



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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To Whom This May Concern:

As North Carolina's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I would like to give my full endorsement of Voices Together, an organization serving public school students with exceptional needs in central North Carolina.

Students with exceptional needs struggle with language, socialization and emotional development, which directly impact their ability to learn. Across our state, the number of children with intellectual disabilities continues to increase and teachers are struggling to find new and innovative methods to support these students and help them gain critical functional skills they need in their classrooms and in their daily lives.

Voices Together is a dynamic best practice and offers unique tools for teaching critical skills to our students. It offers new ways for our teachers to teach and for our students to learn and spans all grade levels from Pre-kindergarten to high school. Through the development of the Teacher Toolbox, we expect to be able to make these strategies available more broadly to teachers and students. I support the partnership between Duke University and Voices Together in their efforts in evaluation and specifically the application for an IES grant to develop and evaluate this important project.

When I visited a Voices Together group, I saw students excited to connect with their peers and motivated to communicate. It was obvious that they were committed to interacting, learning and were gaining essential skills.

This program model should be in every classroom in North Carolina. The techniques and strategies directly align with The North Carolina Extended Core Standard Curriculum as well as some of the College- and Career-Readiness skills identified as needed by these students. The program and professional development for our teachers will give our students with exceptionalities the support in their ability to learn so that they can thrive in least restrictive environments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June St. Clair Atkinson".

June St. Clair Atkinson

JSA:mw

## OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

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