



ILC

A look into the Intensive Learning Center program

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The ILC isn't a place. The ILC is a bunch of places. The ILC is students coming together to serve coffee in the Student Center with smiles plastered across their faces. It's Unified basketball tournaments. And it's constant laughter, no matter what. The ILC is a safe haven in a school of 1800 students.

The acronym ILC stands for Intensive Learning Center, but it's more than just that. ILC stands for kindness and acceptance, a group of students and teachers caring and supporting each other. It stands for teamwork and encouragement, a diverse group of students working with teachers and administration to create an adaptive, accessible learning environment for all.

"Everyone has incredible qualities about them, and I want people to focus on the positive and what students can do rather than what they might not be able to do," special education teacher Jennifer Cohen said. "It's a program, not a placement. A student is not in ILC. They use ILC services to help them get support in other areas." At Monarch, the ILC creates a unique learning experience for students who access the program with classes, such as Unified P.E., Unified Theater, and job opportunities in the school.

There are actually two sides to the ILC programs. One side works with students on the autism spectrum. "The other side of the program has students with multiple disabilities, such as cognitive or physical, and everything in between," Ms. Cohen said.

MOHI Perk, an ILC student-run coffee shop located in the Student Center, is an opportunity to gain skills through interaction and real world experiences. This work space allows the students to develop better

communication skills and practice good work ethic. ILC students have, relatively, the same schedule as their peers. "Their schedule depends on what they're interested in. It also depends on what they're working on. Sometimes they have additional support, sometimes they don't," Ms. Cohen said.

This program has a multitude of supporters including, the school administration. "[Principal Neil] Anderson has probably been the biggest supporter of making MOHI Perk happen and making sure that we went through the right hoops and that he spoke to the right people and made sure we had the right materials," Ms. Cohen explained.

"Student mentors also help support the ILC program and work alongside [students] so that they [ILC students] can model what an appropriate social interaction looks like," said Ms. Cohen. Students can see "what appropriate things are in a natural setting and have conversations with students, rather than an adult constantly telling [them] what to do."

Without this program, students' needs would get lost in a sea of faces. Thankfully, Monarch does have the ILC, which paves a path of success for each and every one of its students. "I think that, with any department, it provides things that students need. If a student needs extra support to take notes, somebody will help them figure out how to do that. [...] We kind of help navigate students through a building of 1800 students where it's super overwhelming," Ms. Cohen said.

Not only is this department a safe place for students, but a place students learn, grow, and become amazing adults who are ready to take the world by storm.

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Unified PE

Block day field trips, Friday “Just Dance” contests, Ninja Warrior Battles and many more fun activities all go hand in hand with the Unified PE class here at Monarch. Students in the ILC program participate in a unified soccer tournament with other schools, and Jennifer Dixon has even “put on a bowling tournament in BVSD for Unified,” special education teacher Jennifer Cohen said.

The diverse activities make sure the class is never boring. “Sometimes we play dodgeball, which can be fun... we play floor hockey... [or] just get to walk around the gym,” Ryan Danekind ‘19 said.

When it is nice, students, walk the track, throw frisbees and play soccer. On some block days, the class even holds scavenger hunts in the mall.

This class brings joy to every single person involved, and nothing but smiles and laughs fill the gym every fifth period.

Breaking barriers

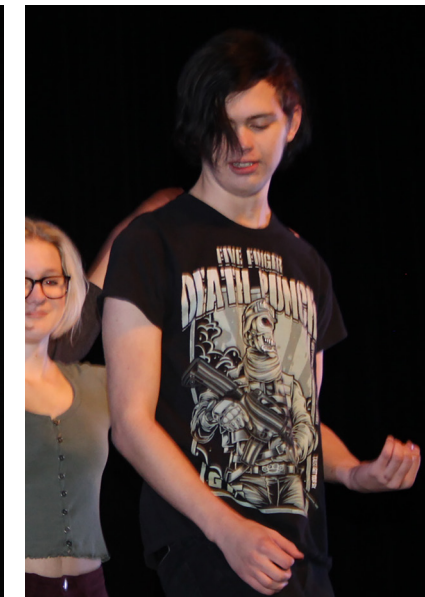
The ability to become a policeman, a baker, or a princess allows people to build a new world. “It’s just like Theater 2, but in a unified environment,” mentor Grateful Beckers ‘20 said. Advanced theater students mentor those who use the ILC program to create works of art.

Every student is an essential part of theater productions as each person is a unique character that adds something to the storyline. After all, you can’t perform Beauty and the Beast without the prince. When even one character is removed, the magic of a production falls to pieces.

The same is true of the people. Students who use the ILC program and those who don’t together fill the classroom with a cast of different personalities, contributing their unique verse.

Special Education teacher Ms. Jennifer Cohen and theater teacher Ms. Gwendolyn Lukas-Doctor co-teach the new class. “[It] incorporates a lot of peer support and peer mentors to work alongside, so that they can model what an appropriate social interaction looks like,” Ms. Cohen said.

The class breaks barriers between people by creating a unified class where everyone can learn from each other. “I enjoy it because I like the idea that theater is for everyone,” Beckers said. “It’s better to be in a world where you’re not afraid to be with people different than you.”



T H E A T E R

“I feel like I’m more aware from taking this class. I definitely feel more mindful of myself and even more empathic.”

-Grateful Beckers ‘20

M E N T O R

A growing program

For the first time in Coach Jennifer Dixon’s four years teaching Unified PE, there were enough mentors to have two semesters of this uplifting class.

“We had over 50 mentors sign up,” Dixon said.

These mentors’ jobs are to support and help lead these students everyday. They’ve created strong friendships and made unforgettable memories together.

“It’s not just us teaching them, they teach us so many new things everyday,” Isabelle Dugan ‘21 said, who’s been a part of the class since August. “My favorite part is the friendships you develop with them,” she said. “They’re just like everyone else. They simply just need a little extra help.”

For Noa Greene ‘21, it hits a little closer to home. “I live with a sister who has high functioning autism,” she said. “These kids are still teaching me so much about life every second I spend with them.” Being a part of the program since January has given Greene a new understanding for people with special needs and has allowed her to see a different side of a life that isn’t much different from her own sister’s.

“They [ILC students] teach you more than you could learn in a math class,” Amanda Dombek ‘21 said. “They teach you how to work with other people and how to be inclusive.”



All three girls said their sole mission is to destigmatize the idea that students in ILC are less capable than everyone else. “Being with them for the first five minutes in the class, I learned they can do just as much, and even above and beyond what other people can do,” Dombek said. “They have such a different perspective and take on life than everyone else does, it opens your eyes to a lot of things.”

These mentors are passionate about what they do. “Awareness and education are the first steps to building an inclusive community,” Greene said.



“I’m definitely a huge Broncos fan [so] I might work at the Broncos stadium. I’m gonna be a football ref one day... and I might even ref NFL.”

- Ryan Danekind ‘19



Real world skills

Monday to Friday, periods one to four, ILC students serve hot drinks in the Student Center while wearing their MOHI Perk Coffee t-shirts.

This is a program that gives students the opportunity to gain skills they can use in the real world. “A lot of students, when they leave here, are not college bound... but they’re going into the community. We want to provide skills that students can use in the community,” Ms. Jennifer Cohen said.

MOHI Perk allows students to interact with their peers, learn how to work in the coffee business and it even teaches them how to interview for future jobs. “The students actually wrote resumes and cover letters,” Ms. Cohen said. “They researched the positions, interviewed for the job and actually went through a training process.”

M O H I P E R K

Support MOHI Perk every day periods one through four in the student center!