Curriculum Connections

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Equal Treatment, Equal Access:

Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights

ADL®

In This Issue

For centuries people with disabilities were thought to be helpless, indigent citizens, and were forced into institutions and asylums without equal opportunity or equal protection under the law. The disability rights movement of the 1960s marked a critical turning point with the rise of a grassroots effort that eventually led to the legislative victories of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (renamed IDEA in 1990) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990.

Since the inception of ADA, changes have been made to better daily living. Supermarket aisles are wider, schools have ramps and public transportation is more accessible for disabled people. However, despite the fact that people with disabilities represent one of the largest demographic groups in the nation, the disability community continues to face architectural barriers, discriminatory policies, negative attitudes and implicit and explicit biases on a daily basis.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 40.7 million people, or 12.8% of the population had a disability in 2016. Persons without a disability ages 16 to 64 were employed more than double the percentage (65.3%) of persons with a disability (27.7%). Even in the digital age, access to the internet is unequally distributed. Findings of a Pew Research Center survey in 2016 reflect lower rates of daily internet use by individuals who have a disability compared to those without a disability (50% vs. 79%).

As Carol Gill, a chief disability rights advocate, observes, "We have been viewed too much in terms of our diagnoses and too little in terms of our personhood…Most of our problems are caused not by our bodies but by a society that refuses to accommodate our differences."

Lessons

The lessons included in this curriculum unit seek to challenge myths and stereotypes about people with disabilities and to promote awareness of various forms of disability. The first three lessons are designed to explore a broad range of physical disabilities with elementary students.

The fourth lesson introduces middle school students to the science behind learning disabilities, and seeks to remove the stigma around this invisible disability by engaging students in an exploration of multiple intelligences and the broad range of human learning styles.

In the fifth and final lesson, high school students explore the historical legacy of bias and discrimination toward people with disabilities, and learn about the self-advocacy and self-determination of disability rights activists. In addition to the lesson plans, various resources on disability are included for educators and students, such as communication guidelines on disability, a school assessment of environmental access to people with disabilities, and a terminology reference sheet on disability.

By raising awareness about different types of disabilities and the struggle for equal treatment and equal access, these educational activities challenge

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the "idealized notion of 'normality' against which disabled people are constantly compared," and force a re-evaluation of ableist beliefs and policy.

References

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Correlation of Lessons to Common Core Standards

Content Area/Standard	Lesson 1: Grades K-2	Lesson 2: Grades 2-4	Lesson 3: Grades 4-6	Lesson 4: Grades 6-8	Lesson 5: Grades 9-12
Reading					
R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	X	X	X	X	X
R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	X	X	X	X	X
R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	X	X	X		
R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.			X	X	X
R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.				X	
R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.					X
R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.				X	X
R.10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.			X		X
Writing					
W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.			X		X
W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.		X	X	X	X
W.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.					X
W.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.			X	X	X

Content Area/Standard	Lesson 1: Grades K-2	Lesson 2: Grades 2-4	Lesson 3: Grades 4-6	Lesson 4: Grades 6-8	Lesson 5: Grades 9-12
W.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.					X
W.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.					X
Speaking and Listening					
SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	X	X	X	X	X
SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.		X	X		X
SL.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.	X	X		X	X
SL.5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.				X	X
Language Arts					
L.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.			X	X	X
L.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.					X
L.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.			X		
L.6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.				X	X

Lesson 1 for Grades K–2

Getting to Know People with Physical Disabilities

Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to begin to familiarize students with the term disability, and to raise awareness about the experiences of people with physical disabilities. Through children's literature and personal connections with people who have a physical disability, students come to understand the capacity of people with disabilities to engage in activities that all people enjoy. Students will also come to know and recognize the International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities.

[**NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL's resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability
- Disability Glossary
- Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability
- Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

Key Words

Ability
Difference
Disability
Sign
Symbol
Wheelchair

Objectives

- Students will learn the terms disability and physical disability.
- Students will understand and recognize the International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities.
- Students will discover the various abilities of people who use wheelchairs.
- Students will meet a person with a physical disability to learn more about the daily experiences of people living with a disability.
- Students will develop a class book depicting what they learned about people with disabilities.

Time

20 minutes for Part I, and 1 hour for Part II

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- *International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities* (one for teacher use)
- *Arnie and the New Kid* by Nancy Carlson (one for teacher use)

Other Material:

- basic art supplies, construction paper crayons, markers

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing main ideas from a storybook, communicating ideas in words and drawings, developing a class book, examining and recognizing symbols, formulating questions, large group discussion

Procedures

Part I

1. Hold up the *International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities* for all students to see. Ask students:
   - Have you seen this sign before? Where have you seen this sign?
   - What does this symbol look like to you? (Explain that this symbol is a picture of a person who uses a wheelchair, and is for people who are disabled. This sign can be found in parking spaces close to the entrance of a store, or a park, or a school so that people who use wheelchairs or who have trouble walking do not have to travel far to get inside. Sometimes it can be found on seats in buses or trains, and means that those seats are reserved for people with disabilities.)
   - What is a disability? (Explain that a disability is a condition that limits a person in being able to see, hear, walk or speak. Some people with disabilities may be blind, or deaf, or may use a wheelchair if they are unable to walk.)
   - Have you ever met a person with a disability?
2. Explain that the class is going to read a book about a student who has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair. Invite students to join you in reading the book *Arnie and the New Kid* by Gina and Mercer Mayer.

   Book summary: In *Arnie and the New Kid,* Philip uses a wheelchair and has the challenge of being new to town. Arnie targets Phillip with acts of bullying and name-calling until Arnie falls, breaks his leg and finds himself temporarily disabled. As Arnie begins to understand and experience a physical disability, the two become friends.
3. Ask some or all of the following discussion questions as you read the story aloud to students:
   - In what way is Phillip different from most of the other kids at his school?
   - Why didn't he have many friends?
   - Was there anything that Phillip could do using his wheelchair that surprised you?
   - How do you think Phillip felt when Arnie teased him because he uses a wheelchair?
   - How did Phillip help Arnie when he fell?
   - What did Arnie discover after he got injured?
   - Do you think Arnie and Phillip enjoyed playing with each other after school? How do you know?
   - How did Arnie feel when he got his caste off?
   - What do you think Arnie learned from Phillip?
   - Were you surprised that the two of them became friends?

Part II

1. Invite a local community member who uses a wheelchair or who wears a prosthetic device to visit the class (or take the class to visit them) so that students have a chance to meet a person with a physical disability. Make sure this is someone who has experience talking with young children about her/his disability. In preparation of the visit, develop a list of questions that the students would like to ask about what it is like to live with a physical disability.

   NOTE: If this is not possible, gather books about people with disabilities so that students can learn more about what it means to have a physical disability and use a wheelchair (see suggested titles listed below). Refer to the ADL resource Evaluating Children's Books That Address Disability for guidelines on choosing children's literature on disability.)

   Suggested books (see also, ADL's children's literature on Disabilities for other books):
   - *Let's Talk about Being in a Wheelchair* by Melanie Ann Apel
   - *Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair* by Jamee Riggio Heelan

- *Featherless/Desplumado* by Juan Felipe Herrera
- *King for a Day* by Rukhsana Khan

2. At the conclusion of the visit (or after reading one of the books), invite students to draw pictures and/or write about what they learned about people with physical disabilities. Once the students have completed their pictures and writing, assemble into a class book, and review with students.

Extension Activities

- As an extension to the class book activity above invite family members and/or schoolmates to a reading of the class book so that students can share what they have learned about people with disabilities. Assist students in answering any questions that guests may have about people with disabilities.

- Organize a field trip to visit a local school or community center that hosts athletic programs for people with physical disabilities. Have students talk to some of the sports players about their disability and how they became involved in the sports program. Visit the International Paralympics Committee website to find local athletic programs for people with physical disabilities.

International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities

Lesson 2 for Grades 2–4

Experiencing Hearing Disability through Music

Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concept of disability to students by exploring the everyday experiences of people who have a hearing disability. Through hands-on exercises such as using sign language and appreciating music by means of sound vibration, students explore similarities and differences in the daily lives of people with and without a hearing disability. In addition, students are encouraged to challenge assumptions about the abilities of people with disabilities in general.

[**NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL's resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability
- Disability Glossary
- Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability
- Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

Key Words

Assumption
Composer
Deaf
Disability
Hard of hearing
Hearing disability
Orchestra
Percussionist
Sign language
Sound
Vibration

Objectives

- Students will hear a piece of music and listen for different sounds and instruments.
- Students will learn the terms disability and hearing disability.
- Students will learn how people with a hearing disability can experience music through sound vibration.
- Students will learn some basic sign language.
- Students will learn how people with a hearing disability perform daily functions.

Time

35 minutes for Part I, and 50 minutes for Part II

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- *American Sign Language* (one for each student)
- *Friends Who Care: Hearing Disabilities Worksheet* (one for each student)
- *Moses Goes to a Concert* by Isaac Millman (one for teacher use)

Other Material:

- balloons, basic art supplies, chart paper, construction paper, crayons, markers, pencils, stereo with speakers, writing paper

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing music, brainstorming, communicating ideas and opinions, cooperative group work, critical thinking, developing a basic understanding of sound and vibration, forming opinions, large group discussion, reading skills, using sign language, writing skills

Procedures

Part I

1. Play a song or piece of music (preferably a cultural piece that represents the ethnic or cultural background of one or more of the students). Ask students to listen to the sounds they are hearing, and to draw or write the sounds and instruments they recognize in the musical piece.
2. Tell students about the cultural significance of the song or musical piece. Ask students to share some of the sounds or instruments that they heard. Chart responses, and paste up student writings and drawings.
3. Write the words "HEARING DISABILITY" on a separate piece of chart paper (or chalk board), and ask students:
   - What is a disability? (Explain that a disability is a mental or physical condition that limits a person in being able to see, hear, speak, walk, or learn).
   - What is a hearing disability? (Explain that there are various levels and degrees of hearing impairment. People who are deaf may have either a total or partial inability to hear, but are not assisted by hearing aids; whereas people who are hard of hearing have a partial ability to hear and may be assisted by the use of devices like a hearing aid.)
   - Do you think a person with a hearing disability would be able to experience the song we just listened to? Why or why not?
4. Give each student an inflated balloon. Have each student hold the balloon in their lap, and replay the musical piece from earlier. (The volume of the music may have to be turned up moderate to loud in order for students to feel the vibrations of the music through their balloons. Students may need to hold their inflated balloon up to the speaker, or place their hands on the speakers, to ensure they can feel the vibration of the music.)
5. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
   - What was it like to feel the music through your balloon?
   - Did some of the sounds feel different to you? How did the sounds feel different from one another? (Explain to students that different sounds create different levels of vibrations which can be felt through a balloon, or through the playing of an instrument such as a piano or drum.)
   - What does this experience tell us about how people with a hearing disability can appreciate music differently?
   - How might a person who has a hearing disability be able to play an instrument?

Part II

1. Invite students to join you in reading the book *Moses Goes to a Concert* by Isaac Millman.

   Book summary: In *Moses Goes to a Concert,* Moses goes on a school trip to an orchestral performance. To the surprise of the children, the percussionist in the orchestra is deaf, just as they are. Moses and the other students not only experience sound and music through vibration and sign language, but discover that they too can achieve anything they put their mind to.

2. Ask students the following questions in response to the book:
   - How was the percussionist who is deaf able to play in the orchestra?
   - What types of things did you learn from this story about people with a hearing disability?

- Do you know any sign language?
- If not, did you learn any sign language from this story?

3. Distribute the *American Sign Language* handout to each student, and demonstrate for students how to sign the words "Hello, I am…" Have students practice signing these words, and then divide students into pairs. Using the handout, have students work together to learn how to sign their name.

4. Reconvene the whole class, and ask students to walk around the room introducing themselves using sign language, "Hello, I am [their name]." Explain to students that some people with a hearing disability do not use their voice when they sign, whereas others do, so it is optional for students to vocalize when they are signing.

Extension: Clarify for students that American Sign Language (ASL) is not a word-for-word translation of English, there are also phrases and expressions that are unique to ASL that students can learn. Distribute the *Friends Who Care: Hearing Disabilities Worksheet* to students. As a homework assignment, have students learn three or four ASL phrases and expressions included in the worksheet. Students may also choose to research and learn new expressions not included in the worksheet and teach them to the class. Also let students know that not every person who is deaf or hearing impaired uses ASL.

5. Ask students how it felt to communicate differently. Explain to students that communication is one way that people with a hearing disability do things differently. Have students brainstorm other things that people with a hearing disability might do differently, and chart responses. Offer one or two examples from the list below, but allow students to generate as many ideas as possible.

- Waking up to an alarm clock to go to school?
- Watching TV?
- Playing games?
- Talking on the phone?
- Dancing?
- Going shopping?

6. Invite a local community member who has a hearing disability to visit the class (or take the class to visit them) so that students have a chance to meet a person with a hearing disability. Make sure this is someone who has experience talking with young children about her/his disability. In preparation of the visit, have students develop a list of questions that they would like to ask about living with a hearing disability.

NOTE: If this is not possible, gather books about people with hearing disabilities so that students can learn more about what it means to live with a hearing disability (see suggested titles listed below). Refer to the ADL resource Evaluating Children's Books That Address Disability for guidelines on choosing children's literature on disability.

Suggested books (see also, ADL's children's literature on Disabilities for other books):

- *Can You Hear a Rainbow?: The Story of a Deaf Boy Named Chris* by Jamee Riggio Riggio Heelan
- *Let's Talk about Deafness* by Melanie A. Gordon
- *El Deafo* by Cece Bell
- *Let's Hear it for Almigal* by Wendy Kupfer

7. After students have had an opportunity to learn more about living with a hearing disability, revisit the list that students brainstormed earlier about daily things that people with a hearing disability might do differently. Ask students if there is anything they want to add or change on the list. Add the following points if not mentioned by students.

- People with a hearing disability can watch TV or movies using closed captioning technology (a system that "captures" words being spoken and displays it as text on the bottom of the screen).
- People with a hearing disability can communicate over the phone using TTY (teletype writer) technology (a system of typing out words over the phone where the words are either read on a lighted screen display or printed on a paper printout.)
- In addition to using sign language, people with a hearing disability can sometimes read lips, and can sometimes use their voice to communicate. It is always best to ask in what way a person with a hearing disability would prefer to

communicate. When speaking to a person who reads lips, always face the person when speaking, and communicate at a normal speed.

- People that use hearing aids can hear normal tones and voices, so it is important not to raise your voice or shout at a person with a hearing disability.

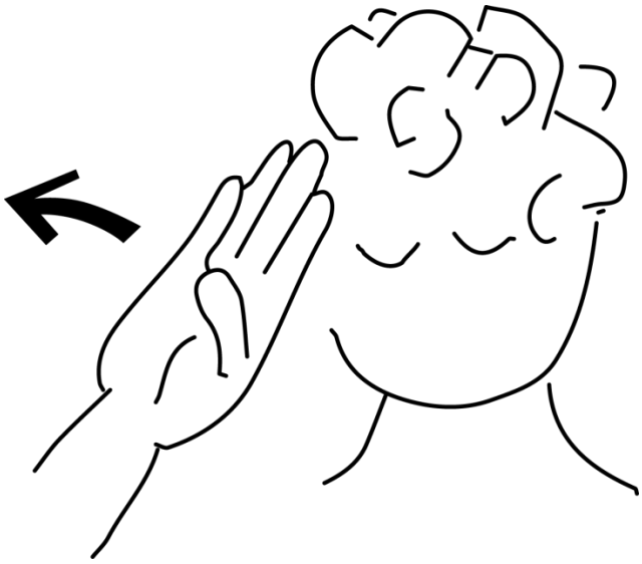
8. Close by asking students:

- What were some of the most surprising things that you learned about people with hearing disabilities?
- How have some of your assumptions or ideas about the abilities of people with hearing disabilities changed?
- What have you learned about making assumptions about the abilities of people with disabilities in general? (Make point to students that we often assume what people with disabilities can or can't do, rather than asking and learning how people with disabilities might do things differently.)

Extension Activity

Have students write a pen pal letter to students at a local school for children who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. Have students express what they learned about people with hearing disabilities, and about using sign language. Have students request in their letter whether they can visit the school for students who are deaf and/or hard of hearing, so that they may learn more about how a school for children with hearing disabilities is both similar and different from their own school. Using the *Friends Who Care: Hearing Disabilities Worksheet*, have students prepare some basic phrases in sign language to communicate with students who have a hearing disability. Also, if possible, have students attend an event together, like a musical performance, and have students share their experience of the event with one another.

American Sign Language

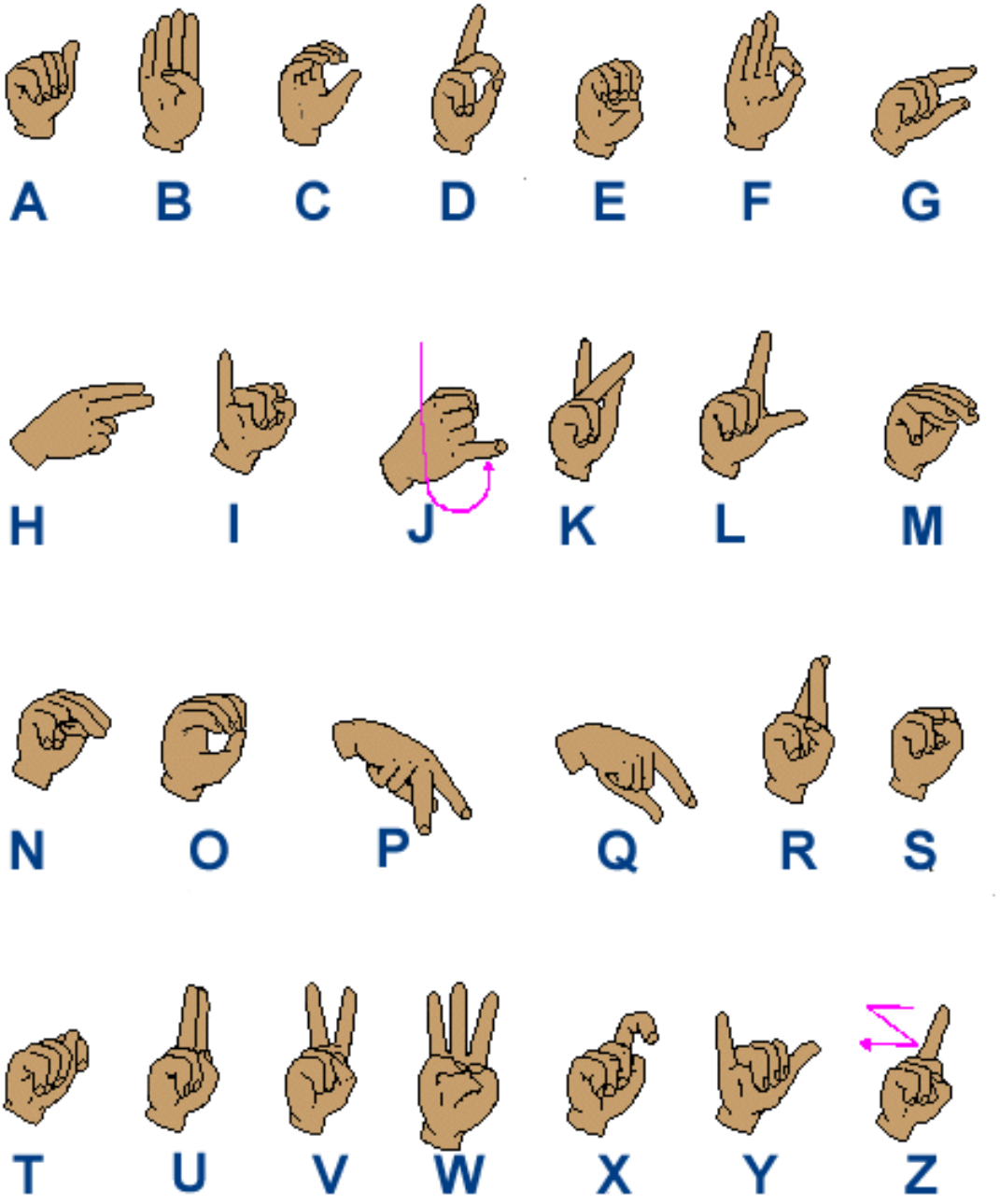


Hello

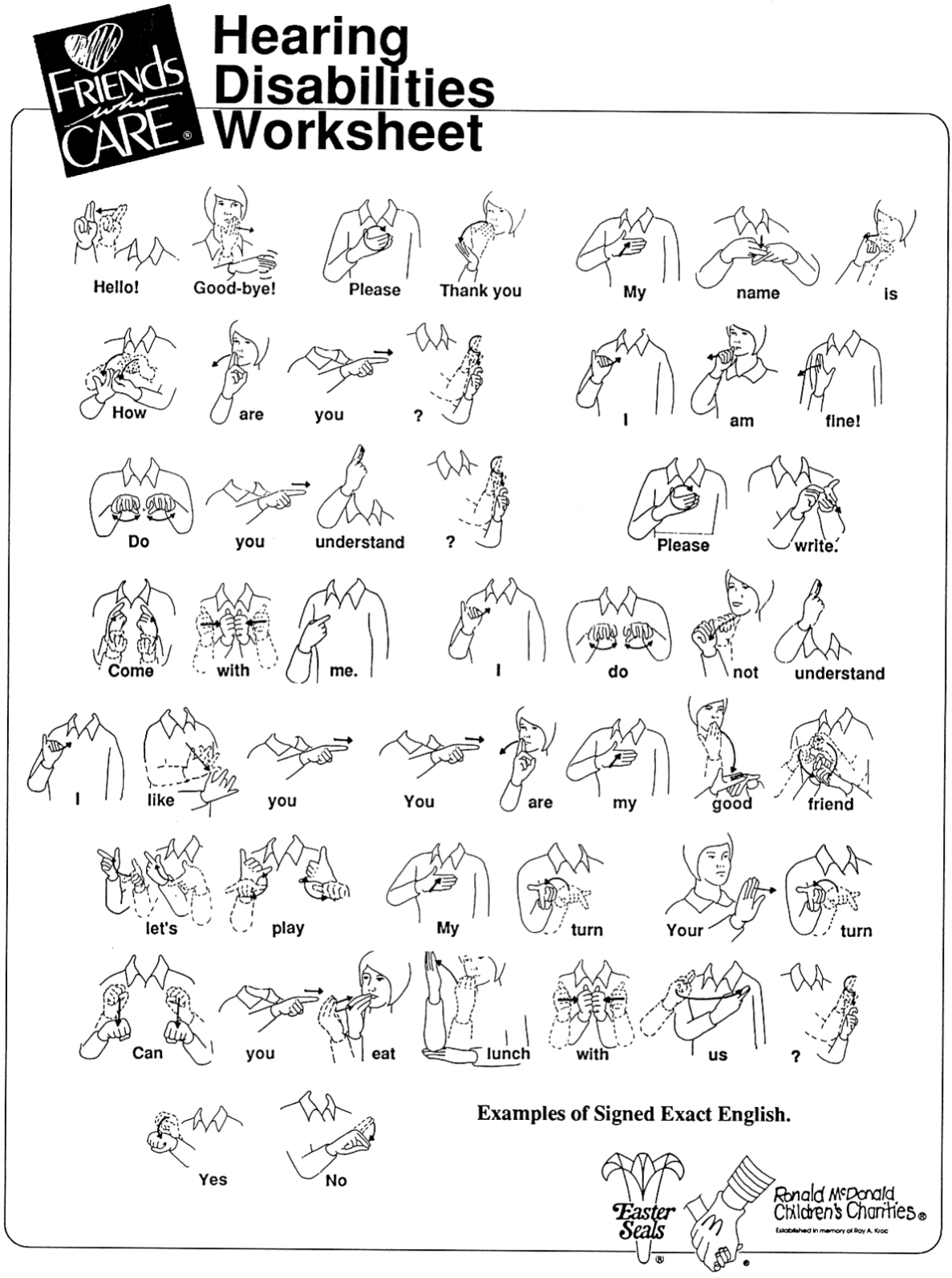
I am

Source: Lesson Tutor, www.lessontutor.com.

Now use the American Sign Language alphabet to spell your name…



*Source: ASL Alphabet licensed/*CC BY-ND 3.0



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Lesson 3 for Grades 4–6

Seeing the World through the Hands of People with Visual Disability

Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concept of disability to students by exploring and understanding daily experiences of people with a visual disability. By engaging in concrete activities such as transcribing Braille and learning about the achievements of activists like Helen Keller, students are challenged to rethink assumptions and beliefs about the abilities of people with disabilities. Students are also asked to consider issues of accessibility by noting barriers in the environment that may limit opportunities for people with disabilities.

[**NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL's resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability
- Disability Glossary
- Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability
- Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

Key Words

Activist
Assumptions
Braille
Campaigning
Disability
Handicap
Visual disability

Objectives

- Students will learn the terms disability, handicap, and visual disability.
- Students will learn about the varying degrees of visual disability.
- Students will learn the Braille alphabet, and use it to decode a sentence coded in Braille.
- Students will learn about Helen Keller, and her life as a writer and activist for people with visual disabilities.
- Students will research and discover the various ways that people with disabilities perform daily functions.
- Students will consider ableist attitudes and assumptions towards people with disabilities, and ways to challenge those assumptions.

Time

Parts I–III are 35 minutes each

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- *Braille Alphabet Card* (one for each student)
- *Famous Quote by Helen Keller Coded in Braille* (one for each student)
- *True/False Questions about the Life of Helen Keller* (one for each student)
- *True/False Questions about the Life of Helen Keller Answer Key* (for teacher use)

Other Material:
- chart paper, paper, pencils, markers

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing documents, brainstorming, collecting and analyzing data, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, critical thinking, forming opinions, large and small group discussion, reading skills, research skills, using Braille code, using the internet, writing skills

Procedures

Part I

1. Distribute to each student a copy of the *Braille Alphabet Card* and *Famous Quote by Helen Keller Coded in Braille*.
2. Ask students if they know who Helen Keller was? Ask if they know what Braille is? Explain the following:
   - Helen Keller was a famous writer in the late 1800s/early 1900s. She was both deaf and blind, due to an illness she contracted as a child. She learned how to communicate through finger spelling with her teacher, Anne Sullivan, and learned how to read using Braille.
   - Braille is a code used to enable people who have a visual disability to read.
   - The quote written on their handouts has been coded in Braille, letter by letter, thus making it possible to transcribe for non-Braille readers. Normally, certain words like 'of" and 'the' are coded in contractions that stand for the whole word, and other words are abbreviated, like "tomorrow" which is spelled "tm", and "friend" which is spelled "fr". For the purposes of this exercise, students will translate letter by letter.
3. Divide students into small groups of four. In their groups, ask students to translate the quotation using the *Braille Alphabet Card* and to discuss the following questions, which are also at the bottom of the card, in their groups. Invite students to puncture the points of Braille on their individual handouts with their pens or pencils after they have transcribed the quote to feel what the quote would feel like to a person who is blind or has a visual disability. [Once transcribed, the quote will read: "The chief handicap of the blind is not blindness, but the attitude of seeing people towards them." —Helen Keller]
   - What do you think was Helen Keller's message in this quote?
   - What are some attitudes of "seeing people" towards people who are blind or who have a visual disability?
   - How do these attitudes or beliefs affect the way "seeing people" behave towards people who are blind or who have a visual disability?
   - How might people with a visual disability go about doing things differently from people who can see?
4. Reconvene the class, and hold a class discussion to process the group questions above.
5. Write the words "DISABILITY", "HANDICAP" and "VISUAL DISABILITY" on a piece of chart paper, and ask the following questions:
   - What is a disability? (Explain to students that the word disability means a mental or physical condition that affects a person's ability to engage in one or more activities, for example seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, or working.)
   - What types of disabilities could a person have?
   - What is the difference between a "disability" and a "handicap"? (Explain to students that the word "handicap" was commonly used to refer to people with disabilities, but that it is an offensive term and should no longer be used. The origin of the word "handicap" is literally a person with "cap in hand", or beggar. Because of this negative association, it is disrespectful to call a person with a disability "handicapped". The more appropriate and respectful term is "person with a disability". Explain to students that a disability describes a person's mental or physical impairment, whereas a

handicap describes a barrier in the environment that limits that person's opportunity to enjoy in everyday activities, such as not having ramps or elevators in a school for a student who uses a wheelchair.)

- What is the difference between blindness, and having a visual disability? (Explain to students that blindness is a form of visual disability. Some people may have a slight visual disability, and need to wear glasses, whereas other people may be blind and are not assisted by glasses. Visual disability can range in terms of levels of visual impairment.)
- What do you think was Helen Keller's message in her quote?
- What are some attitudes of "seeing people" towards people who are blind or who have a visual disability?
- How do these assumptions or beliefs affect the way "seeing people" behave towards people with visual disability?
- How might people with a visual disability go about doing things differently from people who can see?

Part II

1. In their groups, ask students to list all the things they do in a day (going to school, using a computer or cell phone, going to the library, playing an instrument, going to the movies, playing a computer game, watching TV, etc).
2. Once each group has completed its list, ask students to go through the list and imagine how a person with a visual disability might go about doing those things differently. Have groups conduct research to find out the answers to their questions about the daily experiences of people who are visually disabled by going to the Lighthouse for the Blind and National Foundation of the Blind: Questions Kids Ask About Blindness websites. Teachers may also print out the pages from these websites, and have students work in groups to check their responses against the information provided by both organizations.
3. Reconvene students to share their ideas and research with the class, and to clarify answers. Chart responses of students, and add the following, if not mentioned by students:
   - People who are visually impaired or blind can travel unassisted, and some may use canes or guide dogs to do so. They plan their routes using certain landmarks to guide them, or by using trained guide dogs that follow their directions and commands (like 'right', 'forward', 'left', etc).
   - People with visual impairment or blindness who use guide dogs are reliant on their guide dogs to be alert; thus a person should not pet or distract a guide dog, and should always walk on the side opposite the guide dog so as not to stand as an obstacle in the way of the person.
   - Depending on the different levels of visual impairment a person may experience, some people with a visual disability may read written material in large print, whereas others may use Braille to read. (If possible, present a book coded in Braille for students to feel the raised points of Braille.)
   - In any physical space, it is helpful for a person with a visual disability to have bright light, and to have doors, stairs, electrical outlets, light switches, and railings along stairwells be painted in different colors from the wall so that they can recognize them more easily.
   - Always introduce yourself first to a person with a visual disability, before asking to make physical contact, like shaking their hand or hugging them. If you are in a large group, always have others introduce themselves too.
   - Some people who have a visual disability rely on their arms for balance; therefore, it is best to offer your arm or elbow for support if the person requests to be guided.
   - If you serve food to a person who is blind, describe to the person where everything is placed on the plate so that they know what they are consuming, and can avoid certain foods they may be allergic to.

Part III

1. Explain to students that they are going to work in their groups to discover how much they know about Helen Keller. Distribute a copy of the handout, *True/False Questions about the Life of Helen Keller*, to each student and ask students to work together in their groups to complete the handout.
2. Once each group has completed the quiz, review answers and share details about Helen Keller's life included in the *True/False Questions about the Life of Helen Keller Answer Key*.

3. Ask students some or all of the following discussion questions:
   - Were you surprised at some of the things that Helen Keller accomplished as a person who was deaf and blind?
   - What types of assumptions do you think people who are not disabled made about her being disabled?
   - How do you think she may have felt about the assumptions that people made about her?
   - How do you think people like Helen Keller challenged some of those assumptions?
   - Do you think these types of assumptions or attitudes about people with disabilities still exist today?
   - How can people change some of their attitudes or assumptions about people with disabilities?

Extension Activities

- Organize a class project for students to assess their school's accessibility to people with visual disabilities and/or other forms of disability. Select questions from the *Assessing Your School Environment for Access to People with Disabilities* resource sheet, and have students work together in research teams to investigate the accessibility of their school (as necessary, adapt statements to make developmentally appropriate).

- As an individual reading assignment, have students read the book *Sees Behind Trees* by Michael Dorris. Ask students to write a two-page essay in response to some or all of the questions below:

  Book Summary of *Sees Behind Trees*: Set in the pre-colonial past, this coming-of-age story is about a young Powhatan Indian boy with a visual impairment who dreads the warrior's test, a rite of passage for boys his age to enter manhood. He uses his acute senses of hearing and smell to prove his warrior ability, and is acknowledged by the adult name, *Sees Behind Trees,* which he is given by the weroance (expert on hunting) in the village. As a result of his skills, he is asked by a respected elder in the village to help him find an elusive land of waters deep in the forest.]

  a. What are some of the most important lessons that *Sees Behind Trees* learns from his journey to adulthood?

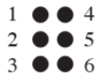
  b. How do his feelings about being visually disabled change from the beginning to the end of the story?

  c. How does *Sees Behind Trees* challenge negative assumptions or beliefs about people living with a disability?

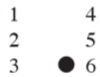
- Have students research and learn about the life story of Louis Braille, and his invention of Braille. Have students visit a local Braille bookstore or publisher to learn about the process of transcribing books into Braille.

Braille Alphabet

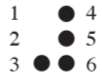
The six dots of the braille cell are arranged and numbered:

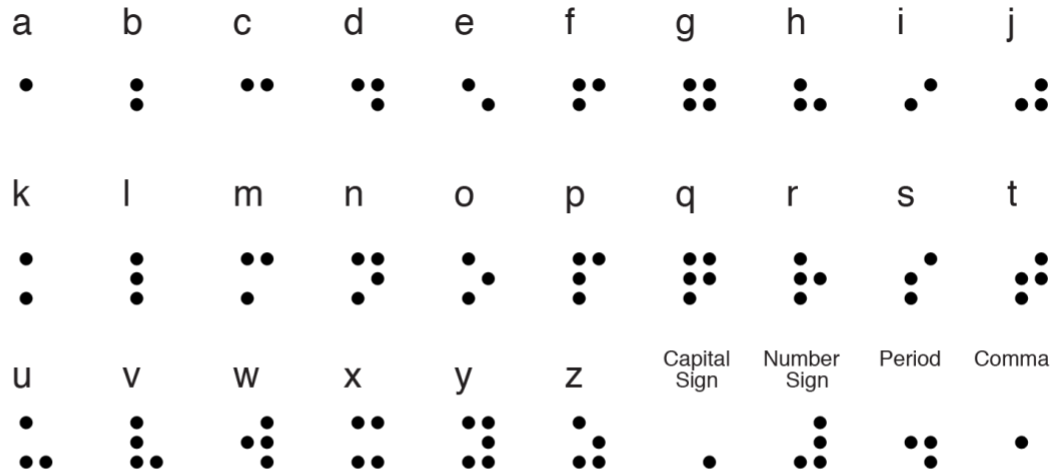


The capital sign, dot 6, placed before a letter makes a capital letter.



The number sign, dots 3, 4, 5, 6, placed before the characters a through j, makes the numbers 1 through 0. For example: a preceded by the number sign is 1, b is 2, etc.





NATIONAL BRAILLE PRESS INC.
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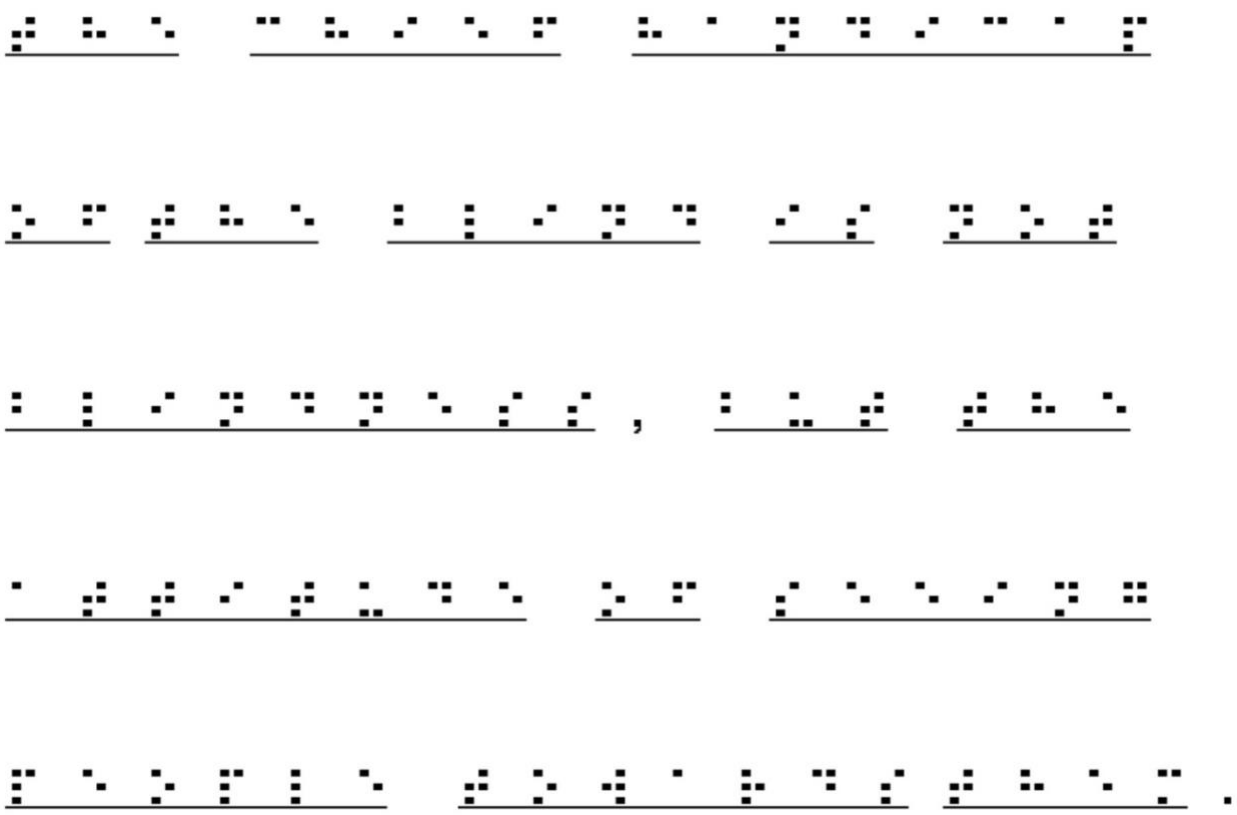
BOSTON, MA 02115
www.nbp.org

Famous Quote by Helen Keller Coded in Braille

Directions: Translate the quotation below using the *Braille Alphabet Card.* Then, discuss the questions below in your group. You may also puncture the points of Braille with your pen or pencil after you have transcribed the quote to feel what the quote would feel like to a person who is blind or has a visual disability.



Translation: _____

_____

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think was Helen Keller's message in this quote?
- What are some attitudes of "seeing people" towards people who are blind or who have a visual disability?
- How do these attitudes or beliefs affect the way "seeing people" behave towards people who are blind or who have a visual disability?
- How might people with a visual disability go about doing things differently from people who can see?

True/False Questions about the Life of Helen Keller

Directions: Work together in your group to complete this handout. Indicate whether you think the statement is true or false or circling "T" for true or "F" for false.

T F 1. Helen Keller was born in Alabama in 1880, and died in Connecticut in 1968.

T F 2. Helen Keller was born blind and deaf.

T F 3. Helen Keller was a famous poet.

T F 4. Helen Keller was not a well-behaved girl. She had many tantrums and broke a lot of dishes and lamps in her house when she was little.

T F 5. Helen Keller's teacher, Anne Sullivan, was also visually disabled. She lost most of her sight by the time she was seven years old.

T F 6. Helen Keller's teacher, Anne Sullivan, first taught Helen how to communicate by spelling out words in the palms of her hands.

T F 7. Helen Keller never went to college.

T F 8. Helen Keller was an activist, and wrote several essays and books about the life of poor people in the United States who were visually disabled or blind.

Helen Keller (left) at age 8 with her tutor Anne Sullivan (right) on vacation in Brewster, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, July 1888.

T F 9. In Helen Keller's time, women were campaigning for the right to vote. Helen Keller could not march with other women for the right to vote.

T F 10. Helen Keller traveled the world to Japan, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

True/False Questions about the Life of Helen Keller Answer Key

1. Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama, and died in Connecticut on June 1, 1968 at the age of 87.
   TRUE.

2. Helen Keller was born blind and deaf.
   FALSE. Helen Keller was born a healthy child with the ability to see and hear. When she was nearly two years old, she contracted a serious illness that left her blind and deaf. Her illness was never officially diagnosed by doctors at the time.

3. Helen Keller was a famous poet.
   TRUE. Helen Keller also wrote many essays and several books, two of which were autobiographies.

4. Helen Keller was not a well-behaved girl. She had many tantrums, and broke a lot of dishes and lamps in her house.
   TRUE. Helen Keller was very unruly until Anne Sullivan became her teacher at the age of seven. Anne Sullivan would punish her for her tantrums by ignoring her and not speaking to her for a while. Eventually, Helen stopped misbehaving.

5. Helen Keller's teacher, Anne Sullivan, was also visually disabled. She lost most of her sight by the time she was seven years old.
   TRUE. At the age of five, Anne Sullivan contracted an eye disease that severely damaged her sight causing her to be nearly blind by age seven, but she was able to correct some of her impairment with two surgeries later in life. Unfortunately, she lost most of her vision by the late 1920's and her right eye was removed due to chronic pain.

6. Helen Keller's teacher, Anne Sullivan, first taught Helen how to communicate by spelling out words in the palms of her hands.
   TRUE. However, when Helen learned how to read and write Braille, she mostly preferred to communicate sounding out or writing down her thoughts.

7. Helen Keller never went to college.
   FALSE. Helen Keller was the first deaf and blind person to graduate from college. She wanted to go to Harvard, but the institution didn't accept women at that time. She settled on her second choice, Radcliff College, which functioned as the female coordinate institution to the all-male Harvard College. Keller graduated Cum Laude from Radcliffe College in 1904. It wasn't until 1999 that the two institutions merged.

8. Helen Keller was an activist and wrote several essays and books about the life of poor people in the United States who were visually disabled or blind.
   TRUE. Helen Keller discovered after conducting a research study that most of the cases of blindness or visually disability in the early 1900's were of poor people who were injured in industrial accidents, or could not afford medical care to treat their disease that caused their disability. Helen Keller became an advocate for working class and poor people to receive proper medical care to avoid needless cases of visual disability whenever possible.

9. In Helen Keller's time, women were campaigning for the right to vote. Helen Keller could not march with other women for the right to vote.
   FALSE. Helen Keller was an activist for women's rights, and marched at the head of many women's suffrage parades.

10. Helen Keller traveled the world to Japan, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.
    TRUE. Helen and her friend Polly Thomson traveled all over the world raising money for the American Foundation for the Blind.

Sources

Biography, www.biography.com

Harvard College, https://college.harvard.edu/about/mission-and-vision/radcliffe

Helen Keller Foundation, http://helenkellerfoundation.org/helen-keller/

James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

Lesson 4 for Grades 6–8

Understanding Learning Differences

Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to increase understanding about learning differences and empathy for people who have them. Experts estimate that 6 to 10 percent of the school-aged population and nearly 40 percent of the children enrolled in the nation's special education classes have a learning disability; yet most students don't understand what learning disabilities are and those who learn differently frequently bear the stigma of being thought of as "slow," lazy, or "weird." During this lesson, students explore their own learning styles as the basis for understanding learning differences. Through simple brain research and articles, students learn the facts about learning differences, and through experiential exercises and personal testimony, students develop an appreciation for others with learning disabilities. The lesson concludes with a brief look at prominent historical and contemporary figures with learning differences and multiple intelligence theory in order to encourage an appreciation for brain diversity and emphasize the broad continuum of strengths and talents inherent in human beings.

[**NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL's resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability
- Disability Glossary
- Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability
- Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

Objectives

- Students will receive information about learning styles and identify their own dominant learning styles.
- Students will discover what learning disabilities are, how they are caused, and how they impact individuals.
- Students will experience various learning tasks that will increase their understanding of learning disabilities and their empathy for those who have them.
- Students will learn about successful people with learning disabilities and understand the idea of multiple intelligence.

Time

2–2½ hours or 3–4 class periods (if less time is available, conduct only Parts II and III, which can be completed in 50–90 minutes or 2 class periods)

Key Words

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
Auditory
Brain diversity
Brain scan
Compensate
Confidence
Decode
Dominant
Dysgraphia
Dyslexia
Dysnumeria
Empathy
Genetic
Heredity
Individualized Education Program (IEP)
Interpersonal
Intrapersonal
Kinesthetic
Linguistic
Metaphor
Learning difference
Learning disability
Learning style
Multiple intelligence
Phoneme
Phonics
Remedial
Resource Room
Self-esteem
Spatial
Verbal
Visual

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- *Learning Styles Questionnaire* (one for each student)
- *What is Your Dominant Learning Style?* (one for each student)
- *Mystery Photo* (one for each student)
- *Brain Scans* (one for each student)
- "Learning Disabilities" (KidsHealth, October 2013, one for each student)
- *Matt's Story* (one for each student)
- *My Struggle* (for teacher use)
- *Writing Activity: The Mechanics of Composing*, *Decoding Activity: Recognizing Phonemes* or *Sequence Activity: Multistep Problems* (one for each student)
- *Who Am I?* (one for each student)
- "Learning Disabilities and Disorders," (HelpGuide.org, for teacher use)
- *Multiple Intelligences* (one for each student)

Other Material:

- chart paper, markers, overhead or LCD projector, small hand mirrors (optional)

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Depending on which activity you choose to conduct, make enough copies of *Writing Activity: The Mechanics of Composing*, *Decoding Activity: Recognizing Phonemes* or *Sequence Activity: Multistep Problems* for each student (see Part III #2).
    - For *Writing Activity: The Mechanics of Composing,* students will need a mirror for this exercise. Small mirrors can probably be borrowed from the science department and students can work in pairs or small groups if it is necessary to share mirrors.)
    - For *Decoding Activity: Recognizing Phonemes,* fold back along the dotted line and tape, hiding the passage translation until after students have completed the exercise.
    - For *Sequence Activity: Multistep Problems,* fold back along the dotted line and tape, hiding the answer key until after students have completed the exercise.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing visual images, brainstorming, cooperative group work, critical thinking, forming opinions, interpreting personal testimony, large and small group discussion, reading skills, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: Learning Styles

1. Prior to the lesson, make the following preparations:
    a. Prepare three sheets of chart paper and title them "Visual," "Auditory," and "Kinesthetic." Divide each sheet into three columns and label them "Studying for a test," "Learning a new game," and "Finding a new place."
    b. Photocopy a class set of the following handouts back-to-back: *Learning Styles Questionnaire* and *What is Your Dominant Learning Style?*.
2. Begin the lesson by telling students that you are going to administer a quiz, but not to worry—it is the kind with no right or wrong answers; in fact, they won't even have to hand it in. Tell students that the survey will help them to explore the style of learning that is most effective for them. Distribute the *Learning Styles Questionnaire* and give students 5–10 minutes to fill it out.

NOTE: Direct students to look only at the questionnaire and not to read the information on the back of the sheet.

3. While students are working, post the three sheets of chart paper ("Visual," "Auditory," and "Kinesthetic") in different parts of the room. When students have completed tallying their responses at the bottom of the questionnaire, instruct them to turn their pages over and read, *What is Your Dominant Learning Style?*. Then direct students to move to the sheet of chart paper that reflects their dominant learning style (according to the questionnaire) and select a recorder for each group.

NOTE: If dividing students into three large groups presents management difficulties, consider creating two groups for each learning style (six groups in all) or facilitating the following discussion as a whole class.

4. Ask each group to discuss how they would typically approach each of the learning tasks listed on the chart paper and what strategies for taking in new information usually work best for them. As the group brainstorms, the recorder should list responses. For example, the "Visual" group might list the following responses:

Studying for a test

- Reading notes
- Creating charts, diagrams
- Creating pictures in my mind to help me remember facts

Learning a new game

- Looking at diagrams and instructions
- Watching others play
- Watching a video or TV

Finding a new place

- Reading or drawing a map
- Having someone show me the route
- Using landmarks to remember the way

5. Bring the whole class back together and allow each group approximately two minutes to share their responses. Use one or more of the following questions to process the activity:

- How were the results of the questionnaire consistent or inconsistent with your own ideas about the way you learn best?
- Did you discover anything new about your learning style? What did you learn?
- Will the questionnaire change the way that you approach new tasks? If so, how?
- Why do you suppose that different people learn in different ways?
- Do you think it would be better/easier if everyone learned in the same way? Why or why not?
- Is one style of learning better than another? Why or why not?

Part II: Understanding Learning Differences

1. Remind students that the learning styles questionnaire taken earlier highlighted our different ways of thinking and our various learning strengths and weaknesses. Point out that we all have different ways of learning, but that most of us are able to get by pretty well in school and in other learning situations. Suggest that some people's learning differences are more severe and impact their ability to read, write, speak, and perform other tasks that are expected of them in school and other learning situations. Tell students that when learning differences are this serious, they are often referred to as *learning disabilities.*

2. Write the term, LEARNING DISABILITIES, in the center of a sheet of chart paper. Ask students to share what they know about learning disabilities (definitions, types, what they have learned from their own experiences or heard from others, etc.) Write all of the students' responses at the end of spokes emanating from the center. Do not discuss or edit the responses at this time—simply write them down verbatim. Allow approximately five minutes for this webbing exercise.

3. Tell students that you are going to display a *Mystery Photo*. Project the image (using an LCD projector or smartboard) and challenge students to guess what it is. After a few guesses, tell students that it is a picture of an adult brain and that the red segments represent areas that were active while a study subject performed a reading task. Project *Brain Scans* and explain to students that a team of medical researchers at Georgetown University scanned the brains of 38 adults while performing reading tasks, and that half of these people have dyslexia (a learning disability that makes learning to read difficult). Point out that the brain images reveal different regions of activation in people with and without dyslexia. Ask students what they think researchers learned from this.

4. Explain to students that researchers believe that dyslexia and other learning disabilities occur because of the way the brain is formed and the way it processes the information it receives. Emphasize that people with learning disabilities are not less intelligent than others, but that their brains may actually be "wired" differently. Explain that for this reason, many

people prefer the term learning *difference* (able to learn in different ways) over learning *disability* (not able to learn). Though both terms are acceptable, encourage students to try and use the term *learning difference* in the future.

5. Return to the web created earlier around the term, LEARNING DISABILITIES. If students already noted brain or information processing differences, affirm their insight; otherwise, add this information to the web. If students included references to limited intelligence, cross them out and ask if there are any other ideas that need to be rethought (e.g., people with learning disabilities are lazy, unmotivated, careless, etc.) Encourage students to return to the web as the lesson proceeds in order to correct misconceptions and to add new information that they learn.
6. Distribute the articles, Learning Disabilities and Matt's Story. These articles can be read together in class or assigned as homework in order to increase students' understanding about what learning disabilities are, what causes them, and how they impact students' lives.

Part III: Building Empathy for People with Learning Differences

1. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud *My Struggle* aloud. Tell students that is was written by a 9th grade boy with learning differences. Allow students a few moments to silently reflect on this piece of writing. Ask them to think about one of the following metaphors and to discuss with a partner why Matt may have evoked this imagery to describe his school experience:

   a. tremendous, rocky mountain

   c. steep cliffs and jagged, slippery rocks

   d. grey and covered in dark, murky, cold clouds

   e. strong, howling, icy winds [that] contain frigid rain

   Allow a few students to share their thoughts with the whole class.

2. Tell students that, unlike physical disabilities, learning differences are usually invisible to us and it may therefore be harder to understand and empathize with the struggles of students like Matt. Lead students through one or more of the exercises below, which will help them to reflect on what it might feel like to have a learning difference. Depending upon the time available and the maturity of your students, these exercises can be facilitated by the teacher with the whole class at once or experienced autonomously by students in pairs or small groups.

   - Writing Activity: The Mechanics of Composing
   - Decoding Activity: Recognizing Phonemes
   - Sequence Activity: Multistep Problems

3. After students have experienced at least one of the exercises above, one or more of the following questions can be used to process their thoughts either through discussion or reflective writing:

   a. How did it feel as you tried to accomplish the task?

   b. How did time pressures or demands from the teacher/peers affect your ability to complete the task?

   c. How do you think you would feel if this were not just an exercise, but a consistent experience with school work?

   d. If you had a learning difference, how do you think it might impact your success at school, your self-esteem, and your relationships with others?

   e. Do you sometimes assume that a student with learning differences is lazy or "stupid"? Do you feel any differently now?

   f. Have you ever teased or excluded someone because of a learning difference? What might you do differently in the future?

Part IV: Multiple Intelligence

1. Distribute the *Who Am I?* handout to each student. Tell students that this handout contains brief biographies of successful people (living and dead) with learning differences. Post the names of the figures in the front of the room and challenge students to match them with each biography.

   Answer Key: 1. Tommy Hilfiger; 2. Richard Branson; 3. Ann Bancroft; 4. Pablo Picasso ; 5. Tom Cruise; 6. Leonard Da Vinci; 7. Thomas Edison; 8. Whoopi Goldberg; 9. Patricia Polacco

2. Ask students if they were surprised to find any particular names among this list of people with learning differences. Ask if they noticed any commonalities among the profiles. Highlight that most of these individuals had very negative school experiences and were labeled by others as unintelligent and incapable; that many of the people in their lives were not able to see past their learning differences and appreciate their talents. Pose the following question:

   - Is a learning difference a problem with the individual, or a problem with the people and society around him/her?

3. Suggest to students that it is important to address the issue of learning differences at both levels. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information from the article, "Learning Disabilities: Types, Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Causes":

   "Students with learning differences will have difficulty in school, so they must get help to find other ways to learn. [At the same time,] American society does not provide enough educational opportunities for people who learn differently."

   "Educational institutions can serve more people if they change to meet the needs of more types of learners. Dr. Mel Levine of the All Kinds of Minds Institute says that many children have brains that are wired differently…and so they learn differently. The problem is that standard schooling tends to assume that one kind of teaching will work for all kinds of students…In the best of all worlds, Levine would like educators to discover how each child learns best and what the individual's strengths are…Every child can be successful in learning and in life, if someone just discovers and teaches to those strengths."

4. Tell students that a well-known psychologist named Howard Gardner has come up with a way to describe our different strengths and the different ways in which we learn. Distribute the handout, *Multiple Intelligences*, to each student and review it together as a class. Point out that although school most often focuses on verbal and mathematical intelligence, there are many other ways of being smart and successful.

5. Ask students to discuss with a partner which types of intelligence are exhibited by the figures in the *Who Am I?* activity from earlier. Ask them to discuss where they see themselves on this continuum of intelligence and what kinds of aspirations they have for the future that might capitalize on their strengths and talents?

6. Conclude the lesson by reminding students to be open-minded and respectful of people with learning differences, and to appreciate "brain diversity" just as they would racial, ethnic, or religious diversity. Leave students with the following food for thought from Dr. Gordon F. Sherman, an expert on learning differences:

   "… brain diversity may benefit our species. History and science tell us environments inevitably change. Who knows what kinds of minds our species may need in the future? [Are learning differences] a biological mishap [or] nature's design?"

Extension Activity

Follow up on the above exploration by reading aloud or assigning a book to students that addresses learning differences. Have students do reflective writing, develop book or research reports, read aloud to younger students, or engage in other projects that will deepen their understanding about learning differences. The following resources will help you to select appropriate titles:

- ADL's Children's Literature on Disabilities
- Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability
- Web Links for Educators and Families About Learning Differences and Disabilities

Learning Styles Questionnaire

Name: _____

Directions: Check the items below that are true for you. You may check as many or as few as apply. Then, answer the three questions below.

____ It's easier for me to remember names than faces.
____ I create pictures in my mind to remember names.
____ I remember events better than names and faces.
____ I buy clothes for comfort more than appearance.
____ I buy clothes for appearance more than comfort.
____ I prefer to stop and ask for directions when finding my way in a new place.
____ I prefer reading a map when finding my way in a new place.
____ I like physically active games.
____ I enjoy crossword puzzles.
____ I remember a zip code or phone number by saying it aloud.
____ I use my free time for physical activities.
____ I prefer newspaper over radio for keeping up with news and current events.
____ I prefer radio over newspaper for keeping up with news and current events.
____ I spend a lot of my free time on arts, crafts, model-making, or mechanics.
____ I like reading and writing games like scrabble or crossword puzzles.
____ I prefer talking and listening games.
____ I'm quick in learning a new physical skill.
____ I'm an enthusiastic book reader.
____ I enjoy talking on the phone in my free time.
____ I prefer spoken directions when learning a new task.
____ I follow written recipes easily when cooking.
____ I tend to doodle and draw.
____ I'm an outdoor person.
____ I like to keep written records of things, such as a diary, journal, log book, etc.
____ I like to build, construct, and fix things.
____ I prefer listening to a CD over reading the same material.
____ When bored, I hum, sing, or engage others in conversation.

Count up your responses

1. How many of the visual items did you check *(Numbers 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24)*? _____
2. How many of the auditory items did you check *(Numbers 1, 6, 10, 11, 13, 16, 19, 20, 26, 27)*? _____
3. How many of the kinesthetic items did you check *(Numbers 3, 4, 8, 14, 17, 22, 23, 25)*? _____

What is Your Dominant Learning Style?

Learning styles are simply different ways of learning. Most learners use a combination of *visual, auditory,* and *kinesthetic* ways of receiving information. However, one or more of these styles is usually dominant. This dominant style defines the best way for a person to learn new information. This style may not always be the same for all tasks. Learners may prefer one style of learning for one task, and a combination of others for another task.

Visual learners

Visual learners learn best by seeing. They may need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual barriers (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos/DVDs, charts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information. Visual learners may find something to watch if they are bored.

Auditory learners

Auditory learners learn best through listening—lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners focus in on tone of voice, pitch, speed and other aspects of verbal presentations. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners prefer to sit where they can hear, but may not pay attention to what is happening up front. They may hum or talk to themselves or others when bored. Auditory learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Kinesthetic/Tactile learners

Kinesthetic learners learn best through moving, doing and touching. They prefer a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them, and enjoy activities such as cooking, construction, and art. They communicate by touching and appreciate physical encouragement from others (such as a pat on the back). Kinesthetic learners remember what was done, but may have difficulty recalling what was said or seen. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration. Kinesthetic learners often need to take frequent breaks and may tinker or move around when bored. They may benefit from sitting near the door or someplace that allows them to easily get up and move around.

Source: LdPride, "Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligence," www.ldpride.net.

Mystery Photo

Image courtesy of Society for Neuroscience and Guinevere Eden

Brain Scans

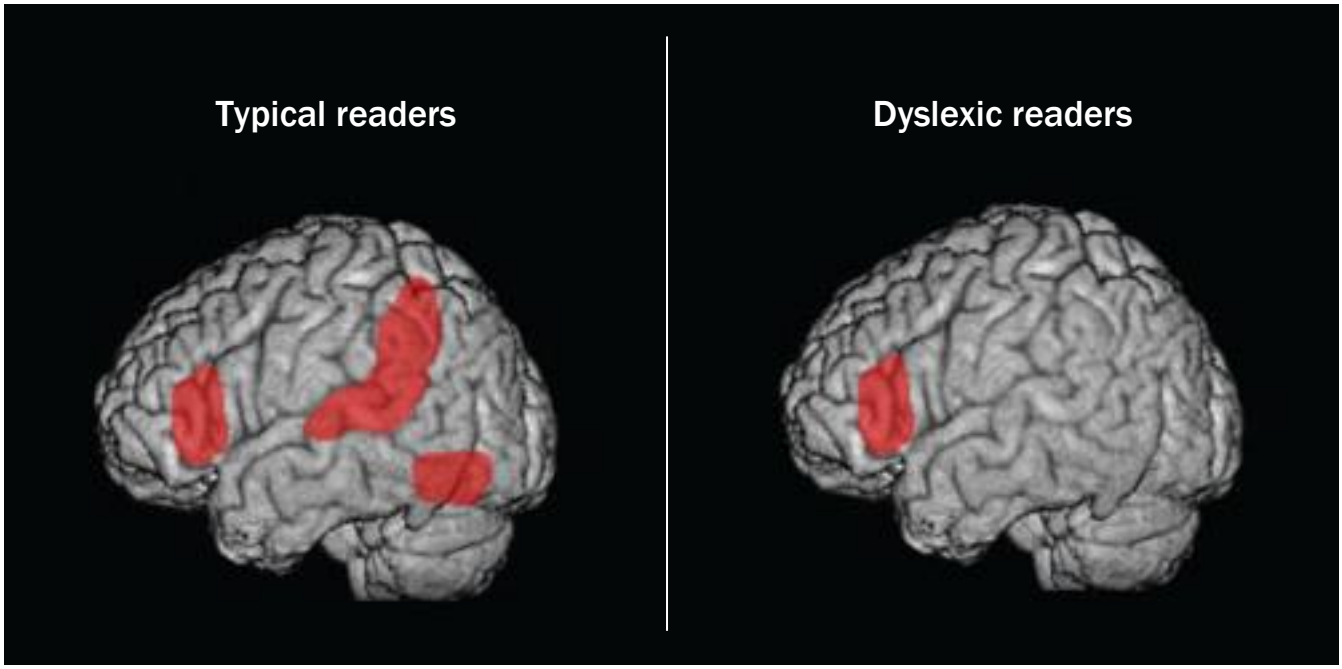


Image courtesy of Society for Neuroscience and Guinevere Eden

A team at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. scanned the brains of 38 adults, half of whom had dyslexia—a learning disability that makes learning to read difficult and which experts estimate affects up to 17% of people in the U.S. While being imaged, participants performed tasks that required the ability to interpret the sounds, or the phonics, of language. The brain images reveal different regions of activation (red) in people with and without dyslexia.

The fact that dyslexia affects smart people (Albert Einstein was dyslexic!) once puzzled scientists. Many figured that their reading problems must be due to laziness. Brain pictures like the one above, however, have helped scientists to understand that dyslexia is about biology, not motivation.

Research shows that people with dyslexia use the brain regions that process written language differently than others. When most readers are asked to pronounce the word "bus" without the "b" sound, for example, they easily say "us," and the brain pictures show their brains lighting up like pinball machines. The brains of people who can't sound out words, however, show less blood flow to the brain's language centers and less activity overall. Researchers are not sure what causes this problem, but without the ability to sound out words, the brain is stumped.

Some researchers have found that people with dyslexia can make up for the inactivity in the language part of their brain by using other areas, such as the region linked with spoken language in the front part of the brain. For example, people with dyslexia who say the words they are reading under their breath may be relying on this area to get through a passage of text.

Brain imaging technology and other research has helped scientists to understand that learning disabilities occur naturally in many people, and has enabled them to create better ways of diagnosing and treating the people who have them.

Matt's Story

What is dyslexia? That question is part of the problem of having dyslexia—many people don't even believe it exists. And those who do accept its existence think it is only reading backwards. Dyslexia is a number of things. In education it is officially called specific language disability. For people who have not been diagnosed it is sometimes called laziness or lack of concentration. For me it means a difference in the way my brain learns and recalls information, not only that sometimes letters and numbers get jumbled or that I have a hard time remembering if the symbol I'm looking at is a 7 or 9, a g or a j, or a lot of other things you'd never believe.

For me, it started early. Kindergarten was good enough until we got to numbers and letters and, of course, remembering what they were. First grade was worse, and by second grade I was falling farther behind. That was the first of many summers I would spend inside, or at clinic, working instead of playing. By third grade I was identified as learning disabled and began to go to the Resource Room for part of the day.

I never really felt different from everyone else though sometimes I felt slow, dumb, humiliated, and very frustrated. I knew what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go, but I just couldn't get there. One of the biggest struggles was to understand that I was a little different and that was OK.

When you have a hidden disability you become a "con artist." You learn to think, you find ways to get around things. Now that by itself isn't so much of a con as a survival skill, but the way you do it and why you do it is important. For instance, one of the things that has always gotten to me is the labels they put on public restrooms, not just "Ladies" and "Men" but also "Lads" and "Lasses," "Dame" and "Herren," you name it. You have to develop the skill and the attitude to know that there is more than one way to learn something or enter a door and sometimes you just have to learn to wait a minute, look at the situation, and maybe see who's going and coming.

Luckily for me I've had some very special teachers, understanding, creative, skilled, and caring. This doesn't stop the nerves and panic whenever I start a new class with a new teacher. What will their expectations be? Will they understand my disability? Will they be willing to help me—giving me time I need, or understanding that sometimes I do things in a different way, or that no matter how hard I try sometimes I still fail? It's pretty stressful until I get to know them and see how they react to my disability. But it has also taught me a lot of things I'll need to know later on in college. Some things, like "reading" a teacher, understanding their likes and dislikes and attitudes, are skills that my classmates are only starting to learn about. It's taught me how to communicate better, something I'm still working on, but it's very important for me to do.

It's very hard to keep a healthy mental attitude. If a person hasn't been identified it can lead to loss of self-esteem and eventually in many cases to jail. But even those of us who have been diagnosed have problems. This is a hidden disability and we have to deal not only with our own feelings but also with people who don't understand and resort to verbal abuse, or make things more difficult. One example I can think of was when I applied for my first job last year. Even though I'd had my mother help me complete the forms at home, the secretary still wasn't satisfied. When I asked her to slow down and explain a little more because I was dyslexic, she became very sarcastic and asked if I was able to at least sign my name. I got over that, but it makes me concerned about how things will be in the future. It's hard to be confident about my abilities.

Perhaps that is the most important thing for dyslexics to remember, to be confident. Confident that they are intelligent and capable of doing anything they want to do. They may have to do it differently, maybe get a little help, work longer, and harder, but they can do it.

—Matt, Age 16, Ventura, CA

Reprinted with permission from Yuri Morita, *Take A Walk In My Shoes: Guide Book for Youth on Diversity Awareness Activities* (CA: Office of Affirmative Action, Division of Agriculture & National Resources, University of California, 1996).

My Struggle

School has been and still is something that I dread profusely. Going to school has been like climbing up a tremendous, rocky mountain with steep cliffs and jagged, slippery rocks. This mountain is very grey and always covered in dark, murky, cold clouds. I step forth to take on this task of climbing this huge mountain. Each step is a battle against strong, howling, icy winds. The winds contain frigid rain that slams against my body, trying to push me down. I keep battling my way up. Sometimes I am knocked down, and sometimes I have to stop to regain my strength. My body is numb. My hands shake like leaves in the wind as I claw myself up the mountainside. Not being able to open my eyes, I blindly claw myself up the steep cliff. I stop because I am in such great pain. I look up and see that my struggle has hardly begun. Sometimes I just do not want to go on any further.

—Matt, Grade 9, Boston, MA, October 2003

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Source: LD Online KidZone Magazine, www.ldonline.org

Writing Activity: The Mechanics of Composing

Dysgraphia is a learning disability that makes it difficult to automatically remember the movements needed to write letters or numbers. It can interfere with communication of ideas through writing by causing poor handwriting, random punctuation, spelling errors, irregular letter sizes and shapes, letter and number reversals, disordered numbering, mixture of upper/lower case letters or print/cursive letters, unfinished words or letters, and slow copying and writing. Students with dysgraphia are often misunderstood as lazy, careless, unmotivated, or "slow" when in fact they may not have control over the motor functions needed to write clearly. These students may experience high levels of frustration when they are unable to translate ideas that they can easily think and speak about on to the written page. As a result, teachers and others often have an incomplete understanding of what these students know.

The following activity may help you to understand the frustration that a student with a writing disability feels.

1. Take out a pencil and a piece of paper.
2. Have a partner hold up a mirror.
3. Put the paper against your forehead.
4. Looking into the mirror, write the word good.
5. Look at the word. Did you write it correctly?
6. Try again.

Now pretend that the teacher is standing next to you. "Hurry up!," she says. "Everyone else is finished!" No matter how smart you are or how hard you are trying, you can't do it right. Think of your brain as a giant computer. Like a machine, it sometimes has bad connections. A short circuit comes if the brain gets "overloaded." It gets overloaded when too many messages come in at once from your eyes, ears, nose, and fingers. These messages get confused. You wish you had a fine tuning knob behind your ear to bring things back into focus. For learning disabled children, this "brain scramble" shows up in many ways. It shows in thinking, reading, writing and talking. You can imagine how frustrating it is to read, write, and talk with "brain scramble." No wonder some learning disabled kids think that they are stupid or crazy.

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Adapted and reprinted by permission from Caroline Janover, *JOSH: A Boy With Dyslexia* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2004).

Decoding Activity: Recognizing Phonemes

Phonemes are the building blocks of language. Represented by letters of the alphabet, they are the component sounds of spoken words. Most people automatically hear, for example, that the word "goat" is made up of three sounds: "guh," "oh," and "tuh."

Reading requires the ability to map the phonemes we hear to letters on a page, and vice versa. But what happens when this basic skill, called decoding, doesn't come automatically? Imagine struggling to sound out every word because you can't distinguish among phonemes.

Activity

Take a few moments to familiarize yourself with this phoneme translation key. Then use it to read the passage that follows aloud to yourself or to a roomful of your peers.

Phoneme translation key:

When you see:	Pronounce as:
q	d or t
z	m
p	b
b	p
ys	er
a, as in bat	e, as in pet
e, as in pet	a, as in bat

Passage:

We pegin our qrib eq a faziliar blace, a poqy like yours enq zine. Iq conqains a hunqraq qrillion calls qheq work qogaqhys py qasign. Enq wiqhin each one of qhese zany calls, each one qheq hes QNA, Qhe QNA coqe is axecqly qhe saze, a zess-broquceq rasuze. So qhe coqe in each call is iqanqical, a razarkaple puq veliq claiz. Qhis zeans qheq qhe calls are nearly alike, puq noq axecqly qhe saze. Qake, for insqence, qhe calls of qhe inqasqines; qheq qhey're viqal is cysqainly blain. Now qhink apouq qhe way you woulq qhink if qhose calls wyse qhe calls in your prain.

Passage translation:

We begin our trip at a familiar place, a body like yours and mine. It contains a hundred trillion cells that work together by design. And within each one of these many cells, each one that has DNA, The DNA code is exactly the same, a mass-produced resume. So the code in each cell is identical, a remarkable but valid claim. This means that the cells are nearly alike, but not exactly the same. Take, for instance, the cells of the intestines; that they're vital is certainly plain. Now think about the way you would think if those cells were the cells in your brain.

—Excerpted from "Journey into DNA," NOVA Online

So how did you do? Assuming you found the exercise difficult (that was our intention), consider that we disguised only eight of the forty-four known phonemes in the English language. And imagine if this weren't a game.

Source: Misunderstood Minds at www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds

Sequence Activity: Multistep Problems

Many students with math disabilities find complex, multistep math problems particularly difficult. Even children who did well in their early school years—easily learning basic arithmetic and math facts—may reach fourth grade and suddenly find math next to impossible.

Integration is an important part of school mathematics from the fourth grade on. The ability to perform multiple operations in the proper sequence (for instance, adding as well as multiplying in a long multiplication problem) or to hold on to one piece of information while remembering another is critical to a child's success in mathematics.

Activity

The problem set below is designed to evoke in you the intimidation and frustration a young student with a math disability might feel working out a problem that requires the integration of mathematics skills. Give yourself one minute to solve all three problems.

Follow all four instructions below to solve each of the three problems. Enter your answer into the space provided.

A. Multiply the third number in the first row by the seventh number in the third row.

B. Add this result to the fifth number in the second row.

C. Add to this total ten times the fourth number in the third row.

D. Subtract the eighth number in the first row from the result.

Problem 1: 6 5 8 7 4 5 6 8 4
3 2 1 9 5 6 4 2 1
6 5 1 5 1 3 2 3 5

Answer: _____

Problem 2: 7 5 4 9 9 5 4 4 1
2 5 1 4 8 9 6 6 8
5 7 5 7 5 7 6 8 2

Answer: _____

Problem 3: 1 2 3 7 6 5 4 3 2
8 4 3 2 1 6 5 4 8
6 5 5 8 1 7 5 12 6

Answer: _____

Did you find the quiz difficult? The thing is, none of the calculations were difficult by themselves. They are simple math facts. Together, though, and with a little time pressure added in, simple problems may become complex and overwhelming. Success in mathematics, particularly in later grades, also depends on language and writing skills, for instance interpreting word problems or mastering complex symbolism. Imagine adding these complexities to the problems above.

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Source: Misunderstood Minds at www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds

Answer Key: Problem 1: 63 Problem 2: 98 Problem 3: 93

Who Am I?

1. Born one of nine siblings in 1951, this world-famous fashion designer reports that "I performed poorly at school…and was perceived as stupid because of my dyslexia. I still have trouble reading." This person dreamed of working in fashion from a young age and opened his first clothing store, "The People's Place," in the 1970s. After the business went bankrupt, this person headed to New York City to concentrate on fashion design. Although he was a relative unknown (and short on money), this person turned down job offers from the famous designers Calvin Klein and Perry Ellis in order to pursue dreams of his own company , which today employs over 5,400 people and takes in almost $2 billion each year.

   Who am I? _____

2. This British businessman was educated at an exclusive School, but did not do well due to his nearsightedness and dyslexia. Despite these problems, he developed a national magazine and a student advisory service while he was still a teenager. After leaving school, this person started a mail-order music catalogue, which eventually led to the formation of Virgin Records, one of the largest music companies in the world. He went on to form Virgin Airlines, a mobile phone network, an internet company, and even a Cola. Known for his personal adventures, this person crossed the Atlantic in the first and largest hot air balloon to cross the ocean, and plans someday to circle the world in his hot air balloon.

   Who am I? _____

3. This preeminent polar explorer was diagnosed with dyslexia in the seventh grade. Though her learning differences made school extremely frustrating, she never gave up on her dream. She is the first known woman in history to cross the ice to both the North and South Poles. She was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame in 1995 and has received numerous other awards for her accomplishments.

   Who am I? _____

4. Born in 1881 in Spain, this famous artist was both controversial and trend-setting. He attended local parochial schools, had difficulties with reading, and was labeled a dyslexic. Despite the difficulties that a learning disability posed in school, it became clear that he had an incredible talent. He had a unique sense of beauty and painted things as he saw them—out of order, backwards or upside down. His paintings—including *Guernica* and *The Young Ladies of Avignon*—demonstrated the power of imagination, emotion, and creativity.

   Who am I? _____

5. This famous actor grew up poor and moved around a lot while his father looked for work. He suffered from dyslexia and was put into remedial classes at school. Though academic subjects were challenging, this person competed in many sports and appeared in a number of plays. After school he focused all his energy on developing an acting career, and never let his learning disability stand in the way of success. Today, he learns movie lines for films such as *Mission: Impossible* and *Jerry Maguire* by listening to a tape.

   Who am I? _____

6. Born in Italy in 1452, this famous painter and sculptor was also was an internationally renowned inventor, scientist, engineer, architect, musician, mathematician, astronomer, geologist, biologist, and philosopher in his time. He was also believed to suffer from a number of learning disabilities, including dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. It appears that this person wrote his notes backwards, from right to left, in a mirror image (a trait shared by many left-handed dyslexic people). This person overcame his learning disabilities by funneling his creative talents into visual depictions of his thoughts. The *Mona Lisa* is one of his most famous paintings.

   Who am I? _____

7. This scientist and inventor was thrown out of school at age 12 because he was thought to be terrible at mathematics, unable to focus, and had difficulty with words and speech. It was very clear, however, that this person was an extremely intelligent student despite poor performance in school. He was an avid reader of the latest research of the day and frequently contributed articles about new ideas in telegraph design to technical journals. Over the course of his career, this person patented 1,093 inventions, including the phonograph and the motion picture camera.

   Who am I? _____

8. This outstanding American entertainer had a lot of difficulty in school, but did not learn until she was an adult that she has dyslexia. Growing up, this person remembers being called dumb and stupid because she had a lot of problems reading. It was clear to her teachers and family that she was neither slow nor dumb, but had some problem that had not yet been well defined. Despite dyslexia, this person has had a successful film and television career, appearing in major motion picture hits like *Ghost, Jumping Jack Flash, The Color Purple,* and *Star Trek: Generations.*

   Who am I? _____

9. This well-known children's book author did not start writing until the age of 41. Diagnosed as having Dyslexia, Dysnumeria and Dysgraphia at the age of 14, she did not learn to read well until high school, when a teacher got her the additional help needed to overcome her reading problems. This person went on to major in Fine Art and receive a Ph.D. in Art History. She has written a book, called *Thank You, Mr. Falkner,* about her experiences with learning differences and the teacher who helped her. Some of her other titles include *Mrs. Katz and Tush, The Keeping Quilt,* and *Pink and Say.*

   Who am I? _____

Multiple Intelligences

Conceived by Howard Gardner, Multiple Intelligences are seven different ways to demonstrate intellectual ability.

Visual/Spatial Intelligence

The ability to perceive the visual. These learners tend to think in pictures and need to create vivid mental images to retain information. They enjoy looking at maps, charts, pictures, videos, and movies.

- Their skills include: Puzzle building, reading, writing, understanding charts and graphs, a good sense of direction, sketching, painting, creating visual metaphors and analogies (perhaps through the visual arts), manipulating images, constructing, fixing, designing practical objects, interpreting visual images
- Possible career interests: Navigator, sculptor, visual artist, inventor, architect, interior designer, mechanic, engineer

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence

The ability to use words and language. These learners have highly developed auditory skills and are generally elegant speakers. They think in words rather than pictures.

- Their skills include: Listening, speaking, writing, story-telling, explaining, teaching, using humor, understanding the syntax and meaning of words, remembering information, convincing someone of their point of view, analyzing language usage
- Possible career interests: Poet, journalist, writer, teacher, lawyer, politician, translator

Logical/Mathematical Intelligence

The ability to use reason, logic and numbers. These learners think conceptually in logical and numerical patterns making connections between pieces of information. Always curious about the world around them, these learners ask lots of questions and like to do experiments.

- Their skills include: Problem solving, classifying and categorizing information, working with abstract concepts to figure out the relationship of each to the other, handling long chains of reason to make local progressions, doing controlled experiments, questioning and wondering about natural events, performing complex mathematical calculations, working with geometric shapes
- Possible career paths: Scientist, engineer, computer programmer, researcher, accountant, mathematician

Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence

The ability to control body movements and handle objects skillfully. These learners express themselves through movement. They have a good sense of balance and eye-hand co-ordination. (e.g. ball play, balancing beams). Through interacting with the space around them, they are able to remember and process information.

- Their skills include: Dancing, physical co-ordination, sports, hands on experimentation, using body language, crafts, acting, miming, using their hands to create or build, expressing emotions through the body
- Possible career paths: Athlete, physical education teacher, dancer, actor, firefighter, artisan

Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence

The ability to produce and appreciate music. These musically inclined learners think in sounds, rhythms and patterns. They immediately respond to music either appreciating or criticizing what they hear. Many of these learners are extremely sensitive to environmental sounds (e.g. crickets, bells, dripping taps).

- Their skills include: Singing, whistling, playing musical instruments, recognizing tonal patterns, composing music, remembering melodies, understanding the structure and rhythm of music
- Possible career paths: Musician, disc jockey, singer, composer

Interpersonal Intelligence

The ability to relate and understand others. These learners try to see things from other people's point of view in order to understand how they think and feel. They often have an uncanny ability to sense feelings, intentions and motivations. They are great organizers, although they sometimes resort to manipulation. Generally they try to maintain peace in group settings and encourage cooperation. They use both verbal (e.g. speaking) and non-verbal language (e.g. eye contact, body language) to open communication channels with others.

- Their skills include: Seeing things from other perspectives (dual-perspective), listening, using empathy, understanding other people's moods and feelings, counseling, co-operating with groups, noticing people's moods, motivations and intentions, communicating both verbally and non-verbally, building trust, peaceful conflict resolution, establishing positive relations with other people
- Possible career paths: Counselor, salesperson, politician, business person

Intrapersonal Intelligence

The ability to self-reflect and be aware of one's inner state of being. These learners try to understand their inner feelings, dreams, relationships with others, and strengths and weaknesses.

- Their skills include: Recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, reflecting and analyzing themselves, awareness of their inner feelings, desires and dreams, evaluating their thinking patterns, reasoning with themselves, understanding their role in relationship to others
- Possible career paths: Researcher, theorist, philosopher

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Source: Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligence, www.ldpride.net

Lesson 5 for Grades 9–12

History of the Disabilities Right Movement

Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is for students to examine how past prejudicial attitudes and social exclusion of people with disabilities led to the rise of a nationwide, grassroots movement for the recognition of equal rights, equal access and equal treatment of people with disabilities. Students will consider how ableist assumptions are rooted in past stereotypical portrayals of disability, and will be challenged to reflect on their own assumptions and attitudes towards people with disabilities. Students will also learn about current day issues concerning the disability community, and will work in concert with disability advocates to take action in their own community on a disability rights issue.

[**NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL's resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability
- Disability Glossary
- Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability
- Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

Objectives

- Students will analyze stereotypical portrayals of people with disabilities in the media from past to present.
- Students will consider the influence of age-old stereotypes of people with disabilities on current attitudes today.
- Students will examine their attitudes and assumptions towards people with disabilities.
- Students will learn about the disability rights movement, and research the role of key leaders and organizations in the movement.
- Students will assess the accessibility of their school for the full inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Students will learn terminology and communication guidelines on disability.
- Students will research current issues facing the disability community, and take action in their community on a disability rights issue.

Time

1½ hours or 1–2 class periods for Parts I and II. (Parts III–V are optional, and provide a more in-depth study of disability rights. If time allows, one or more of the activities in Parts III–V may be implemented as an extension to the first two parts of the lesson.)

Key Words

Accessibility
Advocate
Allocation
Disability
Discrimination
Impoverishment
Independent living
Marginalization
Mobilize
Prejudice
Reasonable accommodation
Rehabilitation
Segregation
Self-determination
Stereotype
Sterilization
Stigmatization
Vocational training

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- *Disability Culture Series: Disability Portrayal and the Media Today*
- *Disability Glossary* (one for each student)
- *A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement* (one for each student)
- *History of the Treatment of Disability Portrayed in Pictures and Words, 1849–1939* (one for each student)
- History of Disability Rights & Self-Determination in Pictures and Words (Post-1940) PowerPoint (for teach use)
- *Assessing Your School Environment for Access to People with Disabilities* (one for each student)
- *Group Research Project: History of the Disability Rights Movement* (one for each student)
- *Communication Guidelines Related to Ability* (one for each student)

Other Material:

- LCD panel and overhead screen or smart board
- chart paper, markers, student journals

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Download the PowerPoint *History of Disability Rights & Self-Determination in Pictures and Words (Post-1940)*. When opening this file a dialog window will appear asking for a password. Click on the "Read Only" bottom, then prepare and cue the PowerPoint to the first slide. When ready to show, click on the slideshow icon ( ) in the bottom right hand corner. The slides will automatically advance, allowing enough time to read and view. (If providing a slideshow format is not possible, distribute copies of the handout *History of Disability Rights & Self-Determination in Pictures and Words (Post-1940)* to each student). See Part II #3.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing primary documents, collecting and analyzing data, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, critical thinking and reasoning, essay writing, examining historical photographs, forming opinions, historical understanding, journal writing, large and small group discussion, media literacy, research skills, social action, using the internet

Procedures

Part I (45 minutes)

1. Begin the lesson with a journal assignment for homework the previous night. Distribute copies of the *Disability Culture Series: Disability Portrayal and the Media Today* and *Disability Glossary* handouts for each student to read as a homework assignment, and ask students to respond to the following questions in their journals:
   a. What kinds of stereotypes or assumptions have you heard about people with disabilities?
   b. What have been some of your personal experiences with people with disabilities?
2. Hold a class discussion using the following questions:
   - What is a disability?
   - What types of disabilities could a person have?
   - What is the difference between a "disability" and a "handicap"? (Explain to students that the word "handicap" was commonly used to refer to people with disabilities, but that it is an offensive term and should no longer be used. The origin of the word "handicap" is literally a person with "cap in hand", or beggar. Because of this negative association, it is disrespectful to call a person with a disability "handicapped". The more appropriate and respectful term is "person with a disability". Explain to students that a disability describes a person's mental or physical impairment, whereas a handicap describes a barrier in the environment that limits that person's opportunity to enjoy in everyday activities, such as not having ramps or elevators in a school for a student who uses a wheelchair.)

3. Divide students into groups of four and have them remember their groups as they will complete the lesson in these same groups through Part IV. Pose the following questions, and ask students to discuss their reactions to the *Disability Culture Series: Disability Portrayal and the Media Today* handout:
   - What are some common stereotypes or assumptions made about people with disabilities?
   - In what ways has the stereotypical portrayal of people with disabilities in the media affected attitudes and perceptions about people with disabilities?
4. As a class group assignment, or as a journal assignment, distribute copies of the handout *A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement* for each student to read and review. Ask students to respond to the following questions in their groups or in their journals:
   a. What are some of the attitudes towards people with disabilities in your school? In your community?
   b. How do people with disabilities participate in your school and community life?

Part II (45 minutes)

1. Distribute copies of the handout *History of the Treatment of Disability Portrayed in Pictures and Words, 1849–1939* to each student. In their groups, ask students to analyze the images in the handout and discuss one or more of the following questions:
   a. What feelings or thoughts do these images evoke for you?
   b. What are the messages being portrayed through these images?
   c. Who is missing or not represented in these pictures?
   d. What do these messages indicate about the treatment and perceptions of people with disabilities prior to 1940?
   e. In what ways has the historical treatment of people with disabilities affected the attitudes and behaviors towards people with disabilities today?
2. Hold a class discussion to review group responses to the questions listed above.
3. Show the slideshow in *History of Disability Rights & Self-Determination in Pictures and Words (Post-1940).* As students are viewing each image in the slideshow, ask them to write down any words that come to mind to describe their thoughts and reactions to the images. (If providing a slideshow format is not possible, distribute copies of the handout *History of Disability Rights & Self-Determination in Pictures and Words (Post-1940)* to each student).
4. Hold a class discussion using the following questions (and if possible, allow the last photograph of the slide show to remain displayed as students respond to the following questions):
   a. What are the messages being portrayed through the words and images in these pictures, and how are they similar or different to those from 1849–1939?
   b. How do the images in this slide show differ from decade to decade?
   c. How do these images portray a shift in attitudes from exclusion and charity, to self-determination and independence of people with disabilities?
   d. In what ways do these images challenge stereotypes about people with disabilities?
5. As a class group assignment, or as a journal assignment, distribute copies of the handout *Assessing Your School Environment for Access to People with Disabilities* for each student to read and review. Ask students to respond to the following question in their groups or in their journals:
   - Are all buildings, classes, extracurricular activities and educational services accessible to people with disabilities in your school?

Part III (2–3 weeks to complete research assignments & 40 minutes for class debrief)

1. Explain to students that they are going to have an opportunity to study the evolution of the disability rights movement through the eyes of disability activists and the organizations that lobbied for key civil rights legislation for people with disabilities. Distribute the *Group Research Project: History of the Disability Rights Movement* and *Communication Guidelines Related to Ability* handouts to each student.
2. Divide students into their original groups of four. Assign each group one of the following disability rights organizations to research (each group should research a different organization):
   a. Disabled in Action (1970)
   b. Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California (1972)
   c. American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (1975–1983)
   d. American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (1983)
   e. World Institute on Disability (1983)
3. Explain to students that they should determine their timeline for conducting research and completing tasks as a group. Remind students to research any of the questions that remain unanswered from earlier in the lesson.
4. Once completed, have students prepare and present a 5–10 minute presentation of their individual group research projects. Groups should present in chronological order, following the development of the disability rights movement and the founding of the disability rights organizations listed above.
5. After each group has presented, pose the following discussion questions to the class:
   - In what ways do we see the advancements and results of the disability rights movement being lived out today?
   - Are there issues of inequitable treatment or lack of accessibility for people with disabilities in our school? In our community?
   - How can people who are not disabled be allies to people with disabilities in gaining greater rights to access and equity?

Part IV (1 week to complete research and write paper)

1. In their groups, or as an individual homework assignment, have students research current issues of inequity facing people with disabilities. These could be issues facing students with disabilities in their own school, or could apply to the general population of people with disabilities nationwide. Students should write a brief, one-page paper describing one of the current issues of inequity facing people with disabilities, and at least two forms of action they could take as allies or student activists in gaining equal rights and treatment for people with disabilities. Students may conduct interviews, contact local disability organizations and may use the following websites, to conduct their research (remind students to revisit the *Communication Guidelines Related to Ability* handout before reaching out to people in the disability community).
   - American Association of People with Disabilities: www.aapd-dc.org
   - Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund: www.dredf.org
   - Independent Living USA: www.ilusa.com
   - Institute on Independent Living: www.independentliving.org
   - National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities: www.nichcy.org
   - National Organization on Disability: www.nod.org
   - World Institute on Disability: www.wid.org
2. Once students have submitted their papers, ask students to share the results of their research with the class. On chart paper, list the various issues of disability rights that students recorded in their individual research papers.

Part V (1–2 months to research and complete projects)

1. Ask students to review the list of issues researched by the class, and to choose five (by consensus) that they are most interested in learning more about and taking action on.
2. Post five pieces of chart paper around the room and write at the top of each chart paper one of the five disability rights issues chosen by the students.
3. Have students choose which of the five issues they would like to work on by walking to the chart paper with the topic they are most interested in learning more about and taking action on. (If groups are uneven, ask students if they would be willing to move to a different group to take action on another disability rights issue.)
4. Once groups have been determined, have students spend five minutes writing down on their group chart paper various ways they could learn more about their selected disability rights issue, and different forms of action they could take as a group to create awareness about the issue in their school and/or community.
5. Once each group has brainstormed various forms of action they could take on their selected issue, inform each group to choose one form of action to implement in their school and/or community. Ask each group to come to a consensus on which form of action they will implement.
6. Inform students that once their group has chosen their project (such as helping to make their school more accessible, or writing letters to local politicians to ensure local voting stations are accessible to people with disabilities), they will build an action plan that reflects:
   a. the specific goal of their group project,
   b. ways they will outreach and include people with disabilities in their organizing and campaigning steps,
   c. specific action steps they will take to achieve their project goal,
   d. a timeline that reflects when and where they will complete the action steps they have outlined.
7. Review the action plan of each group to ensure that each of the four questions listed above has been completed satisfactorily. Once each group's action plan has been approved, students may begin implementation of their action project or campaign.
8. After students have had time to successfully complete their action projects, ask each group to give a presentation to the class on the following:
   a. the successes of their group's project or campaign,
   b. how they went about working in coordination with the disability community,
   c. challenges that may have arisen, and
   d. their individual impression of the impact of their group project or campaign on their school and/or community.
9. Encourage students to continue taking action on disability rights issues by implementing an additional action project. For each additional project that students pursue, they should repeat steps 4–8 to ensure students meet and reflect on their project goals.

Extension Activities:

- Study race and gender issues within the disability community.
- Compare and contrast differences and similarities between the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement, and the disability rights movement.
- Research abuse and murder of people with disabilities by Nazi doctors and the Third Reich during the Holocaust.
- Study the real life story of Helen Keller as a suffragist and human rights activist.
- Research policies on disability access of potential college choices of high school juniors and seniors.

Disability Culture Series: Disability Portrayal and the Media Today

Tiny Tim. Helen Keller. Captain Hook. These three very different personalities have one thing in common: a disability. Tiny Tim brought tears to the eyes of young and old as he faced the adversity of hobbling around on crutches at such a tender age while enthusiastically exclaiming "God Bless us everyone!". The story of Helen Keller inspired many as we watched her face deafness, blindness, and underestimation on her way to brilliance. And Captain Hook? We scorned that bitter, scheming captain with a hook for a hand as he attempted to bring demise to the ever-magical boy in green tights. If you let these three legendary characters swirl in your brain for a minute, you just might be able to relive the heartbreaking innocence and irony of Tiny Tim's blessing, the feeling of general good as Helen Keller finally achieved the fame she so richly deserved, and the deep hatred for the despicable, evil Captain Hook.

What you likely won't realize is the typical stereotypes that these characters fulfill and have been fulfilling in the media for decades on end, disabled innocence (Tiny Tim), disabled inspiration (Helen Keller), and disabled evil (Captain Hook). Think about it. When was the last time you tripped through the crowded school halls, only to pass a child on crutches blessing random students? Chances are he worked his way through with an occasional smile, facing a well-meant "hang in there" and a few awkward, demeaning looks. And while all people in general have a bit of extraordinary in them, it's very rare that a person with a disability achieves something great enough to win the attention of the media, no matter how misguided the media's standards might be.

The "Cinema of Isolation" has been just as harsh, if not harsher for more than a century (Norden, 1994)…people with disabilities debuted in the movies with the crude "humor" of Thomas Edison's fifty second *The Fake Beggar* [an 1898 film by Thomas Edison considered to be the first film addressing disabilities in which a man pretends to be blind in order to collect some extra money and is eventually chased by the police (Ivory, 1997)]. People with disabilities continued to be used for "frivolous shocks and gags" early on as in 1908's *Don't Pull My Leg,* staring a stolen prosthetic leg as the main source of entertainment. Some films, such as 1931's *City Lights,* refuse to deal with the (in many cases) finality of a disability. This classic Charlie Chaplin movie starred a young girl who was cured of her blindness during the duration of the film, "allowing" the story to end happily ever after.

In the past and unfortunately still today, few movies seem to contain the element of disability at the end. The movie usually concludes with the character with disabilities being cured or dying, leading the viewer to the assumption that life with a disability can in no way be rewarding or fulfilling. Many saw a light at the end of the tunnel with 1946's *The Best Years of Our Lives,* starring WWII vet Harold Russell, who lived with a disability in real life. Numerous members of the disability community applauded the opportunity for a person with a disability to actually portray himself in a movie…

An end to the unfair portrayal and unrealistic depiction of people with disabilities has yet to see an end, however. Films even as late as 1989, such as *See No Evil, Hear No Evil* featured Robert Pryor and Gene Wilder milking puns and laughs from visual and hearing impairments. Enduring cinema characters such as Peter Pan's Captain Hook and Star War's Darth Vader (who requires a mechanical breathing device to live) continue to portray their characters with malicious bitterness. This only compounds the damage that has been done, is being done, and will be done to the character of disabled people worldwide… One would think that honest, open global journalism would be a redemption from the stereotypical views of society with its scandalous breakthrough news and exposes. Sadly, a study entitled "News Coverage of Disability Issues" reported that "Almost seventy percent [of the stories concerning disability] had no identifiable source with a disability in it …" (Haller, 1999). Just what does this mean to us as readers? People with disabilities simply aren't being consulted on disability issues, or any other issues for that matter. "Print journalists are much more likely to use people with disabilities as examples in their news stories rather than as sources" (Haller, 1999). "The message that may be getting to the public…(is that)…people with disabilities can't speak for themselves" the 1998 study stated.

"After decades of stereotyped, often demeaning portrayals, has Hollywood gotten any better at showing the complexity of living with a disability?" This question, posed by a 1997 article in *Quest*, deserves an answer (Ivory, 1997). The realistic view of disabilities seems simple. All the disability community asks is that we be portrayed as people who happen to have a disability.

While many recent choice cinema selections have been lucky enough to have directors who understand this request, many movies still lack…

According to a 2001 article from iCan.com writer Nicole Bondi, movie studios still look at a disability role as an easy way to an Oscar. Bondi points out that it's worked in the past for classics such as *Forrest Gump, Rain Man,* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.* Despite the pitfalls, the last several years have brought increasing growth to the maturity of the handling of disabled roles. Movies such as *Notting Hill* and *The Replacements* included characters in wheelchairs (Bondi, 2001).

These characters were neither essential to the plot or given special attention. They were simply people. *The Replacements* was also home to a deaf football player, and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* includes deafness and sign language. The fact that characters with disabilities are being added into movies as extras is extremely normalizing and encouraging…Critically acclaimed *A Beautiful Mind* captured the life and genius of John Nash over a fifty year period (Duncan, 2002). Viewers were able to take in the onset and battle of Nash's schizophrenia and experience it as though they themselves were Nash…

Most media outlets are not so precise and realistic with their portrayals of true life with a disability, however. Falsehoods regarding disabilities are spoon fed to society at large today, only to be regurgitated as ridiculous pressures on individuals with disabilities to conform to a misleading societal standard of beauty… So just how has over a century of media lies and scattered truths affected us as disabled individuals? Is our self-perception warped and self-esteem damaged as a result of false images and stereotypes?...

While nearly everyone, whether they have a disability or not, endures internal difficulties with accepting themselves in contrast to our societal standard of beauty, the problem only compounds for individuals with disabilities. Many people have disabilities that in some way alter their physical appearance from what is considered "normal"…How much farther do individuals with a disability have to go to reach the pinnacle of so called "perfection" the media demands today? Internal pressures to conform are only heightened for those with disabilities.

While the internal, self-imposed pressures spurred on by the media vex and contort our self-image, outside forces are at work too. Cultural pressure seems to be ever increasing. "Within this culture, having a disability is viewed negatively. This notion is supported by the fact that the lives of…(individuals)…with different disabilities are not reflected in the media. We are invisible. However, when our lives are spoken of, they are distorted through romantic or bizarre portrayals of childlike dependency, monster-like anger or super-human feats…" declared an article about women with disabilities (Odette, 1998)…

While characters with disabilities in the media are seldom portrayed realistically, society toasts the stereotype and immediately pours it out on others with disabilities. This can lead to added pressure on an individual with a disability to perform (in contrast to the stereotype of disabled inspiration), to prove themselves as upstanding members of society (in contrast to the stereotype of disabled evil), or to prove themselves simply human (in contrast to the stereotype of disabled innocence).

I recently read an article in the Fall 2001 edition of *Profile,* a publication of The Milton J. Dance Jr. Head and Neck Rehabilitation Center. "Patients undergoing treatment (for cancer of the head and neck) often experience changes to body image, speech, and swallowing. Following treatment, public interaction may provide unexpected anxiety and reactions that may be insensitive. A social worker can help patients to adjust to their new image and/or function, to understand public reaction and to utilize coping strategies" the article read (Self, 2001)…

Sometimes I wonder why our society's ideals are what they are. Who was originally born blonde and shapely that so attracted someone somewhere to deem him/her society's finest? How did the trend even catch on? What if, far back in time at the foundation of our culture, someone had deemed an individual with a "facial disfigurement" and a cane beautiful? Would society even had considered it a "disfigurement" at all? Societal ideals that cause us to question our self-image are nothing more learned traditions and customs passed down through generations.

Article adapted and reprinted from Erin, "The History of Disability Portrayal in the Media; Disability Culture part I," "Disability Portrayal and the Media Today; Disability Culture part II," and "Disabilities and Self Image; Disability Culture part III." Albuquerque: Kids As Self Advocates (KASA).

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"Self Image in Head and Neck Cancer Patients: A Social Worker's Perspective." *Profile* (2001).

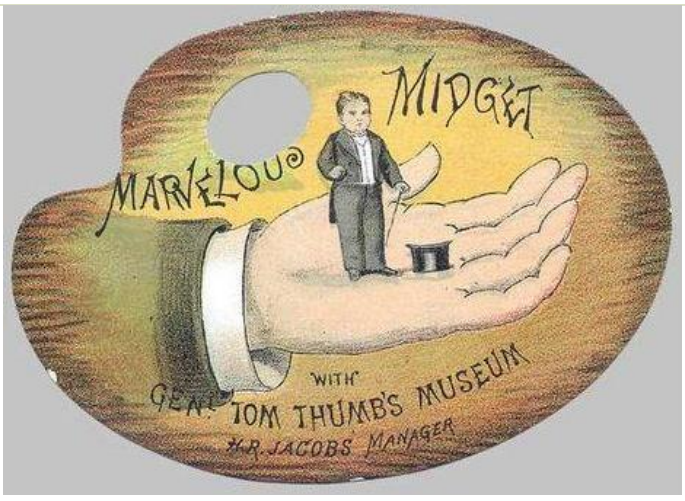
History of the Treatment of Disability Portrayed in Pictures and Words, 1849–1939

1849, "The Crazy Woman"

From Allen Crane, *The Gold Seeker,* Merriam, Moore & Co., 1849. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

c. 1860, "Boston Hospital For The Insane"

Lithograph by Nathaniel J. Bradley, A. Meisel Lithography. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.



c. 1880, "Marvelous Midget with General Tom Thumb's Museum"

Courtesy of the Syracuse Univ. Library, Special Collections.

c. 1930, "Midget Swing Revue"

Postcard, Robert Bogdan Collection.

c. 1910, "Charity Postcard Of Irvin Malzi"

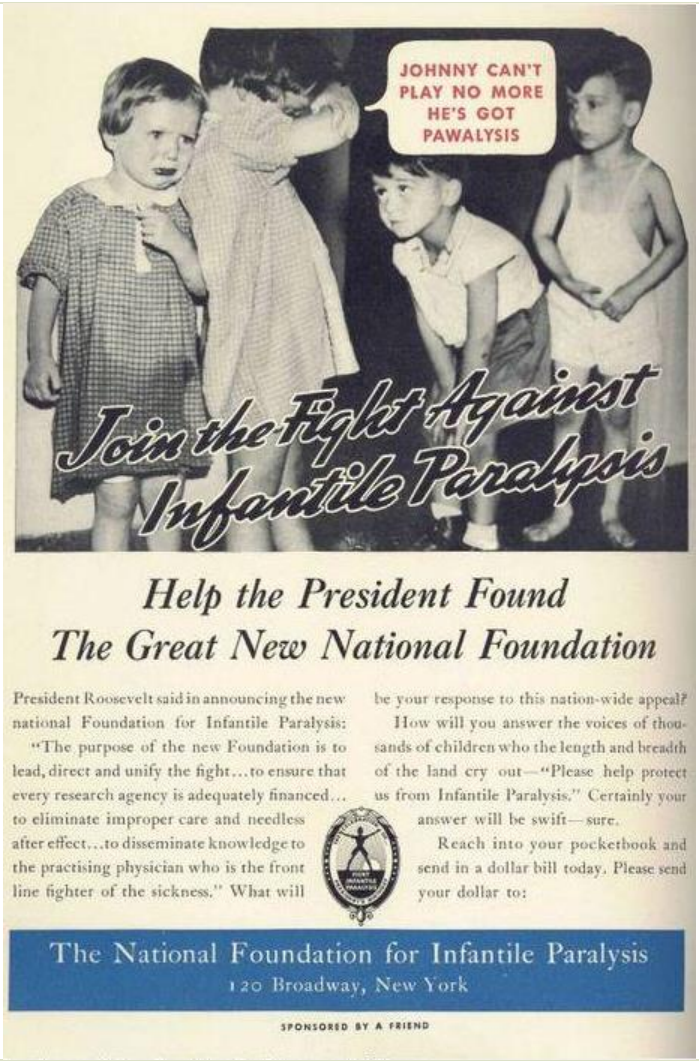
Postcard, Robert Bogdan Collection.

Date Unknown, "Our Afflicted Sister"

Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

1917, "The Black Stork, Movie Advertisement"

From the *Chicago Tribune,* April 2, 1917.



1938, "Johnny Can't Play No More. He's Got Pawalysis"

The President's Birthday Magazine, January 20, 1938, National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

"The invalid is a parasite on society. In a certain state it is indecent to go on living. To vegetate on in cowardly dependence on physicians and medicaments after the meaning of life, the right to life, has been lost..."

—Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844–1900

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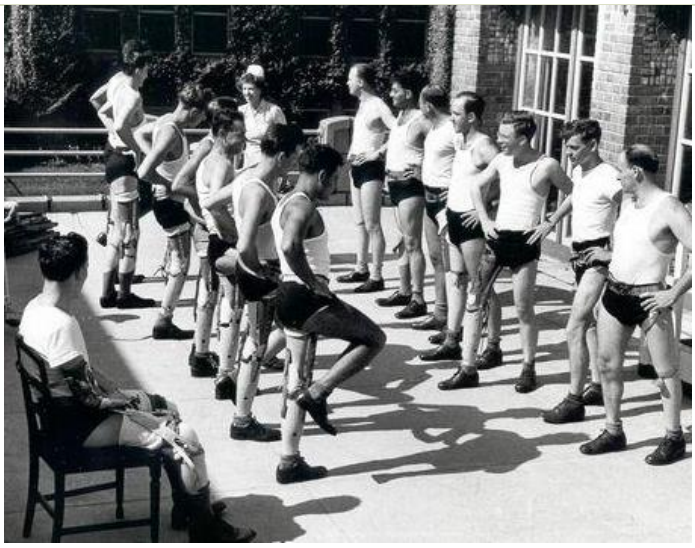
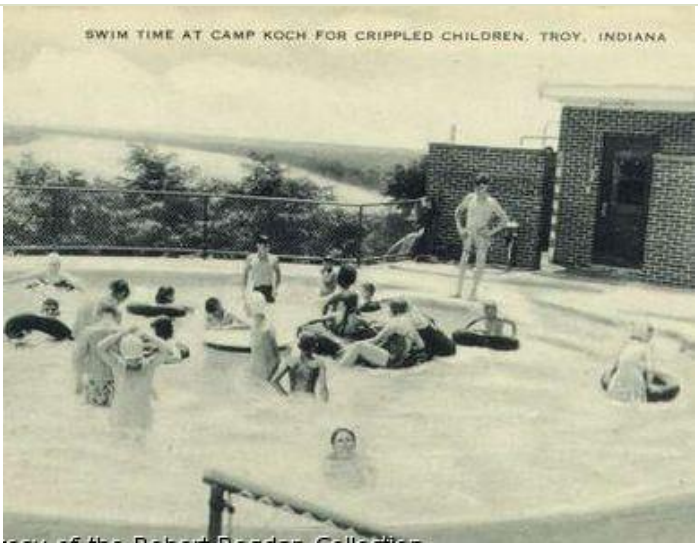
History of Disability Rights & Self-Determination in Pictures and Words (Post 1940)



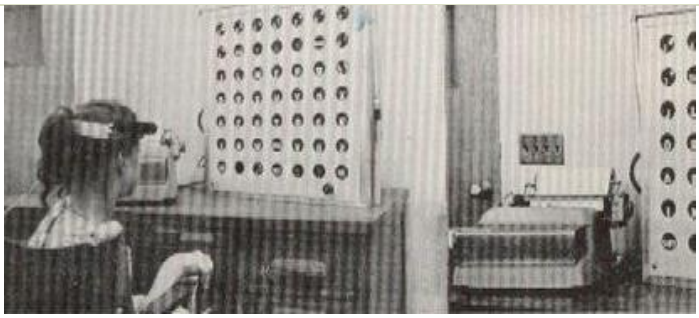
1945, "WWII Amputees Exercising On Sun Deck"

Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine, Prints and Photographs.



c. 1950, "Camp Koch For Crippled Children"

Courtesy of Robert Bogdan Collection.



1959, "Typing By Electric Eye"

From "Exclusive Collection Of Typewriter Adaptations For Respiratories," *Toomeyville Jr. Gazette* 2(1): 2. Courtesy of Gazette International Networking Institute

1962, "Atop The Eiffel Tower"

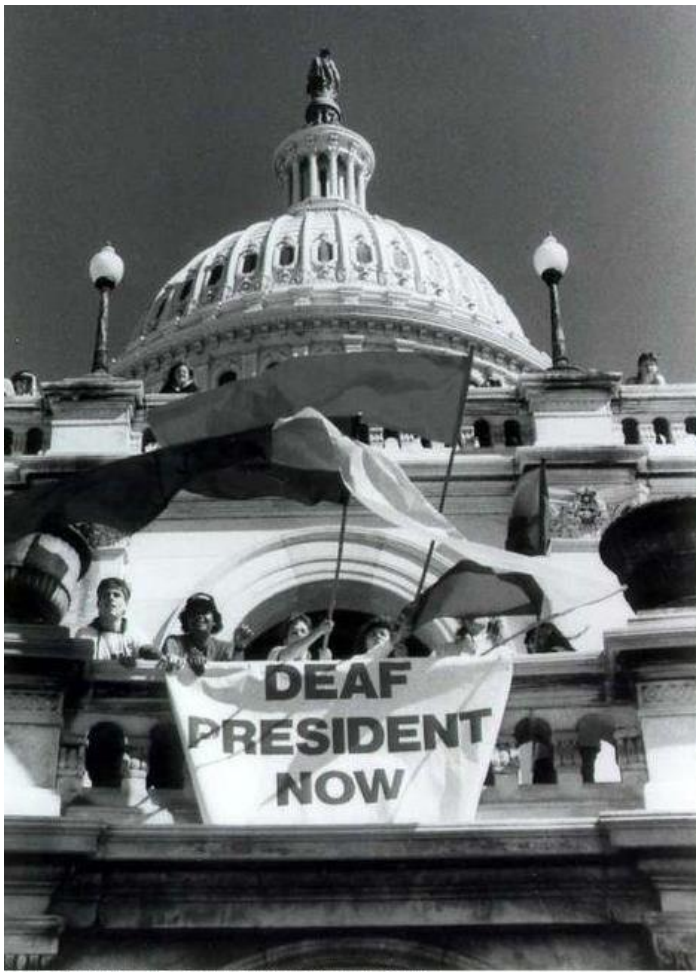
From John Prestwich, "Paris!," *Toomey J Gazette* 5(1): 48. Courtesy of Gazette International Networking Institute.

1965, "Christmas In Purgatory"

From Burton Blatt and Fred Kaplan, *Christmas In Purgatory: A Photographic Essay On Mental Retardation* (Human Policy Press, 1974), 25.

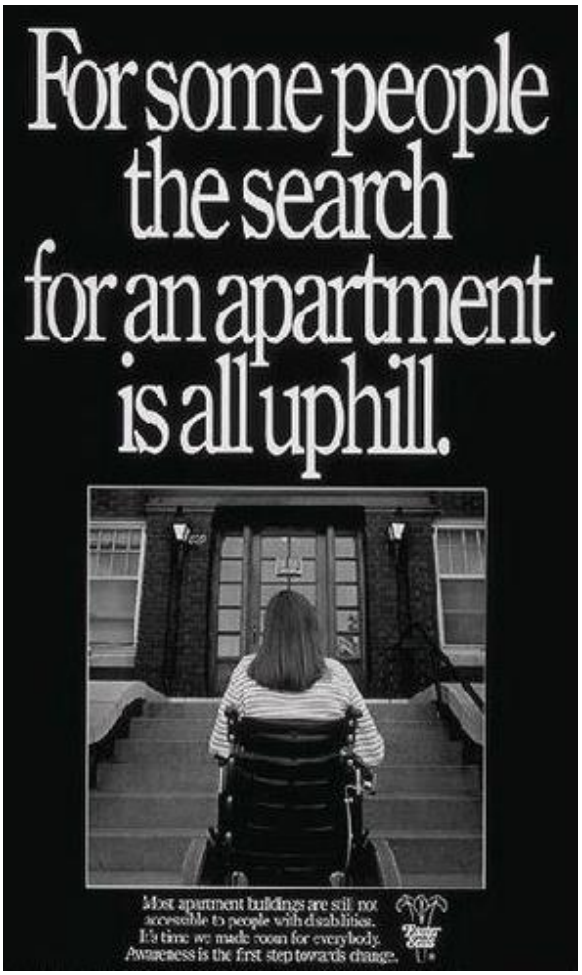
1965, "Christmas In Purgatory"

From Burton Blatt and Fred Kaplan, *Christmas In Purgatory: A Photographic Essay On Mental Retardation* (Human Policy Press, 1974), 39.



1988, "Gallaudet University Student Protest, #1"

From Gallaudet Student University Protest, March 1988. Courtesy of Gallaudet University Archives.



1990, "Searching For An Apartment"

Terry Bremer, Awareness Is The First Step Toward Change, Easter Seals Society, 1990.

1990, "George Bush Signs The ADA"

From George Bush Signs The ADA George Bush Presidential Library, July 26, 1990.

2005, "Shadow of Disability"

This photo by Tamer is one of 33 awarded photographs from the World Health Organization photo contest "Images of Health and Disability 2005". The contest has been organized in order to promote the understanding and use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

All images with the exception of "Shadow of Disability" used with permission for educational purposes only and accessed from the Disability History Museum, www.disabilitymuseum.org.

Group Research Project: History of the Disability Rights Movement

Instructions

1. Research the history of one major disability rights organization and create a group portfolio including:
   a. an historical description of the founding and mission of the disability rights organization;
   b. a profile of one of the organization's key leaders;
   c. events surrounding one or more of the demonstrations held by the disability rights organization in efforts to gain civil rights legislation for people with disabilities; and
   d. a description of how the organization came to influence one of the principal acts of disability legislation (1973 Rehabilitation Act, 1975 IDEA, or 1990 ADA).
2. Use the following research questions as a guide in developing a group portfolio:
   - What was the mission or main objective of this organization?
   - What were the rights of people with disabilities that this organization was working to secure? What rights were being denied to people with disabilities at the time the organization was founded?
   - Who were some of the major leaders of the disability rights movement associated with this organization?
   - What were the strategies taken by disability rights activists associated with this organization to ensure key disability rights laws were passed?
   - What was some of the language/terminology/key civil rights issues on disability reflected in the legislative acts this organization worked to have passed?
   - Name the major services the organization provides to people with disabilities today.
3. Using the resource and research links below, group portfolios should include written descriptions and primary documents, such as photographs, quotations, oral histories, letters, art and so forth.

List of Organizations

Disabled in Action (1970)

Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California (1972)

American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (1975-1983)

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (1979)

American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (1983)

World Institute on Disability (1983)

Research Links and Resources:

Beyond Affliction: The Disability History Project
www.npr.org/programs/disability/ba_shows.dir/index_sh.html

Disability History Museum
www.disabilitymuseum.org

Disabled Rights: American Disability Policy and the Fight for Equality
by Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer (Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2003)

Disability Social History Project
www.disabilityhistory.org

History of Independent Living
www.acils.com/ilhist.html

Independent Living USA
www.ilusa.com

Museum of Disability History
http://museumofdisability.org/

No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement
by Judith Shapiro (New York: Random House, 1993)

Smithsonian National Museum of American History: The Disability Rights Movement
http://americanhistory.si.edu/disabilityrights/welcome.html

The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation
by Doris Zames Fleischer and Freida Zames (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001)

University of California-Berkeley: The Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement
http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/drilm/index.html

VSA, the international organization on arts and disability
www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/

ADA Signing Ceremony

July 26, 1990

This video documents the speech given by President George H. W. Bush when he signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law on July 26, 1990. In the video, President Bush speaks to a huge audience of activists, Congressional supporters, people with disabilities, and their families and friends gathered on the south lawn of the White House.

The 22-minute film, provided to the Department by the George Bush Presidential Library, is re-released on the Internet to increase awareness of the ADA.

Dial Up (Modem & ISDN)

QuickTime: Open Captions | Audio Description

Real: Open Captions | Audio Description

High Speed Internet (DSL/Cable)

QuickTime: Open Captions | Audio Description

Real: Open Captions | Audio Description

[Note: You may need to download the video first in order to play it.]

Famous People with Disabilities

Autism

Dan Aykroyd, Canadian actor, comedian, screenwriter and singer (Asperger Syndrome)
Susan Boyle, singer/musician who become a global star after appearing on the TV show *Britain's Got Talent* in 2009 (Asperger Syndrome)
James Durbin, finalist on the tenth season of *American Idol* (Tourettes and Asperger's syndromes)

Dyslexia

Anderson Cooper, CNN news anchor
Tom Cruise, actor
Walt Disney (1901–1966), cartoonist
Albert Einstein (1875–1955), German-born physicist who developed the theory of relativity
Whoopi Goldberg, comedian, actor and talk-show host
Greg Louganis, Olympic swimmer (Dyslexia, Depression, HIV/AIDS)

Hearing Impairment

Ludwig von Beethoven (1770–1827), 18th century classical composer (Deafness)
Derrick Coleman, NFL player with the Seattle Seahawks (Deafness)
Thomas Edison (1847–1931), inventor (Hearing Impairment)
Claudia Gordon, adviser on disability issues to President Obama and the first Black Deaf lawyer in the U.S.
Marlee Matlin, actress (Deafness)

Learning Disability

Agatha Christie (1890–1976), English crime novelist, short story writer and playwright
Daniel Radcliffe, actor and star of the *Harry Potter* movies (Dyspraxia)
Charles Schwab, financier

Polio

Dorothea Lange (1895–1965), Depression photographer
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945), 32nd President of the United States (Also Paraplegic but hid it from the public)
Wilma Rudolph (1940–1994), first African-American woman to win three gold medals in one Olympic game

Seizure Disorder

Julius Caeser (100 BC–44 BC), Roman Emperor
Danny Glover, actor, film director and activist (Epilepsy)
Harriet Tubman (c. 1820–1913), born into slavery was an anti-slavery activist, women suffragist and Union spy during the American Civil War (Seizures)

Speech Impairment

James Earl Jones, actor (Stuttering)
Marc Anthony, American actor, singer, record producer and television producer (Stuttering)
Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962), American actress, model, and singer, who became a major sex symbol (Stuttering)

Vision Impairment

Ray Charles (1930–2004), singer, songwriter, musician and composer (Blindness)
Sammy Davis, Jr. (1925–1990), dancer and singer/songwriter (Vision Impairment/Cancer)
Helen Keller (1880–1968), educator/activist (Deaf-Blindness)
Stevie Wonder, musician/songwriter (Blindness)

Paraplegia

Stephen Hawking, British astrophysicist (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, a.k.a Lou Gehrig's Disease/Paraplegia)
Itzhak Perlman, classical musician/violinist (Polio/Paraplegia)
Christopher Reeve, actor, director and activist (Quadriplegia from a spinal cord injury)

Other Disabilities

Chris Burke, actor/folk singer (Down Syndrome)
Michael J. Fox, Canadian-American actor, author, producer and activist (Parkinson's Disease)
Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), painter/artist (Bipolar)
Howie Mandel, actor, comedian and game show host (Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD) and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD))
Mary Tyler Moore, actress (Type 1 Diabetes)
Harilyn Rousso, psychotherapist/disability rights activist (Cerebral Palsy)
Justin Timberlake, singer-songwriter, actor and entrepreneur (ADHD)
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), French painter, printmaker, draftsman, and illustrator (Short-statured)

Sources:

Bio: www.biography.com
Disability Horizons, http://disabilityhorizons.com/
Disability Social History Project: www.disabilityhistory.org
Disabled Women on the Web: www.disabilityhistory.org/dwa
SelfAdvocateNet.com: http://selfadvocatenet.com
Understood: www.understood.org

List of Disability-Related Organizations

Accses
www.accses.org

American Association of People with Disabilities
www.aapd.com

American Foundation for the Blind
www.afb.org

Americans with Disabilities Access Board
www.access-board.gov

Association on Higher Education and Disability
www.ahead.org

Cerebral Palsy Group
https://cerebralpalsygroup.com

Center for Disability Information & Referral
www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir

Center on Disability Studies
www.cds.hawaii.edu

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
www.c-c-d.org

Council for Disability Rights
www.disabilityrights.org

Disability Action Center
http://disabilityactioncenter.com

Disability History Museum
www.disabilitymuseum.org

Disability Resources, Inc.
www.disabilityresources.org

Disability Rights Advocates
www.dralegal.org

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
www.dredf.org

Disabled Peoples International
www.dpi.org

Disabilities Social History Project
www.disabilityhistory.org

Disability Statistics
www.disabilitystatistics.org

Hearing Loss Association of America
www.hearingloss.org

Independent Living USA
www.ilusa.com

Job Accommodation Network
http://askjan.org/

Justice for All
www.jfanow.org

Learning Disabilities Association of America
http://ldaamerica.org/

Museum of Disability History
http://museumofdisability.org

National Alliance of Mental Illness
http://nami.org/

National Association of the Deaf
http://nad.org/

National Center for Dissemination of Disability Research
www.ncddr.org

National Council on Disabilities
www.ncd.gov

National Council on Independent Living
www.ncil.org

National Disability Rights Network
www.ndrn.org

National Organization on Disability
http://nod.org/

U.S. Department of Labor: Office of Disability Employment Policy
www.dol.gov/odep/

Society for Disability Studies
http://www.disstudies.org

TASH
www.tash.org

Very Special Arts
www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/

World Institute on Disability
www.wid.org