At Home
- Behind closed bedroom doors
- Private Times
Prom Mingle for Those Without Dates

- At least two months before school should provide a mingle session for students without a prom date.

- Getting a prom date can be harder for people with disabilities or people who struggle socially.
Suggestion: Have a “prom mingle for singles”

- Invite those without prom dates to a lunchtime or after school event

- Provide an opportunity for the singles to pick someone who they might like to go to prom with

- For those not in relationships, maybe advise asking a friend or see if there is someone in the school who also doesn’t have a date
Teach some prom date night Etiquette

- Holding Hands
- Staying Together
- Dancing Together
- Types of conversations people have while sitting at table
- Etc
Next Prom Preparation Lesson: Learning to Dance!
Dancing Skills

- Fast Dances
- Slow Dancing
- Swing Dance
- Common Dance Moves
- Dances to Specific Songs such as:
  - Y-M-C-A
  - Macaraina
  - Electric Slide
  - Music from specific cultures / events
  - etc
- Ballroom Dancing
- Modern Dance
- Partner Dances
- Group Dances
- Protocol for asking someone to dance with you or to find a partner
- Twirling and hand signals
- Partner cues / who is in control
Dance Practice

- Can be done in any school venue such as:
  - Classroom
  - Gymnasium
  - Dance Studio
  - Cafeteria
  - Stage Area

- Dance Music and Stereo/Boombox/PA system are recommended

- Visuals could include YouTube videos of common dance moves
Dance Practice: Fast Dance

- Have students find a partner or group
- Practice asking their partner to dance with them
- Rehearse Fast Dance Moves
- Practice cueing for a twirl
- Play Music
- Have students dance
- If asking someone to dance for the first time choose a fast dance
- Common fast dance music genres include rap, hip-hop, rock and roll, etc
A slow dance is more intimate and you move slower than the music.

- Have students find a different partner
- Practice asking their partner to dance
- Practice Slow Dance Moves
- Practicing holding someone tight
- Practice cueing for a twirl
- Play Music
- Have students dance to a slow song
- Let students know that you will often dance with your date on this one.
- Common slow dance music genres include love songs, ballads, and easy listening music
A Group dance is where the entire group does a specific set of moves for a particular song.

- Have students get into a group
- Ask students if they know some group dance songs
- Pick a common “group dance song” (e.g. “hokey pokey”, “electric slide”, “cha cha slide”, “Macarena”, “Y-M-C-A”, etc)
- Rehearse the moves and phases together
- Play Music
- Have students dance to the group dance song and practice again
- Repeat for other common group songs
Other Dance Etiquette Tips

- If you want to take a break from dancing or don’t know a specific song you can sit down and talk at a table.
- Always dance with your date during slow songs. If you are stag, it is a good idea to sit down.
- If you don’t know the moves to a specific group song, try to mimic the other dancers or leave the floor and come back when a different song comes on.
Basic Dining Etiquette

- Proper Use of Fork, Knife and Spoon
- Use of Napkin
- Things on the Table
- Talk to who you are dining
- Don’t spill or throw food
- Correct utensils for the food types
- Not spilling
- Chew with Mouth Closed
- Don’t reach across the Table
Formal Dining Etiquette

- Utensils in Out to In Order
- Multiple course meals
- Correct Utensils for the correct courses
- Quiet Voice when low light in room
- Toasting
- Small Talk Conversations
- No Cell Phone or Text usage during meals
- Wait for Host to start eating
- Ask to be excused before getting up
- Passing Dishes across Table
- Saying the Blessing
- Tipping
Dining Etiquette Lesson Idea: Formal Manners

- Extend the school lunch period one day (at least one hour, possibly using an assembly period)
- Ask children to dress up that day (optional)
- Set the table formal style using real silverware
- Have the cafeteria staff prepare their lunch in multiple courses
- Teach the children which utensils to use and practice some more advanced manners and have them pretend it is a nice restaurant.
Prom Fashion

- Formal vs Semi-Formal
- Themed Dress?
- Teach kids how to prepare
- Coordinating Colors
- Boutonniere / Corsage
Prom Transportation

For those that cannot drive, consider:
- Parent or Friend Drives / Picks Up
- Limo
- Uber / Lyft / Taxi
- Accessible Taxi
- Public Transportation
- Other
Make the Inclusive Prom Night Memorable!

- Prom is a great memory to celebrate the end of high school
- We can make diversity welcome during this experience

Make Segregation History and Implement 100% Inclusion Nationwide in Prom Night 2018 and Beyond Across the USA and around the world!
KIT Inclusive Prom Guide

How to Have an Inclusive Prom
A Guide for School Dance Organizers

http://www.tinyurl.com/kitinclusiveprom
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