

SAMUEL HABIB



“There’s sunlight streaming from his smile.” – ISAIAH HABIB

In the film, Dan Habib says, “Ever since Samuel was very young, I just couldn’t bear to see him left out of anything, since he so desperately wants to be in the middle of the action.” Much of this film centers on the effort by the Habib family—and the work of the staff at Beaver Meadow Elementary—to keep Samuel included in every aspect of their life and school.

But inclusion does not mean denying that a disability exists.

“We don’t try to hide the fact that Samuel is different from his brother, and his peers, in many ways,” Habib said. “But we finally figured out we have to live in the present, look at who he is as a

person, as Samuel. So that we can be his mom and dad.”

Samuel’s teacher, Barbara O’Brien, also understands that disability is part of a diverse society. “Inclusion is the best way for every child to learn,” she said.

It takes creativity to make inclusion work well. It takes aides who know when to support Samuel in the classroom, and when to simply let him be with the other kids. It takes therapists who are committed to integrating therapy into the classroom rhythm. And it takes a teacher like O’Brien, who is constantly thinking about how each student can be involved in every part of the day.

“Inclusion is the best way for every child to learn. I don’t think inclusion builds community. I think not having inclusion takes away community.” – BARBARA O’BRIEN



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ Samuel’s mother, Betsy, said she was “so afraid” when she found out Samuel had a disability. Why? Would you have similar or different feelings?
- ▶ Samuel’s father, Dan, wondered “how the world would see Samuel.” How did you see Samuel?
- ▶ What did you think when Isaiah said that because Samuel gets so much attention he sometimes feels like “you guys don’t care about me?”
- ▶ Why does Betsy hate the term “wheelchair bound?”
- ▶ What are your thoughts about taking students out of their regular classrooms to provide therapy? Consider Dan’s comment that “every time you pull a kid out of the classroom it reinforces that they are different somehow.” Is one goal of inclusion to reduce the perception of “different-ness?”
- ▶ What roles do various people play to make inclusion possible for Samuel? Talk about his teachers, therapists, aide, parents, sports coaches, extended family and friends, brother Isaiah and Samuel himself.
- ▶ Samuel’s teacher, Barbara O’Brien, said “the challenges of inclusion have forced me to be a better teacher.” What do you think she means by this?
- ▶ O’Brien says inclusion is the best way for all children to learn. Talk about why that might be true.