

BEYOND DIFFERENCES®

Inspiring Youth to End Social Isolation

Beyond Differences was the first organization in the U.S. to identify social isolation as a public health crisis for youth.

What started with a handful of schools in Marin County, Beyond Differences today works with fully 25% of all middle and junior high schools in America – reaching millions of students.

Recognized by the U.S. Surgeon General, pediatricians, mental health practitioners, educators, and public policy experts, social isolation is a leading cause of depression, anxiety, adverse medical consequences, suicide ideation and potential community violence.

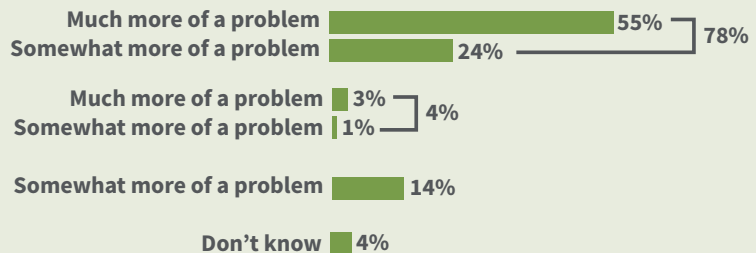
Beyond Differences was founded in the SF Bay Area in 2010, by Laura Talmus and Ace Smith following the death of their 15-year-old daughter, Lili Rachel Smith who was born with a rare cranial facial syndrome and faced social isolation challenges in middle school.

Not surprisingly, middle school is the ideal time to help children accept one another and go beyond differences. They use a student-led approach because children themselves are the best leaders to change the culture of their own middle school and help create cultures of belonging.

The pandemic has made everyone aware of how important connection is to our mental health and well-being.



More than three-quarters of voters think social isolation has become more of a problem for young people since the start of the pandemic



TEACHER'S CURRICULUM

Beyond Differences has designed and developed specialized curriculum that wraps around the school year and is based on the principles of Social Emotional Learning. The curriculum has been utilized in more than 8,500 schools in all 50 states around the country.

Each curriculum contains eight (8) teacher lesson plans, a student leadership unit about social isolation and promoting student activism, and instruction and supplies for planning and celebrating an in-school special event around each of the National Awareness Days led by students for their classmates. Key partnerships include the New York City Department of Education but the true growth has come from a grassroots network of teachers who need resources for their classrooms.

National Awareness Days

Know Your Classmates® Day



No One Eats Alone® Day



Be Kind Online® Day



Your school can celebrate all three and receive a free toolkit when you sign up!

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

A National Teen Board of high school students mentor younger middle school students on why social isolation matters and how to run the programs at their school. The Teen Board is also a pipeline for young middle schoolers to join when they enter high school themselves.

TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Professional development workshops and classes are offered for teachers, staff, administrators, and counselors to accompany the original curriculum as well as current challenges in the classroom

PARTNERSHIPS AND MEDIA ADVANCES

As the country becomes more aware of the dangers of social isolation, Beyond Differences is often turned to as an expert. From the U.S. Surgeon General's Office to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, dozens of companies and foundations as well as elected officials all recognize and respect Beyond Differences for its early vision and strong track record.



Beyond Differences is a responsible fiscal steward with a diverse 17-member national Board of Directors. It's 2021-2022 operating budget is \$2.1 million, and all materials and programs are available free of charge. With this small budget, Beyond Differences' impact is felt across the country and continually measured with data-driven and evidence-based science research.

For more information, please visit [Beyond Differences](https://www.beyond-differences.org).