

LESSON PLAN

The Tools I Need: Disability and Accommodations

Compelling Question: Why are accommodations important to people with disabilities and to society at large?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-3	4-7	45-60 minutes	Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language
8-12			



Web Related Connections

Lesson Plans

[Dolls are Us](#)

[Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights](#)

[“The Present” and Living with a Disability](#)

[Understanding and Challenging Ableism](#)

Other Resources

[A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement](#)

[Disability Glossary](#)

LESSON OVERVIEW

In 2020, when Shaylee Mansfield was eleven years old, she made a video that went viral called #Instacaptioning. Shaylee, who is Deaf, is an actress and former YouTuber. In the video, Shaylee makes the case for automatic captioning on Instagram stories. She made the video because she felt frustrated because, at the time, there was no captioning on Instagram. While watching stories from friends and celebrities, Shaylee could not understand what was happening in the videos and she couldn't understand what people were saying, thinking and doing. Instagram now has automatic captioning available, but Shaylee's video was an important way to spread awareness about the lack of accommodations for people with disabilities.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to understand what disabilities are, consider what tools and accommodations people with disabilities need, and advocate for accommodations by writing a persuasive letter.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand what disabilities are and the different kinds of disabilities.
- Students will gain an understanding of various accommodations needed by people with disabilities.
- Students will learn how to advocate for people with disabilities by writing a persuasive letter or essay.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- Video: [#Instacaptioning](#)
- [Making video games accessible to those with disabilities \(one copy for each student\)](#)
- [Persuasive Letter Graphic Organizer \(one copy for each student\)](#)

Key Words

advocate
accessible
accommodation
bias
deaf
disability
discrimination
exist
feedback
guide
inclusive
mission
professional
social isolation
stereotype

[Note to Teacher: As you teach this lesson, be mindful that you likely have students in your classroom who have disabilities, or they may have family members with disabilities. These disabilities may be visible or not visible. Students with disabilities may have a range of thoughts and feelings about discussing the topic of disabilities when it's so close to home. Students with disabilities should never be asked to discuss their disability with the class, or looked to as an "expert" on the topic. It must be their choice to share. While teaching the lesson, be especially attuned to their needs and possible discomfort about discussing this topic. In addition, avoid using terms like "differently abled" because some consider the term condescending, offensive or a way to avoid talking about disability because of discomfort. Also, be mindful not to speak about people with disabilities in stereotypical terms, even if those terms are seemingly positive such as "courageous," "determined" or "strong."]

Introduction: Watch and discuss video

1. Show the video [#Instacaptioning](#)
2. After watching the video, engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What is happening in the video?
 - Why does the girl say, "Instagram, we have a big problem!"
 - Why can't the girl understand the videos she is watching?
 - What does it mean to be deaf? What does it mean to be hard of hearing?

[Note: Define deaf means as unable to hear; hard of hearing means partial loss of hearing.]

- Were you surprised to learn that 400 million people around the world are deaf or hard of hearing? How so?
 - What is "automatic captioning?" You can try to figure it out by separating the words, automatic and captioning.
 - What does the girl mean when she says, "Knowledge is power. Captioning is power."
 - Why do you think she made this video?
3. Elicit/explain that the girl who made the video is Shaylee Mansfield and she is Deaf*. Shaylee made this video in 2020 when she was eleven years old. At the time Shaylee made the video, there was no automatic captioning on Instagram, but now there is. Elicit from students that because Shaylee is Deaf and because there was no captioning on Instagram, she could not understand what was happening in the videos and what people were saying, thinking and doing.

[*Note to teacher: Some people refer to this disability with a capital D (Deaf) and others use lower case d (deaf). They are not interchangeable. "Deaf" with an uppercase 'D' refers to people who identify with Deaf culture and view it as a part of their identity. Often, people who are Deaf prefer communicating in sign language. When spelled with a lowercase "d," "deaf" refers to the audiological condition of not hearing. People who refer to themselves as deaf often don't have as strong of a connection to the overall Deaf community and prefer communicating orally rather than signing. You can share this information with your students if it seems relevant, but it is not necessary.]

4. Ask students: *What is captioning and why does Shaylee need captioning (or captions) to understand what's happening? Have you ever seen or used captions or know others who use captions? Why are they needed?* Elicit/explain captioning as follows:
 - Captioning in videos, films, TV shows and live events provides a text version (words written out) of the words, sound effects and other non-verbal sounds (i.e., phone ringing, scary music) on a screen or monitor.
 - Sounds often play an important role in establishing plot, tone, or meaning in a video and people who are deaf or hard of hearing might miss these moments without captions.
 - Captioning enables people who need the text to understand the content and have full access to the material.
 - People who use captioning include those who cannot hear the sound in a video because they are deaf or hard of hearing and people who have challenges taking in information through audio (sound) exclusively, due to learning disabilities or other reasons.
5. Introduce the word "accommodations" briefly by saying: Shaylee needed an accommodation because she can't hear the videos. Tell students that we will discuss more about accommodations later in lesson.

What is a disability?

1. Remind students that Shaylee is Deaf (unable to hear) and explain that she has a disability. Elicit/explain what disability means and the different ways that people can be disabled. Have students share examples of different kinds of disabilities and record their responses on the board/smart board. For a few of the examples that students share, ask what that person needs in order to fully and comfortably participate.

Definition: *A mental or physical condition that restricts an individual's ability to engage in one or more major life activities (e.g., seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, communicating, sensing, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working or caring for oneself).*

2. If you need to break down the definition, you can elicit what the phrases below mean and then provide the language/explanation as follows:
 - **A mental or physical condition:** A mental condition affects a person's thinking, emotions or behavior. A physical condition affects someone's body or specific parts of their body (i.e., eyes, legs, fingers, ears, etc.).
 - **That restricts an individual's ability:** Restricts means to limit or prevent something from happening. Restricting an individual's ability means they are unable or have limitations in doing certain things.
 - **To engage in one or more of major life activities:** To engage means to do or participate in something. Engaging in one or more of major life activities (seeing, hearing, speaking, etc.) means to be able to do (or not do) these tasks or activities.
3. Have students think to themselves if they know someone or they themselves have a disability. Explain that according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 26% of people in the U.S. (or 61 million people) have a disability. That means that 1 in every 4 people have a disability. To learn more, share [this infographic](#) with students.

Tools I Use/Tools I Need

1. Ask students: *What did Shaylee need to understand the videos?* Elicit from students that Shaylee needed captioning in order to understand what was happening in the Instagram videos. Use the example of eyeglasses to share that people need different tools in order to easily and comfortably participate in all of life's experiences, including at school, home, clubs, games, work, activities, etc.
2. Explain to students that there are both tools and "accommodations" that help people with disabilities access information and participate. Explain that a tool is something that a person with disabilities brings with them, like a hearing aid or a wheelchair. An accommodation is what helps the person use that tool. For example, a wheelchair is a tool and a ramp or an elevator is an accommodation to help a person who uses a wheelchair move around.

If a definition is needed, define accommodation as: *To change, adjust, modify or adapt something so that people with disabilities have access to work, play, learn and participate in regular life activities.*

3. Have students turn and talk with a person sitting near them. Invite them to share an example of a tool or accommodation for people with disabilities. Have them respond to the question: *What tool or accommodation does a person with a disability need to participate?* Give students five minutes to discuss this in their pairs and explain that they should come up with one or more responses to the question.
4. Reconvene the class and have each pair share with the class at least one of the tools or accommodations they discussed, recording their responses on the board/smart boards. The list might look something like this.

DISABILITY OR BARRIER	ACCOMMODATIONS OR TOOLS NEEDED
Hearing loss: deafness, hard of hearing	Hearing aid, captioning, ASL or sign language interpreters or interpretation, notetaker, remote microphone
Paralysis, nervous system disease, inability to use legs	Wheelchair, forearm crutches, prosthetics, ramps, elevator, accessible bathrooms
Learning disabilities	Providing more time for assignments and tests, taking tests in a quiet room, breaking learning tasks into smaller steps, giving instructions verbally and in writing, fidget tool
Vision loss: low vision, blindness	Eyeglasses, sit near front of class, braille, audio versions of notes, handouts and texts, guide dogs, white cane

5. After making the list, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:

- Have you seen accommodations in our school and community? How about in the media and in society at large?
- Have you seen places or situations where accommodations are needed, but are not available? How so?
- What did you learn about disabilities and accommodations by doing this activity?
- Why is it important to reflect on the tools and accommodations that people with disabilities need?



Reading Activity

1. Distribute a copy of the article to all students: [Making video games accessible to those with disabilities](#). Provide ten minutes for students to read the article silently, or read aloud together, with students taking turns to read.

[NOTE: This article is from [Newsela](#), which publishes daily high-interest news articles at five different reading levels. This article is a 5th grade reading level. If your students need reading materials at a lower or higher reading level, this article is available at grades 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6th grade levels. You can register on Newsela (for free) to access all the articles.]

2. After reading, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:

- Who is Clinton Lexa and why does he play video games with his left hand?
- What does accessible mean? How is Clinton Lexa making video games more accessible?
- What is “Can I Play That?” Why does Courtney Craven, who runs the site, say she hopes one day accessibility advocates will not be needed?
- How do you think video games could be more accessible for people with disabilities?
- Why do some people with disabilities feel alone and isolated and how can video games help?
- What did you learn by reading this article? What more do you want to know?



Accommodations in Our School and Community

1. Explain to students that sometimes schools and other places and spaces in our communities do not provide accommodations and other tools that people with disabilities need. In addition, explain that there is sometimes name-calling, bias, stereotyping, bullying, and discrimination directed at people with disabilities. Engage students in a discussion by asking: *How is our school accessible and welcoming for people with disabilities? What would make it more safe, respectful and accessible?* Record their responses on the board/smart board and save for later as a possible activity to address some of the issues.

2. Then ask: *What accommodations do we have in school so that students with disabilities can fully participate and learn?* Brainstorm a list and add any that students may not have shared. Then ask: *What are some accommodations that we don't have and that are necessary to help students with disabilities be able to fully participate and learn?* Brainstorm a list.
3. You can also discuss and brainstorm accommodations that might be needed in other places such as online, and in physical places such as streets, public transportation, parks, playgrounds, houses of worship (church, synagogue, mosque), stores, businesses, workplaces, museums, libraries, etc.

After creating lists of accommodations needed in school and other parts of the community, engage students in a process where they identify one of the accommodations for which they will advocate. After choosing one, have students write persuasive letters (or essays) either to the principal, mayor or other official that explains why a particular accommodation is needed.

4. Distribute the Persuasive Letter Graphic Organizer and review each of the sections, as follows:

- Who the letter is being sent to.
- Opening statement about the disability and accommodation needed.
- Why you feel or think this accommodation is needed.
- 2-3 reasons to support your position, including facts, quotes, experiences, or examples.
- Closing summary and request.

Explain to students that they should complete the graphic organizer first, providing 10-15 minutes for students to work on the graphic organizer. Depending on how much time you have allotted for the lesson, spend a few additional class sessions to help students develop and strengthen their writing by revising, conferencing, editing and rewriting their letters/essays to completion, or assign the completion of the letter/essay as homework over the next few days.

5. When completed, have students share their letters/essays with each other and consider whether students want to send the letters to the intended recipients.

Closing

Have students share their opening statement from the graphic organizer with the rest of the class, either verbally, or by writing on pieces of paper and posting around the room.

Additional Reading and Resources

- [A Play Space for All](#) (Video: Courtenay Chicago)
- [Disability Impacts All of Us](#) (Centers for Disease Control)
- [Engineering student helps envision self-driving future for people with disabilities](#) (Newsela, April 21, 2000)
- [Shaylee Mansfield](#)
- [Students With Disabilities Urge Smoother Transition to College](#) (Education Week, November 1, 2022)
- [Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students](#) (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
- [Types of Learning Disabilities](#) (Learning Disabilities Association of America)

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: 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. R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Writing
W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: 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. SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
Language
L3: 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. L4: 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. L6: 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.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

Making Video Games Accessible To Those With Disabilities

By Time USA, LLC, adapted by Newsela staff
Published: 03/08/2022
Word Count: 407
Recommended for: Upper Elementary School
- Middle School
Text Level: 5

Clinton Lexa loves to play video games, but doing so hasn't always been easy. Lexa was born with a disability that affects a person's hands. That means Lexa usually does tasks and activities, such as playing video games, left-handed. "I taught myself," Lexa said. "There was no guide."

Today, Lexa is a professional gamer. Lexa has nearly 20,000 followers on the Twitch streaming platform. Lexa is one of many people working to make video games more accessible. Something that is accessible can be used by anyone, no matter their physical ability. For example, companies and organizations are designing special controllers so people with disabilities can play.

Getting Connected

Lexa works as an accessibility consultant. Lexa gives feedback to developers to help make video games accessible to people with disabilities. Developers are people who design and build games.

Screenshot from video game Celeste. Text reads: Assist Mode allows you to modify the game's rules to fit your specific needs. Zoom-in

Image 1. A still from the game "Celeste," notifying the user that Assist Mode is available. Photo: Extremely OK Games

One project is a difficult adventure game called "Celeste." It has an "assist" mode that allows players to modify the game's settings. Lexa suggested an update to the mode's introduction. They wanted more people would feel encouraged to use the mode. The result is challenging while being "more inclusive," Lexa said. "Everyone does have different needs."

"Video games are this shared experience that allow us to build friendships."

Mark Barlet, Founder of the AbleGamers Charity

"Can I Play That?" is a website that reviews video games. Courtney Craven runs the site. She said that games are changing thanks to the efforts of accessibility advocates like Lexa. Craven hopes that one day developers will be so focused on accessibility that advocates won't be needed. "We want to not have to exist."

Games For All

Mark Barlet is the founder of the AbleGamers Charity. The group works to make gaming more inclusive. He said people with disabilities can sometimes feel alone or isolated, meaning apart from others.

"Social isolation is a pandemic," Barlet said.

"AbleGamers creates these shared experiences. The group helps people with disabilities find and build controllers that enable them to play. "Our mission is about combating social isolation," Barlet said. Tools such as the Xbox Adaptive Controller, which AbleGamers helped design, make this possible.

Craig Kaufman is senior director of community and inclusion at AbleGamers. "We basically had to make sure that the industry was paying attention and focused on including players with disabilities," he said. "Because for the longest time, most people didn't."

Persuasive Letter Graphic Organizer

Student Name:

Who I am Sending My Letter To (Principal, Mayor, Someone Else):

Opening Statement About the Disability and Accommodation Needed:

Why I Think or Feel this Way:

Reason #1

Facts, Quotes, Experiences, Examples

Reason #2

Facts, Quotes, Experiences, Examples

Reason #3

Facts, Quotes, Experiences, Examples

Closing Summary and Request: