



THE NORA PROJECT
Building inclusive classrooms

Evaluation Report

2022-2023



Setting a New Standard in Education

A Letter from our Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

Disabled and nondisabled students confront a myriad of challenges in classrooms and learning spaces. Disability inclusive educational opportunities are limited, and misinformation about disability persists, resulting in the continued segregation of disabled students.

Education's most broadly used social-emotional learning programs were not designed to address this challenge. They fall short of delivering the content, information, and experiences necessary to build disability inclusive classrooms.

This is where The Nora Project comes in. We provide educators and students with programs that set a new standard in education, where disability is expected and valued in every classroom.

Disabled students have the right to find themselves included and reflected in accessible curricula and school environments. I joined The Nora Project as Executive Director this year to continue the organization's important work. I am pleased to share the following findings, which demonstrate our impact and progress toward the goal of building disability inclusive learning environments where everyone can thrive.

All the best,



Dr. Angela Adler



Executive Summary

Mission

The Nora Project (TNP) builds disability inclusive classrooms. We are a leading provider of PreK-12 disability inclusion-informed curricula and professional learning programs, designed for disabled and nondisabled learners to experience together in an inclusive setting. We aim to discredit ableist educational practices and school cultures, and to increase knowledge of disability identity and inclusion. In doing so, we positively impact classroom culture by building community and reducing conflicts.

Our Findings

TNP evaluates our programming on an annual basis. We survey teachers and students as they begin using their programs (for this report, in August/September 2022) and again at the end of the program (in May/June 2023).

This report covers key findings from the mixed methods evaluation for the 2022-2023 school year, which demonstrate the impact made by TNP programming.

Key Report Findings

1 TNP helps students understand disability. Last year, the number of TNP students who understood that disability is a form of diversity **quadrupled**.

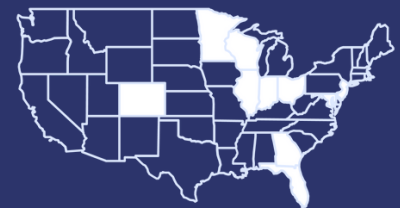
2 TNP increases empathy. Teachers reported that students' empathic interactions **doubled**.

3 TNP improves student understanding of inclusion. An overwhelming majority of students (**80%**) reported that they gained a deeper understanding of inclusion from TNP.

4 TNP helps educators build inclusive classrooms. TNP teachers reported that they have the **knowledge, strategies, and confidence** to make their classrooms more inclusive.

By the Numbers

The Nora Project is used in over **70** schools in **10** U.S. states and **2** additional countries (Canada and the UK)



Our programs have impacted over **6,500** students

Our growing suite of programs includes

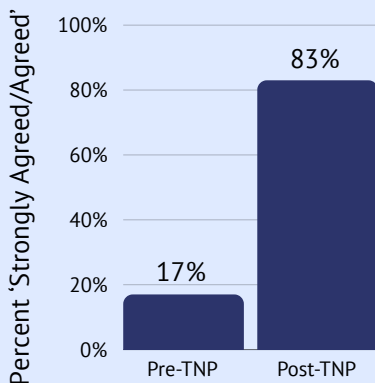
- **6** curricular units (60 lessons total)
- **4** professional learning modules
- **2** live-delivered virtual webinars

TNP Helps Students Understand Disability

Disability Awareness Findings

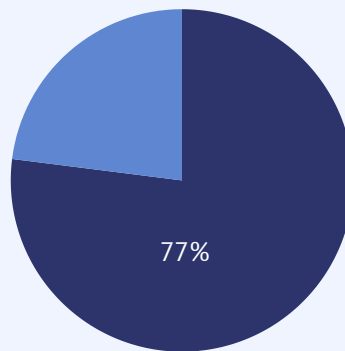
Students who use TNP programs in their classrooms learn about disability awareness, ableism, and disability history. These lessons succeed in increasing student and teacher disability awareness.

The total number of students who understand that disability is a form of diversity quadrupled.



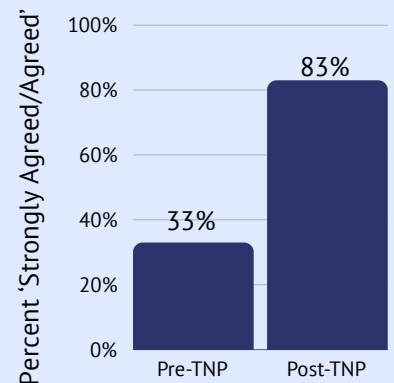
Teacher reports on students' understanding of disability as diversity

77% of students reported they could identify language that is ableist.



Students' self reported ability to identify ableist language

The number of students who understood the meaning of 'disability' more than doubled.



Teacher ratings on students' understanding of the word 'disability'

Testimonials

“There is no such thing as normal because everyone has their own stories, their own disabilities, their own health situations, and their own life. No two people are the same.”

– **Student, Grade 4, Maryland**

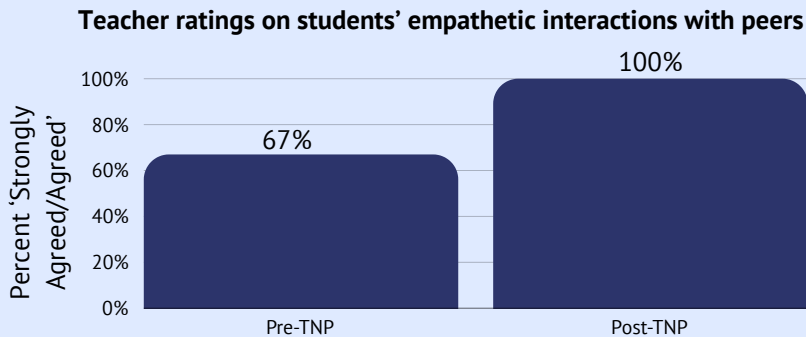
“The most important thing I have learned is that it is not up to me to determine one's identity or ability. The lessons on "Ableism" are truly impactful, as much for me as they are for my students.”

– **Christina Randall, Teacher, Gavin Central, Illinois**

TNP Increases Empathy

Empathy Findings

TNP lessons introduce and explore empathy, a key component to understanding disability as a form of diversity. Students and teachers reported that TNP programs increased empathy toward others, including an increase in affective empathy, which positively impacts classroom culture by decreasing bullying and improving friendships.



The number of teachers reporting that students had empathetic interactions with peers increased substantially (by 33%) after TNP programming.

- 62% of teachers reported a **reduction** in conflict between students.
- Students reported that they **made gains** in cognitive empathy (the ability to understand how a person feels and what they might be thinking) and prosocial motivation (the desire to protect and promote the well-being of others).
- Students reported that their affective empathy (the ability to feel for the emotional state of another person), **increased** by the end of the school year.

Testimonials

“It’s important for people to know each other’s stories because if you know where someone came from, the challenges they’ve faced, and how they got to where they are now, that helps you show a lot more empathy towards other people.”

- **Student, Grade 5, Maryland**

“Without [the students’] empathy skills, none of the projects would be possible. Being able to develop the ability to feel what others feel is critical, and being able to develop it in 4th grade is amazing. They carry those skills with them forever, so being able to set them up for success early is magical.”

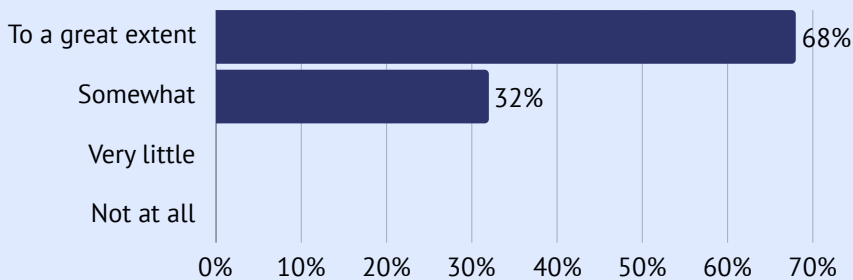
- **Kim Smith, Teacher, Congress Park Elementary School, Illinois**

TNP Improves Student Understanding of Inclusion

TNP lessons help students practice inclusion. Students learn each other's stories, embrace differences, and take action to make their school community more inclusive.

- **80%** of students reported they had a deeper understanding of the meaning of inclusion.
- **92%** of teachers reported that their students demonstrated an increase in accepting others.
- **77%** of teachers reported students including more of their peers in play at recess.

Teacher reports on the extent to which TNP helped build community



All TNP teachers reported that TNP helped build community in the classroom.

Testimonials

“I have thought of myself as more inclusive, and I have changed since I joined The Nora Project. I have learned about inclusivity and anti-ableism and deeply learned more about what they mean.”

- **Student, Grade 4, Illinois**

“Students were able to learn about inclusion from their peers, which was an amazing change in the school community.”

- **Samantha Kyme, Teacher, Nathan Hale Elementary School, Illinois**

“My students are able to more regularly identify and manage their feelings. Additionally, they are more accepting of the differences in their classmates and recognize them as part of diversity that should be celebrated. They show empathy for each other throughout the school day and solve problems they encounter using tools and strategies that TNP has equipped them with.”

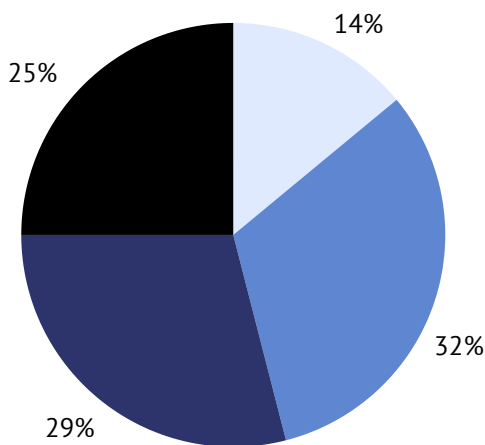
- **Jennifer Garza, Teacher, Joseph Sears Elementary School, Illinois**

TNP Helps Educators Build Inclusive Classrooms

Professional Learning Findings

Building inclusive classrooms starts with training educators through TNP’s professional learning courses. Professional learning focuses on disability awareness, ableism, disability history, and inclusion, as well as supporting teachers in their implementation of TNP curricula.

Teachers who implement TNP curricula were asked at the end of the school year to reflect on what they learned, either personally or professionally, as a result of implementing TNP.



Teachers’ responses reflected the following themes:

- Feeling more confidence in teaching TNP concepts
- Learning about ableism, disability awareness, and inclusion
- Putting student-centered learning into practice through TNP
- Realizing the importance of teaching TNP core concepts

Testimonials

“I have become a lot more aware of how ingrained exclusion vocabulary is in our everyday language and “norms” in society.”

- **Lindsey Fry, Teacher, Highland Middle School, Illinois**

“I learned about different ways to teach the students about including others. I also learned different ways to create a classroom community that is welcoming.”

- **Katherine Batzler, Teacher, Fulton Elementary School, Maryland**

“I learned to encourage students to problem-solve on their own and work together respectfully without a lot of guidance. It was challenging at times, and I could see them struggling, but it was awesome to see how they worked through their conflicts when they arose, and how they worked together to find solutions.”

- **Joey Fontanetta, Teacher, Congress Park Elementary School, Illinois**

Our Commitment to Accessibility and Inclusion

The Nora Project's commitment to accessibility and inclusion extends beyond the classroom and into the very fabric of our workplace culture and practices.

TNP employs 17 staff across the U.S. and U.K. Our fully remote team is composed of talented professionals across industries and of intersectional identities, including disability, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity.

TNP's dedication to accessibility and inclusion is reflected through our platform selections, hiring processes, and benefits, as well as our internal and external communications:

- **Meetings:** TNP hosts meetings on Zoom, due to the platform's robust accessibility features, such as closed captioning functionality. Team members engage in meetings in the manner most comfortable to them. Cameras are optional, and the chat function is used to pose and respond to questions. Additionally, recorded meetings allows team members to review conversations post-event.
- **Hiring:** TNP posts open positions on disability job forums and highly encourages disabled applicants and applicants with marginalized identities to apply. We recently updated our hiring processes to allow candidates to submit websites, documents, or video and audio files for their application instead of a standard resume and cover letter. TNP shares questions in advance of hiring interviews, and in the chat during interviews, for the candidate's preparation and reference.
- **Benefits:** TNP offers flexible PTO, which separates time off for leisure from time off for illness and safety. We have a comprehensive policy for illnesses and injuries of any duration. We also offer health, dental, and vision benefits for domestic partners and have eliminated the waiting period for coverage.
- **Branding and Design:** TNP's branding complies with WCAG Accessibility standards and all social media posts, website pages, and marketing assets are created with these standards in mind. Our marketing materials are screen-reader compatible, and we use image descriptions in our social media posts and choose colors that have contrast for readability.
- **Services:** TNP is in the process of ensuring all documents, including but not limited to lesson plans, worksheets, and posters, are screen reader compatible and follow text size, font, and color contrast standards. We also are in the process of adding ASL translation to our digitally delivered professional learning modules.