

# Promoting Disability Awareness and Acceptance In Childhood

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## I. Introduction

What is the importance of promoting disability awareness and acceptance in schools?

Studies have found that many children with visible physical differences experience a cycle of negative peer interactions, which increases their risk for social discomfort, rejection, and potential adjustment problems throughout their lifespan (Harper & Peterson, 2001). These negative social experiences, along with any physical or cognitive barrier, might exclude these children from fully participating in their educational environment. Any student who actively participates in their school is more likely to experience positive, successful social interactions with students, teachers, and others (Simeonsson, et al., 2001). If we can teach children about disabilities at a young age, the hope is that they will be accepting of people who are different and encourage the participation of children with disabilities in an educational and social environment.

What are some general concepts to teach at each age?

3-5 Year Olds-Teach that while everybody is different, everyone has similarities too. We all have special things about us.

5-7 Year Olds-Help to make them aware of more specific issues and promote sensitivity to all people's differences. Teach them to think how they can help children with disabilities participate.

8-10 Year Olds-Teach them respect for people with disabilities.

10-13 Year Olds-Teach them how to be a good friend to people with disabilities.

\*It is important to remember that these are *general* concepts and are not strict guidelines as to what should be taught at each age. Several of these concepts overlap and could be taught to children of various ages. These are just some basic ideas to get you started depending on what age level you work most closely with.

## Can I really play a big role in helping children learn about different disabilities?

Yes! Although true social awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities may start in the home, the classroom is an excellent place to promote knowledge and understanding of people with special needs. The more *you* know and the more motivated *you* are, the more likely the children will want to learn about different disabilities. This is called professional empowerment. There are four main factors of knowledge/skills that help people attain professional empowerment.

**-Information**-Having access and knowing where to find pertinent information helps us to be in a better position and feel comfortable teaching children about different disabilities.

**-Communication skills**-Communications skills, both verbal and nonverbal, are extremely important when addressing new and different topics. Children learn by example and often follow our lead as adults. If they see us interacting with people with disabilities or helping a student with a certain task, they may be more apt to talk to or help the student themselves. Also, children will have a lot of questions regarding certain disabilities because they may be new to them. By having a general idea of how you would answer certain questions beforehand might help you to be able to better handle certain situations. People first language is also important. Remember to always say "person with a disability" instead of "disabled person."

**-Problem Solving**-This might be a challenging topic for some of us to teach because of the great deal of variability of disabilities and variability within each disability. By developing and implementing plans to find solutions for the students and by helping the students problem solve we can have a better understanding of how to teach children about different disabilities.

**-Life-management skills**-This refers to being sensitive to potentially stressful or embarrassing situations and knowing how to obtain support in these situations. A child who has seizures or bowel and bladder incontinence may be mortified if something related to this would happen in the classroom. It is important to be aware of each child's specific condition and know how to help them if the situation arises.

## How do I use this manual?

This manual was designed to provide simple, yet effective measures and resources to promote disability awareness and acceptance. The section on "simple things you can do to promote disability awareness in your classroom" is designed to provide basic suggestions for an educational environment in which children can participate in an accepting and nonjudgmental atmosphere.

The next section on games and physical activities is intended to provide games or activities that all children can participate in, no matter what skill level they are at. The aim of these activities is to provide children an opportunity to participate with their classmates with disabilities and to help them get involved in the activity.

The section on classroom activities provides different activities divided by age range in which you can have children participate in your classroom. They may be used as adjuncts to previously existing lesson plans or may be used by themselves. After the activity section there is a resource section that may be helpful in executing certain activities.

The last section consists of resources for your own educational needs. Refer to this section if you would like to know where to look to find out more information on specific disabilities. It also may help you find different activities or ideas beyond the scope of this manual.

## SAMPLE EVALUATION OF ACTIVITY

Below is a sample evaluation form that you can use both before and after an activity is implemented to assess whether or not you thought the activity was successful.

What are/were some key questions to promote discussion?

What would I do differently (or in addition to) what is suggested in the manual? What could I have done differently if I were to do this activity again?

What are some things to look for in the week following each activity? Some of these questions could include:

-Did I notice increased interaction among typically developing children and children with disabilities?

-Did I notice children with disabilities advocating for themselves?

-Did I notice children in my class teaching other children about disabilities?

## II. What can I do to promote disability awareness in my classroom?

- ❖ **Increase each child's self-determination.** Self-determination involves making decisions and choices, problem solving, setting goals, and self-advocacy.

Here are some easy things you can do to promote each child's self-determination:

- Offer as many opportunities as possible for making choices, setting goals, and self-advocacy. Ask students what they would like to accomplish on a regular basis.
- Everyday events provide excellent opportunities to encourage self-determination (i.e. selecting clothing, activities, food or deciding to use self-instruction in conversation).
- Self-determination related goals and objectives should be incorporated into the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and transition plans.
- Involve students in their educational planning and decision-making in order to build capacity for self-determination and skills for adult living

### The Importance of Self-Determination

Children with high levels of self-determination tend to:

- Have more opportunities to make choices
- Have a realistic understanding of their abilities and limitations
- Be better problem solvers
- Be able to assert themselves in an appropriate manner
- Feel they have control over what happens in their life
- Feel they have the skills and knowledge to achieve their goals

A lack of self-determination in children with disabilities has been related to preventing adequate integration into mainstream society.

- ❖ **Increase each child's self-esteem.** Here are some simple things you can teach children to increase their self esteem:
  - Teach them their body is their own, no matter what shape, size, or color it is
  - There are things about ourselves that we cannot change -such as skin color, shoe size, or if we use a walker - We should accept and love these things because they are part of who we are.
  - Have children remind themselves of things about themselves that are cool (i.e. I can go really fast in my wheelchair)
  - Teach children to stop any negative thoughts before they start
  - Have children give themselves three compliments every day
  
- ❖ **Promote similarities and common themes. Do not emphasize our differences.** Teach children that differences are normal but we all have a lot of similarities. By focusing on what we all have in common, we encourage children to come together and bond with each other over common interests. For example, we all like to have fun and laugh, no matter what differences we may possess from one another. Children with special needs are not really different, they just need extra help performing certain tasks.
  
- ❖ **Emphasize the positives of each individual.** While we all have a lot of similarities, we all also have different areas of strength. A child who might need the most time to process what he is reading may be the fastest runner in school. A child who uses a wheelchair to get around school may be fluent in both Spanish and English! Encourage friendships between children with typical development and children with disabilities. Children without disabilities can learn a lot just by talking to their friends with special needs and asking them questions.
  
- ❖ **Hold Parent-teacher meetings** (with or without the child present)
  - Ask parents to describe their child's personality and explain a little bit about their disability.



- Get "tips" from parents regarding what works at home, what are effective ways to best communicate with their child, different strategies they use, what time of day child works best.
- Make sure you are on same page with the child's parents. Ask them what their expectations are regarding their child's disability, social interactions, and the perceptions of their child's peers regarding their disability.
- Ask the parents if they would be interested in a communication book in which they write information as to if the child had a good morning or a difficult night, etc and the teacher could write a sentence or two regarding the child's performance in school that day (i.e. Was the child more tired than normal? Etc). The book could be transported with the child in their backpack.

❖ **Teach children how they can help a friend with a disability:**

- If some of your classmates are teasing your friend, you can help by telling them to stop or talking to a teacher
- Help friends or classmates who have physical needs by asking them if you can push their wheelchair or help them gather their school supplies. It is very important that you ask them first though, because they may not need as much help as you think!
- If a friend feels sad about their disability, give them your time and listen to their feelings and thoughts
- Most importantly, remember to treat your friend with special needs just like you would your other friends. Invite your friend to have pizza or go to the mall with you

### **III. What games or physical activities can I play with the children to increase participation of everyone involved?**

Because every child is different and every child has individual needs, it is important to make every effort to enable each child to participate at the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical level when playing games. There are five main themes that should be incorporated into every activity that the children play:

- ◇ Eliminate elimination
- ◇ Change the focus of the game from "Me first" to "We can"
- ◇ Reduce potential for any type of injury (including social, emotional, and physical)
- ◇ Everyone should be a winner!
- ◇ Have FUN!!!

#### **❖ Pre-school (3-4 year olds)**

##### **1) Islands**

###### *Purpose:*

The purpose of Islands is for all of the children to work together to solve a problem or obtain a difficult goal. The goal of this game is to try to get everyone on the islands when the music stops and to teach children how to share.

###### *What you need:*

- A source of music or sound (Clapping works too!)
- Islands made out of large pieces of paper, plastic hoops, rugs, large towels, or other materials that children can safely step and stand on without slipping.

###### *Directions:*

Children move among the islands. When the music (or sound) stops, all children find an island. Sharing an island with friends is great. If a child cannot step on the island, they can hold hands or touch someone else who is on the island already.

###### *Suggestions:*

- Islands can be made of different colors. For younger children you can ask all of the children to move to the red island, for example. Numbers or shapes can be used too.
- To make the game more challenging, you can ask the children to try to find a different island each time until they have found all the islands.

## 2) Balloons in the Air

### *Purpose:*

The purpose of Balloons in the Air is for the children to work together and help each other to keep all of the balloons in the air without touching the ground.

### *What you need:*

-A lot of colorful balloons at least 7-8 inches in diameter

### *Directions:*

Children try to keep the balloons from touching the floor.

### *Suggestions:*

- Young children can sit on the floor to play this game so they do not run into each other.
- Over-inflated balloons can break more easily, which may frighten young children

## 3) Cows and pigs

### *Purpose:*

The goal of this game is for all children making similar noises to find each other. It teaches children how to concentrate, make decisions, and distinguish between different auditory sounds.

### *What you need:*

No specific materials are needed for this game!

### *Directions:*

Whisper either "cow" or "pig" in each child's ear. The children then make the appropriate animal noise and try to find others making the same noise. Have the children continue to make the noises until everyone has found their similar animals.

### *Suggestions:*

- Make the sound of a pig or cow first, then have the children repeat this sound so everyone knows what sound to make.
- Have all the children move together first. Make the sound of a cow and have all children respond by going to a part of the room that is the "barn."
- Add different animals as the children grasp the concept of the game

#### 4) Robots

*Purpose:*

Children learn to listen, follow directions, and develop motor planning.

*What you need:*

No specific materials are needed for this game!

*Directions:*

Each child finds a partner. One partner tells the other partner (the robot) how to move in specific ways. They can use commands such as forward, backward, left, right, stop, go, etc.

*Suggestions:*

- This game can also be played as a group with the teacher telling the "robots" how to move.
- Obstacles can be placed in the way so children need to tell their partners how to get around the obstacles.

### ❖ **Early elementary (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grades)**

#### 1) Islands

*Purpose:*

The purpose of Islands is for all of the children to work together to solve a problem or obtain a difficult goal. The goal of this game is to try to get everyone on the islands when the music stops and to teach children how to share.

*What you need:*

- A source of music or sound (Clapping works too!)
- Islands made out of large pieces of paper, plastic hoops, rugs, large towels, or other materials that children can safely step and stand on without slipping.

*Directions:*

Children move among the islands. When the music (or sound) stops, all children find an island. Sharing an island with friends is great. If a child cannot step on the island, they can hold hands or touch someone else who is on the island already.

*Suggestions:*

- For older kids, you can use numbers as islands and ask them to move to an island on which the number is more than 4 or less than 4, etc.
- To make the game more challenging, you can ask the children to try to find a different island each time until they have found all the islands.

-To further challenge the children, one island can be removed each time and the children need to try to get on the remaining islands.

## 2) Balloons in the Air

### *Purpose:*

The purpose of Balloons in the Air is for the children to work together and help each other to keep all of the balloons in the air without touching the ground.

### *What you need:*

-A lot of colorful balloons at least 7-8 inches in diameter

### *Directions:*

Children try to keep the balloons from touching the floor.

### *Suggestions:*

-Children can be divided into two teams. Each team tries to keep up as many balloons as they can.

-Over-inflated balloons can break more easily, which may frighten young children

## 3) Blanket Ball

### *Purpose:*

The purpose of Blanket Ball is to have the children interact with each other and work together to solve common goals. There are several different ways that this game could be played.

### *What you need:*

-A plain sheet or some other light material that is large enough for everyone in the class to hold on to

-Objects for the middle such as a soft ball, rolled up socks, cardboard cutouts, etc.

### *Directions:*

Everyone holds onto the sheet with two hands (if possible). The sock or ball is placed into the center of the sheet. On the count of three, the children practice slowly lifting the sheet up and down. They can see how high in the air the ball can go and how many times they catch it on the sheet.

### *Suggestions:*

-This game can be played sitting or standing.

-A disk that has a different color on each side can be used and the children can try to guess which color will land upright.

-Objects could be labeled with letters, numbers, or colors

-Music can be added for extra fun. A lot of small objects could be on the sheet, and when the music stops, the children have to make sure all of the objects come to a rest on the sheet as quickly as possible!

#### 4) Cows and Pigs

*Purpose:*

The goal of this game is for all children making similar noises to find each other. It teaches children how to concentrate, make decisions, and distinguish between different auditory sounds.

*What you need:*

No specific materials are needed for this game!

*Directions:*

Whisper either "cow" or "pig" in each child's ear. The children then make the appropriate animal noise and try to find others making the same noise. Have the children continue to make the noises until everyone has found their similar animals.

*Suggestions:*

- Add different animals as the children grasp the concept of the game
- Have the children choose which animal they want to be. They can then make the sound and form groups on their own without being assigned ahead of time.

### ❖ **Later elementary and middle school (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grades)**

#### 1) Heads Up 7-Up

*Purpose:*

The purpose of this game is to guess which one of the people who are "it" put your thumb down.

*What you need:*

No specific materials are needed for this game!

*Directions:*

Depending on class size, pick 3-7 people to be "it." Then have everyone in the class put their head down on their desk and close their eyes...No peeking! Make sure everyone has their thumb in a "thumbs up" position on their desk. Next the people who are "it" go around and pick 1 person each and press down their thumb. Once everyone who is "it" has pressed down someone's thumb, everyone can then raise their head and open their eyes. The people whose thumbs were pressed down then guess which person pressed down their thumb. If they are correct, then they get to be "it" for the next round.

*Suggestions:*

-If the children do not have desks to put their heads down on, they may simply close their eyes. To involve another person in the game, someone could have the job of making sure everyone keeps his or her eyes closed.

## 2) Beach Volleyball

*Purpose:*

The purpose of this game is to work together with both teams to keep the ball up in the air as long as possible.

*What you need:*

A beach ball (non-latex) is needed for this game. Either a net or an imaginary line could be used as the dividing point.

*Directions:*

Divide the class into two teams on either side of the classroom, net, or imaginary line. Then one team starts with the beach ball. The object of the game is to see how many times each team can hit the ball back and forth before it hits the ground.

*Suggestions:*

-This game can be played sitting or standing, depending on preference, space, and class size.

-This game can also be played similar to regular volleyball and points can be scored each time a player hits a non-returnable ball to the other side.

-For older children, revisions can be made so that every child on each side has to hit the ball at least once before any points can be scored. This suggestion makes the game slightly competitive but makes sure that everyone becomes involved.

### 3) Two line relays

*Purpose:*

The purpose of this game is for each team to work together to accomplish a common goal.

*What you need:*

Everyone needs a spoon. One (or two if there are two lines) hard-boiled eggs.

*Directions:*

The class can form a single line or can be divided into two lines if there are enough people. If there are two lines, the lines should face each other. The team works together to move the egg on the spoons from the front of the line to the back of the line. If there are two teams, the first team who gets the egg to the back of the line without dropping it wins!

*Suggestions:*

- This game can be played sitting or standing.
- A foam ball can be used if there are no hard-boiled eggs available.
- Different versions of this game can be played. Just be creative! Some ideas include stringing a long piece of string through everyone's shirt sleeves, playing "telephone," or passing a medium size ball using only your elbows.



#### **IV. What are some classroom activities I can do to promote awareness?**

The following activities are divided by age range but this is just a general guideline. Several of the activities could be used with a couple different age groups. You know the children in your classroom best, so it is your choice which activities you think the children would benefit from the most. It might be helpful to have the children reflect on their experience after some of these activities. Examples of reflection could include a group discussion, a personal journal entry, a one-page paper, drawing a picture about what they learned, or a letter to Mom or Dad to talk about what they learned today. Resources for these activities are provided in the next section.

## 3-4 Year Olds

### Activities

- ❖ Picture books or stories that lead to a discussion
  - There are numerous children's books written about children with disabilities in order to promote disability awareness. Reading one of these books to the class is a great way to begin a lesson or topic on disabilities and will definitely raise questions and help initiate discussion. See the resource section for a list of books.
  
- ❖ Puppet show
  - The puppet show can be performed by teachers, parents, or volunteers as part of a learning opportunity for the children. Another option is to teach children about disabilities first and then have them create their own puppet show. Or the puppet show could be given first by the teachers to introduce a new topic and then left out for the children to play with during play time.
  - There is also a group who is dedicated to performing puppet shows specifically for disability awareness. Refer to the resource section to find out more information!
  
- ❖ Cooking activities for specific disabilities (CF, Diabetes, Lactose Intolerance)
  - This is a great opportunity for children to work together, learn to cook, and learn why some children need to eat foods different from other children. Several other important concepts could be incorporated into cooking activities such as counting, colors, patience, taking turns/sharing, and sequencing.
  - See the resource section for a link to some great recipe ideas.
  
- ❖ Coloring pictures of people with disabilities
  - See resource section

- ❖ Classroom Center with a focus on therapy/medicine
  - Have a designated play area set up as a therapist/doctor's office and include different items for the children to use/play with. Some examples could include books, bandages, crutches, adaptive equipment/toys, brail, wheelchair, etc. Ask a school therapist if they have any suggestions or equipment that might be beneficial in such a center.

## 5-7 Year Olds

### Activities

- ❖ "Disability for a day"
  - Have children wear mittens and attempt to button their shirt
  - Play with play dough with rubber bands on fingers
  - If possible, borrow a wheelchair from the nurse's office
  - Put Vaseline on plastic glasses
  - Any others you can think of!!
  
- ❖ Picture books or stories that lead to a discussion
  - There are numerous children's books written about children with disabilities in order to promote disability awareness. Reading one of these books to the class is a great way to begin a lesson or topic on disabilities and will definitely raise questions and help initiate discussion. See the resource section for a list of books.
  
- ❖ Puppet Show
  - The puppet show can be performed by teachers, parents, or volunteers as part of a learning opportunity for the children. Another option is to teach children about disabilities first and then have them create their own puppet show. Or the puppet show could be given first by the teachers to introduce a new topic and then left out for the children to play with during play time.
  - There is also a group who is dedicated to performing puppet shows specifically for disability awareness. Refer to the resource section to find out more information!
  
- ❖ Disability Awareness Quiz
  - Have the children take this simple quiz to find out how much they already may know about disabilities. This is a great way to introduce the topic of disabilities. It could also be given at the conclusion of the lesson to see how much the students retain. See the resource section for a sample quiz!

- ❖ Cooking activities for specific disabilities (CF, Diabetes, Lactose Intolerance)
  - This is a great opportunity for children to work together, learn to cook, and learn why some children need to eat foods different from other children. Several other important concepts could be incorporated into cooking activities such as counting, colors, patience, taking turns/sharing, and sequencing.
  - See the resource section for a link to some great recipe ideas.

## 8-10 Year Olds

### Activities

- ❖ Videos
  - Videos are a great way to teach children about different disabilities and to initiate and foster discussion. See the resource list for some recommended videos for this purpose.
  
- ❖ "Kid Power"
  - Have the children do science projects about "studying people."
  - Kids can do reports on different disabilities or famous people with different disabilities
  
- ❖ Provide opportunities for children to spend time with individuals with disabilities
  - Visit local group homes or day programs as a class field trip
  - Have children volunteer to assist with Special Olympics programs
  - See the resource section for a list of day programs or homes in your area
  
- ❖ Child with disability can teach classmates
  - Read/Tell a story
  - Talk about what makes them special
  - Watch a video that the child made or a video about a similar disability
  
- ❖ Find out if someone in your class has a brother or sister with special needs. Siblings may be particularly proficient at teaching other children about disabilities.
  - See the resource section for a link to a booklet on supporting siblings with a disability.

- ❖ Give examples of accomplishments by those living with differences
  - Make a bulletin board of famous people with different disabilities (This could be a class project)
  - Each week present a different accomplishment by a person with a disability
  
- ❖ Disability Awareness Quiz
  - Have the children take this simple quiz to find out how much they already may know about disabilities. This is a great way to introduce the topic of disabilities. It could also be given at the conclusion of the lesson to see how much the students retain. See the resource section for a sample quiz!

## 10-13 Year Olds

### Activities

- ❖ Career day
  - Talk with the occupational or physical therapist in your school and have them bring in adaptive equipment and let kids try it
  
- ❖ Videos
  - Videos are a great way to teach children about different disabilities and to initiate and foster discussion. See the resource list for some recommended videos for this purpose.
  
- ❖ Have children pick a role model and write a 1 page paper or story about why they are their role model. Information about adults with similar disabilities that students in the classroom have could be presented before hand.
  
- ❖ Provide opportunities for children to spend time with individuals with disabilities
  - Visit local group homes or day programs as a class field trip
  - Have children volunteer to assist with Special Olympics programs
  
- ❖ Give examples of accomplishments by those living with differences
  - Make a bulletin board of famous people with different disabilities (This could be a class project)
  - Each week present a different accomplishment by a person with a disability
  
- ❖ Have a motivational speaker come in who emphasizes disability awareness
  - See the resource section for local motivational speakers who specialize in this topic.
  - Find out how open the speakers are to question and answer sessions and promote them at the end of the talk.



❖ Disability Awareness Quiz

- Have the children take this simple quiz to find out how much they already may know about disabilities. This is a great way to introduce the topic of disabilities. It could also be given at the conclusion of the lesson to see how much the students retain. See the resource section for a sample quiz!

❖ Celebrity Trivia of people with disabilities

- See the resource section for a fun trivia game regarding famous people with disabilities! See how many you can get right!

## High School Students

### Activities

- ❖ Have a motivational speaker come in who emphasizes disability awareness
- ❖ Have students form a "buddy system" with younger children with disabilities or run group activities for children with disabilities in the community
- ❖ Provide opportunities for children to spend time with individuals with disabilities
  - Visit local group homes or day programs as a class field trip
  - Have children volunteer to assist with Special Olympics programs
- ❖ Encourage students to become involved in summer camps for children with disabilities in your community. Check out the Variety Club or ask a school therapist about information regarding these camps.
- ❖ Speak with the principal or director of the school about having the students receive academic credit for their participation in community programs for children with disabilities. If a senior project is required by your school district, this would be an excellent project for students to partake in.
- ❖ Disability Awareness Quiz
  - Have the children take this simple quiz to find out how much they already may know about disabilities. This is a great way to introduce the topic of disabilities. It could also be given at the conclusion of the lesson to see how much the students retain. See the resource section for a sample quiz!

## V. Resources for Classroom Activities

### Picture books or stories

#### ❖ Children's books

##### ○ Taking "different disabilities" to School

These are a series of books that are designed to promote understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities. The key to helping children accept people with disabilities is education. Each book includes a "Kids' Quiz" at the end for classroom interaction and "Ten Tips for Teachers." Current books include ADD, asthma, autism, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, Down Syndrome, dyslexia, food allergies, seizure disorders, and Tourette Syndrome.

<http://www.jayjo.com/>

##### ○ It's Your Turn at Bat: Featuring Mark Riley. Barbara Aiello and Jeffrey Shulman. Frederick, Md.: Twenty-first Century Books, 1988. The Kids on the Block book series.

-A story about Mark, a fifth-grader with cerebral palsy. A question and answer section about cerebral palsy is included.

##### ○ Turtle Books Series (Jason and Nordic Publishing)

###### ❖ Danny and the Merry-go-round. Nan Holcomb. 1987.

-Danny, who has cerebral palsy, makes new friends at the park. This is a great book for self and social acceptance.

###### ❖ Andy Finds a Turtle. Nan Holcomb. 1988. ISBN 09-44727-02-6

-Andy has cerebral palsy. His physical therapist calls him a "turtle" one day because he is feeling uncooperative. Andy then attempts to discover what a turtle is and during this process becomes a small hero and learns something important about himself.

###### ❖ More of these great books can be found at the following website:

<http://www.jasonandnordic.com/page1.asp>

- Why Are You Afraid To Hold My Hand? By Sheila Dhir. Tulika Publishers. ISBN 81-86896-12-0.  
-This book helps children understand disabilities and the strengths of those who are differently abled.  
<http://www.tulikabooks.com/inverse.htm>
- Circle of Friends Robert Perske. 1988. ISBN 0-687-08390-7  
-People with disabilities and their friends enrich the lives of one another.

### Puppet Shows

- ❖ Kids on the Block Puppet Show
  - Kids on the Block is an organization that presents puppet shows regarding peer interactions of children with different disabilities. This is an interactive program that uses four-foot tall puppets with special needs to educate children on disability awareness.  
<http://www.kotb.com/>
  - They have a coloring sheet as well  
[http://www.kotb.com/kob2.htg/Kids\\_Coloring\\_Sheet.PDF](http://www.kotb.com/kob2.htg/Kids_Coloring_Sheet.PDF)

### Cooking Activities

- ❖ Kids Health Recipes
  - This website provides several different recipes specifically for children with different needs (including Diabetes, Cystic Fibrosis, Lactose Intolerance, and Celiac Disease). Cooking with children in your classroom can help them learn about different types of food, meal preparation, and different circumstances where children with certain special needs might need to eat specific foods.  
<http://kidshealth.org/kid/recipes/index.html>

## Coloring

### ❖ Free Coloring Pages

- This website allows you to download free coloring pages for children to color. This would be a great project for children to learn about different disabilities while they are coloring.

<http://www.coloring.ws/disabilities1.htm>

- The Easter Seals Coloring and Activity Book is available for free from the following website.

[http://www.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/Easter\\_Seals\\_Fun.pdf?docID=5743](http://www.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/Easter_Seals_Fun.pdf?docID=5743)

## ❖ Videos

- The Green Kid  
This is a video by Candid Camera that tells school-age children that there is going to be a new student whose skin is green. When asked what they thought about this, the children respond honestly and speak about differences and acceptance. Free copies can be requested at the below website.  
[http://www.candidcamera.com/update/green\\_kid.html](http://www.candidcamera.com/update/green_kid.html)
  
- "You've Got a Friend" Program and Video (Tourette Syndrome)  
*You've Got a Friend* is a fun, positive, supportive, and educational video about Tourette Syndrome. The video and accompanying curriculum offer straightforward, factual answers to questions that kids and grown-ups have about this disorder. Also available in Spanish.  
<http://www.danya.com/products/orderform.asp>
  
- Simon Birch - 1998 (Rated G)  
Drama- Simon, an 11 year old boy who is small of stature believes he is a giant in character and will surely be a hero. Simon sets out on a journey with his best friend to find his best friend's dad and themselves. Based loosely on a book by John Irving called "A Prayer for Owen Meany"
  
- My Left Foot - 1989 (Rated PG-13)  
This movie is based on a true story. Christy Brown (Daniel Day Lewis) is a man who has spastic quadriplegia who can only control movements in his left foot. He learns through determination and the help of a teacher to overcome the chains of his disability and becomes a successful painter and poet.  
\*This movie should only be viewed by children ages 13 and over due to the rating.

## ❖ Disability Awareness Quiz

## Disability Awareness Quiz - True or False

1. You can "catch" a disability from someone else.

False! A disability is not something that you can catch.

2. People in wheelchairs cannot play sports.

False! Almost every sport you can think of has been adapted so that people in wheelchairs can play! From wheelchair basketball, to sled hockey, to rugby!

3. People who talk slow or have a learning disability are not smart.

False! Just because somebody has problems vocalizing their thoughts or processing certain kinds of information does not mean that they are not smart.

4. People who are blind can read.

True! People who are blind read with a special kind of alphabet: Braille

5. People with disabilities do not have the same feelings have people without disabilities.

False! Everyone has the same feelings.

6. People with disabilities cannot live by themselves.

False! There are many people with disabilities who live independently. There are also many people that live by themselves but may have someone help them with more difficult tasks.

7. Everyone who uses a wheelchair is unable to walk.

False! Many people are in wheelchairs because their legs are too weak to carry them long distances. They may walk for short distances or walk for exercise only.

- ❖ "Kid Power"
  - This is a research project that a child in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade performed to see how teaching other kids about certain disabilities changed their perceptions, knowledge, and comfort level around people with disabilities. This could also be a project in combination with visiting a group home or day program. Each child could look up different information on certain disabilities and then present it to the rest of the class.  
[http://www.beachcenter.org/Research/FullArticles/PDF/PPDO\\_A\\_Children%20can%20teach.pdf](http://www.beachcenter.org/Research/FullArticles/PDF/PPDO_A_Children%20can%20teach.pdf)
  
- ❖ Special Olympics
  - Contact your local Special Olympics chapter to have a representative come in to talk to the children about Special Olympics or watch a video.  
<http://www.specialolympics.org/>  
 Pennsylvania Chapter <http://www.specialolympicspa.org/>  
 New Jersey Chapter <http://www.sonj.org/>
  
- ❖ Local group homes or day programs to contact about visiting for an educational field trip
  - UCP <http://www.ucp.org> <http://www.ucpphila.org/>
  - HMS <http://www.hmsschool.org/>
  - Easter Seals <http://www.easterseals.com>
  - KenCrest Organization <http://www.kencrest.org/>
  
- ❖ Sibling Resource
  - This is a booklet made by "Association for Children with a Disability." It is designed specifically for siblings of a child with a disability or a chronic illness. It discusses emotions and feelings that siblings might have as well as family structure and function. This may be a good booklet to recommend to the parents of a child with a disability if they have other children as well.
  - [http://www.acd.org.au/siblings/content/Supporting\\_Siblings.pdf](http://www.acd.org.au/siblings/content/Supporting_Siblings.pdf)
  
- ❖ Accomplishments of people with disabilities



## **Accomplishments by People Living With a Disability**

You can use this list to teach children about disabilities or assign them as a project for children. There is plenty of information about each person below. One person could be assigned to each child and the child can do a report, paper, or project on the person, their accomplishments, and/or their disability.

### ***Jean Driscoll***

Jean won the Boston Marathon wheelchair division seven times, setting the world record five of those times. She also competed in several Paralympic Games. Jean now spends her time traveling and speaking to youth about her accomplishments and spina bifida. Jean has spina bifida.

### ***Franklin Roosevelt***

The 32<sup>nd</sup> president of the United States, served three terms, from 1933-1945. He was paralyzed from the waist down when he was 39 from Polio.

### ***Jim Abbott***

Jim Abbott was born without a right hand. He went on to be a pitcher for the Yankees, throw a no-hitter, and win a gold medal in the 1988 Olympic Games.

### ***Stephen Hawking***

A famous astrophysicist and author who was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease when he was only 21 years old.

### ***Heather Whitestone***

Heather was Miss America in 1995. Heather has also been deaf since she was 18 months old. She is now a motivational speaker who promotes following your dreams.

### ***Helen Keller***

Helen Keller was both deaf and blind. She went on to advocate for her rights and become a famous author and lecturer.

### ***Ray Charles***

Ray was blind from a very early age. He was an amazing singer, songwriter, and pianist.

### ***Tom Cruise***

Tom is a famous actor who also has dyslexia.

### ***Albert Einstein***

Albert was a famous physicist and inventor. He had a learning disability and had trouble with math and writing while he was in school.

### ***Walt Disney***

Walt Disney, the famous cartoonist and entrepreneur had a learning disability.

#### ❖ Family Village Library

- This resource provides a website with links to several additional resources regarding famous people with disabilities. This is a good link to check out if you are considering this for a class project.

<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/general/FAMOUS.HTML>

#### ❖ Motivational Speakers

- Paul Stuart Wichansky is a motivational speaker for A Vision in Motion and he happens to also have cerebral palsy. The purpose of his speeches is to promote disability acceptance in the classroom. A Vision in Motion is a motivational speakers bureau full of energetic and amazing speakers who have overcome adversity and now hope to positively influence the lives of others through their speeches.

<http://www.avisioninmotion.com/>

<http://www.justthewayyouare.com>

#### ❖ Celebrity Trivia

- This website provides a trivia sheet asking questions about famous people who are living with disabilities. This would be a good in class project or homework assignment. The next page contains the trivia questions from the website.

[http://www.disabilitycentral.com/activteen/gameroom/trivia/celebrity\\_trivia\\_1.htm](http://www.disabilitycentral.com/activteen/gameroom/trivia/celebrity_trivia_1.htm)

## Celebrity Trivia

(Reprinted with permission from [www.disabilitycentral.com](http://www.disabilitycentral.com))

The famous people noted in this quiz all had something in common. They faced their disabilities realistically and discovered ways to use what they learned to excel far beyond expectations.

Growing up with a disability and facing challenges unknown by my peers imbued me with qualities that motivated me to test my limits. The people in this quiz were imbued with the same strengths. The frustration and the pain we experience as young people with disabilities are motivators to find creative ways to meet our needs, to develop other qualities and to be kinder to others who are suffering. So, when you feel discouraged, overwhelmed or angry because your life seems harder than others, remember a disability gives one gifts that one may not otherwise have received. It isn't the problem that is important, it is the solutions we find that mold our character.

### Your choices for the answers:

- a. Bob Dole
- b. Tom Cruise
- c. Walt Disney
- d. Cher
- e. Robin Williams
- f. Charles Dickens
- g. Carly Simon
- h. Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- i. Bruce Willis
- j. Stevie Wonder

### The quiz:

1. Earned very poor grades and was labeled slow in school. Went on to produce movies and cartoons for family entertainment.
2. Actor learns lines by listening to audiotapes because dyslexia makes reading difficult.
3. This actor has to practice speaking lines because of stuttering.
4. This comedian/actor is always moving about because of ADHD.
5. This politician hid the residual effects of polio from the public.
6. This singer started to sing because that was the only time stuttering wasn't a problem.
7. This famous writer had epilepsy.
8. This politician became paralyzed on the right side after being struck by a shell in WWII.
9. This singer/actor has struggled with a lifelong learning disability.
10. This singer is visually impaired.

(Reprinted with permission from [www.disabilitycentral.com](http://www.disabilitycentral.com))

## Answers

1. Earned very poor grades and was labeled slow in school. Went on to produce movies and cartoons for family entertainment.

c. **Walt Disney**

2. Actor learns lines by listening to audiotapes because dyslexia makes reading difficult.

b. **Tom Cruise**

3. This actor has to practice speaking lines because of stuttering.

i. **Bruce Willis**

4. This comedian/actor is always moving about because of ADHD.

e. **Robin Williams**

5. This politician hid the residual effects of polio from the public.

h. **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

6. This singer started to sing because that was the only time stuttering wasn't a problem.

g. **Carly Simon**

7. This famous writer had epilepsy.

f. **Charles Dickens**

8. This politician became paralyzed on the right side after being struck by a shell in WWII.

a. **Bob Dole**

9. This singer/actor has struggled with a lifelong learning disability.

d. **Cher**

10. This singer is visually impaired.

j. **Stevie Wonder**

(Reprinted with permission from [www.disabilitycentral.com](http://www.disabilitycentral.com))

## Volunteer Opportunities

- ❖ The Variety Club of Philadelphia
  - There are lots of opportunities for students to volunteer within the Variety Club. Some of these opportunities include volunteering at the summer camp, being a golf buddy, and helping out at the holiday party.  
<http://www.varietyphila.org/>
  
- ❖ Muscular Dystrophy Association
  - Be a volunteer for one week out of the summer at a local MDA summer camp! Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age and will receive an orientation and training that includes wheelchair techniques, lifting and transfers, personal hygiene, and emergency procedures. The primary responsibility of each counselor is to provide both physical and psychological support to their camper, thereby helping them to enjoy camp.  
<http://www.mdausa.org/clinics/camp.html>
  
- ❖ Easter Seals
  - This is another great organization for which students can volunteer or spend a day observing. The website has a list of local Easter Seals organizations and contact information to volunteer at the camps or other events.  
<http://www.easterseals.com>
  
- ❖ Carousel House
  - Carousel House provides several different camps for children with special needs throughout the Philadelphia area. There is a day camp for children with mental and physical disabilities, a sports camp for people with mental disabilities, and a day-trip camp for adults with acquired disabilities.  
<http://www.phila.gov/recreation/carousel/>

- ❖ Be a camp counselor!
  - The following websites provide an extensive list of camps for children with special needs. You can search for camps based on the following criteria: state, country, religion, gender, region, and session length.  
<http://www.kidscamps.com>  
<http://www.grownupcamps.com>
  
- ❖ Special Olympics
  - Contact your local Special Olympics chapter to have a representative come in to talk to the children about Special Olympics or watch a video.  
<http://www.specialolympics.org/>  
Pennsylvania Chapter <http://www.specialolympicspa.org/>  
New Jersey Chapter <http://www.sonj.org/>

#### Resources for Kids

- ❖ Active Teen
  - This website is managed by teens with disabilities for teens with disabilities. It contains games and trivia regarding famous people with disabilities, chat areas, etc. Youths with disabilities can talk to other youths with disabilities on this site. They can also find out information regarding their own disability and learn about what opportunities exist for them. This website is a great way to promote self-determination among teenagers.  
<http://www.disabilitycentral.com/>
  
- ❖ The Survival Guide for Kids with Learning Disabilities
  - This website lists 10 ways that children with learning disabilities can make life easier for themselves at school. Examples and suggestions are provided below each idea.  
<http://www.ldonline.org/article.php?id=354&loc=65>



❖ Disability Awareness Site for Youth

- This is a website designed by Center for Disability Information & Referral for promoting awareness and understanding of people with disabilities. They have several games and ideas that could be used in lesson plans and also have information on sign language, braille, and teaching sign language.

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir/kidsweb/disabilch.html>

## VI. Where can I look to find more information on different disabilities?

Below is a list of resources that you can look to for more information about specific disabilities. Some of the websites or books may be beneficial to use in your classroom or lesson plan as well.

### ❖ Books

- *Woodbine House*

Woodbine House is a publisher who is known for publishing books on disabilities and related topics. There are books on this website for people of all ages and incentives. There are children's books, educational books, books for teenagers, books on special education, etc. Older students, teachers, or parents looking to learn more about specific disabilities might find just what they are looking for on this website.

<http://www.woodbinehouse.com/>

- *Sensitivity and Awareness, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*

This book contains background materials about various disabilities, lesson plans, and classroom activities for primary and middle school children. It can be ordered from the website below for a decent price.

<http://www.jasonandnordic.com/page1.asp#sensawre>

### ❖ Websites

- *National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities*

This website provides articles and information on various disabilities. It also has resources regarding special education and inclusion. There are several parent guides on this website as well.

<http://www.kidsource.com/NICHCY/>

- *National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke*  
This is another website that has an alphabetical list of many different disorders and disabilities. Each information page then has links to additional resources or organizations specific to that disability.  
[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/disorder\\_index.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/disorder_index.htm)
  
- *Autism Society of America*  
This is a comprehensive website about autism and autistic spectrum disorders. They also have a link to a directory of ASA Chapters, professionals, government resources, diagnostic centers, and service providers.  
<http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer>
  
- *United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)*  
UCP is a top source of information regarding cerebral palsy. It is a nationwide organization that is dedicated to advancing the independence, productivity and full citizenship of people with disabilities through an affiliate network. Check out this website to find your local UCP.  
<http://www.ucp.org/>
  
- *National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities*  
This is another website that provides an alphabetical list of topics that are relevant to children with disabilities. The main focus of these topics is autism, behavior issues, and learning disabilities. This website is also available in Spanish.  
<http://www.nichcy.org/resources/default.asp>
  
- *Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA)*  
The MDA website provides useful information and resources on muscular dystrophy as well as current research and publications regarding the disease. This website is also available in Spanish.  
<http://www.mdausa.org/>

- *The National Down Syndrome Society Website*  
This website contains an abundance of information regarding Down Syndrome as well as current research and news and events related to Down Syndrome.  
<http://www.ndss.org/>
- *National Down Syndrome Congress*  
A variety of information and resources on Down Syndrome can also be found on this website.  
<http://www.ndsccenter.org/>
- *National Institute of Mental Health*  
This website provides several publications on a variety of diagnoses related to mental health. Some popular diagnoses include: ADHD, autism, anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, HIV/AIDS, and suicide prevention.  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/>
- *The Disability History Museum*  
The goal of this website is to provide information and resources to help create awareness and understanding about the historical experience of people with disabilities in the United States. In the education section (which is currently under construction) there will be resources for teachers and course packets.  
<http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/>
- *Disability Info.gov*  
This website provides an abundance of information and references regarding various aspects of life that people with disabilities may need additional support in. Focus areas include employment, education, housing, health, transportation, income support, technology, community life, and civil rights.  
<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov>

- *Communicating With and About People with Disabilities*  
This is a website run by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Disability Employment. This resource provides helpful information that should be considered when communicating with a person with a disability. This could be something that you would share with your children or just remember to incorporate when you are teaching them about different disabilities.  
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/comucate.htm>

❖ Journals or Magazines

- *Review of Disability Studies*  
This is an excellent resource providing information about research on different disabilities. This would be a good resource for adolescents to have as they are preparing for college or employment.  
<http://www.rds.hawaii.edu/>
- *Exceptional Parent*  
Exceptional Parent is an excellent journal for parents, teachers, or healthcare professionals. Although a subscription is required to receive this journal, there are several helpful resources on their website that are available to anyone.  
<http://www.eparent.com/>
- *Disability Solutions*  
This is a resource for anyone interested in Down Syndrome and related disabilities. (Free subscription)  
<http://www.disabilitysolutions.org/subscription.htm>
- *New Mobility*  
This publication provides information for people using wheelchairs. The reason for use could be anything from a spinal cord injury to multiple sclerosis.  
<http://www.newmobility.com/>

❖ Disability Awareness Curriculum

The following websites are sites that offer suggestions and/or packages for purchase of pre-existing disability awareness curriculum.

○ *Public Images Network*

This website provides some resources for a curriculum entitled "Just Like Me and You: A Disability Awareness Curriculum." It is appropriate for third, fourth, and fifth grade students.

There are a total of nine lessons, three per grade level. A list of books written about children with disabilities to promote disability awareness are also found on this website.

<http://www.publicimagesnetwork.org/resources.html>

○ *Friends Who Care*

This curriculum was developed by Easter Seals and is intended for teachers to use in third and fourth grade classrooms. It contains introductory information about disabilities and includes hands-on activities that help children learn about different disabilities. Friends Who Care requires approximately eight classroom hours of flexible programming and can be ordered through the website below.

[http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl\\_friends\\_teachers](http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_friends_teachers)

○ *Some Ways the Same, Some Ways Different*

This is a curriculum kit developed by the Boston Children's Museum. It provides a general foundation for children learning about disabilities including learning disabilities, visual impairments, deafness, augmentative communication, physical disabilities, and mental retardation. Kits can be ordered for a two week rental through the following website.

[http://www.bostonkids.org/educators/disability\\_awareness.html](http://www.bostonkids.org/educators/disability_awareness.html)

- *A Classroom Explores Disabilities*  
A video and curriculum guide are included in this program to incorporate disability awareness into the curriculum. It provides an overview and specific examples of disability awareness in the classroom. This curriculum can be ordered through the following website.  
[http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc/products\\_curriculum.htm](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc/products_curriculum.htm)

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