



TOGETHER WE ARE ABLE
School Inclusion Education Program

STEP 1: **Ability Awareness Classroom Workshop**

- Pre-Play Day Workshop
- Pre-Play Day Worksheet
- Quiz Cards
- Buddy Guidelines

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PRE-PLAY DAY WORKSHOP

Core Learning Objectives:

- Creating a common definition/understanding of the word disability.
- Inspiring an understanding of where our personal responses to disabilities come from (fact vs. myth).
- Establishing common ground by exploring the challenges and accomplishments of people with disabilities.
- Gaining insight into perspectives of people with disabilities.
- Preparing your students for their interactive play experience.

Note: If you want to start a literacy component prior to the play day, please see the **Supplemental Material** section for recommended reading.

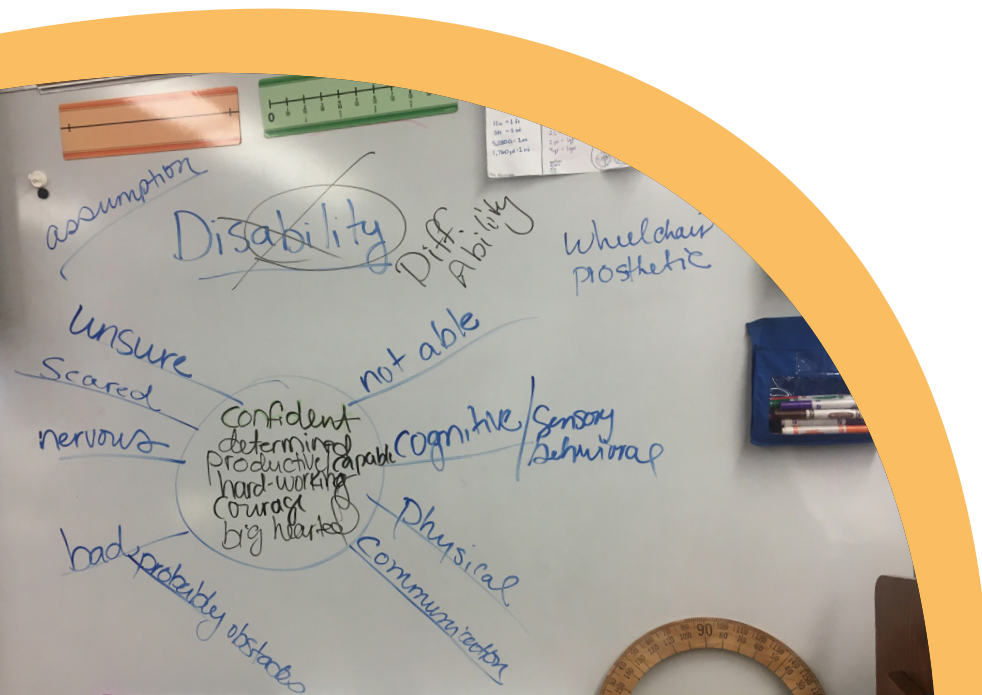
1. Written Exercise & Sharing Responses

Time Requirement: 10-12 Minutes

Materials: Paper, pencils, whiteboard, marker

Goal: Identify thoughts and feelings about disabilities and gauge how familiar your students are with the topic.

Draw a big circle on the board. You can write their key phrases on the outside of the circle. As you hand out the exercise, remind students that there are no right or wrong answers and that you are the only one to look at this. Ask them to write down whatever their initial thoughts and feelings are then ask those willing to share:



1. **What does the word disability mean?** (Write key phrases on the board...can't do, unable, sick, etc.) Does disability mean the same thing as illness or disease? What is the difference?
2. **What about our feelings?** Does anyone want to share how they feel when they see someone who uses a wheelchair, has a visual impairment, or has a behavior that feels different (talking to himself, making sounds that are unfamiliar)?
3. **Who here knows someone with a disability really well?** Use this opportunity to identify how much first-hand knowledge the class has and emphasize that we may not even realize we know someone with a disability. Many are invisible, like Learning Disabilities.

Bridge:

We all have feelings about people who have a different way of moving, speaking, thinking. But where do those feelings come from? Who knows what the word assumption means?

Often, we assume a person with a disability can't do a lot of things we can and feel sad for that person. But the truth is, we don't KNOW what that person can or can't do. We are going to play a game and find out what we do and don't know about disabilities.

2. "Watch Out...It's Catching!" | Ability Awareness Game

Time Requirement: 10-15 Minutes

Materials: Quiz Cards, a classroom bell or buzzer

Goal: Explore the difference between fact and fiction. Extended discussion on each card can help students understand what their assumptions are about disabilities.

Prior to the start, pick out 8 to 10 flash cards. Some can cover general misconceptions while others can be specific to the disabilities that their peers have that they will be playing with.

Ask for 8 volunteers and have them form two lines, on either side of you, at the front of the classroom. Place the buzzer or bell on a desk in between the two lines.

Give them the following instructions:

I am going to hold up a flash card that has a disability assumption on it. The two contestants standing near the buzzer will reach out and tap it when you think you have the answer...true or false. Whoever taps first, gets to answer.

Audience members have to decide if their classmates are right, wrong, or if they don't know (thumbs up, down, in the middle.)

As you move through the cards, take time to address the issues that the students might run into on the playground or in life.

Example:

“People who use wheelchairs can’t drive...true or false?” - Some can, some can’t. Just because someone uses a wheelchair doesn’t mean they can’t operate a car. If some of your buddies on the playground are using wheelchairs, does that mean they can’t use their legs? They might be able to, so don’t assume either way.

Bridge:

Now we know what some of those assumptions are! How do we get rid of assumptions? We get to know the person versus stopping at his outside...what we think we know about them. Let’s meet some kids who are pretty good at busting assumptions about disabilities.

3. Together, We Are Able Education Video

Time Requirement: 20 Minutes (running time is 12 minutes)

Materials: DVD, DVD player, white board, marker

Goal: Students will be able to identify what abilities the kids have and find aspects that they share in common (video games, karate, etc.). This DVD can be stopped in 3 sections to facilitate a discussion on physical, developmental, and sensory differences or run as a complete 12-minute video.

Video Preamble/Discussion:

In this video, you are going to meet 3 kids who have special abilities and challenges, just like you.

1. Cole’s Intro & Spencer: Once the students are finished viewing this section, ask them to debrief about Spencer (write key phrases inside the circle on the board).

- What words would you use to describe Spencer?
- What surprised you about his abilities?
- What about his attitude?
- What about his attitude towards himself...how does he or his family relate to his physical differences?

2. Jessica: Continue the debrief and consider centering it on communication.

- What words would you use to describe Jessica?
- Why kinds of activities did she do? Does anyone here take Karate?
- What about her ability to communicate? Could you understand her?
- Could she understand the people around her?
- How would you communicate with someone who had limited words...can you communicate without words?

3. Kai: Continue the debrief questions and consider centering it on sensory input.

- What words would you use to describe Kai?
- What about his ability to communicate, was it hard for him to talk?
- How did Autism affect Kai? Did it change his ability to be friends with other kids?
- What about his desire to help others?

4. Completing the Circle

Once you have finished the video, go to the circle on the board. By now, it should have words on the outside and the inside. Consider covering the following talking points.

1. So, let's look at the words we started with outside the circle (sad, sorry for, etc.)...are those the same kind of words as the ones inside the circle...the words we used to describe Kai, Jessica, Spencer?
2. What's different about them? The words on the outside are words we used when we were describing how we felt about people with disabilities...and many of them were negative (sad, bad, can't do). The words on the inside are words we used to describe people we had the chance to get to know...those tend to be more positive, right (awesome, creative, funny)?
3. Let's go back and look at how we defined disabilities: can't do or needs help. Does anyone here have something they have a hard time doing and need help with...like math? Does anyone have something they do differently than others? All people have challenges and skills...and all people do things a little differently. Maybe we can change Dis-ability to Different Abilities...?

When you play with your buddy, you have the chance to get to know him or her on the inside. You won't have to stop with those outside feelings and assumptions. There will be things you do differently. Find out what you both like to do that is the same!

5. Description of the Field Trip & Q&A

Time Requirement: 10 Minutes

Materials: BUDDY Handout (for more extensive buddy guidelines, see the Inclusive Play Guide)

Goal: Increase awareness of the goals for the interactive play experience; establish boundaries for respectful language and communication, and prepare students for different ways of play and communication.

Go over the BUDDY Handout and talk the students through the logistics of the day.

- We will meet our buddies for a day of play.

- Two students from this class will be paired with one buddy from the other class (we recommend a 2:1 ratio, when possible).
- When we get together to play, we will find out what your buddy loves to do, how he/she communicates, moves, and plays.
- If your buddy is in a wheelchair and needs help being pushed, we will show you how and when to use the brakes.
- You and your buddy will play! We will set up a couple different play stations for you to enjoy.
- You and your buddy will stay together and eat lunch. Be sure to wear comfortable playground clothes.
- Find out about your buddy: what kind of questions can you ask to learn more? Are there any questions you should avoid? (ex: what is wrong with your legs?) Buddies want to be seen as buddies first and having a disability last!



Name: _____

PRE-PLAY DAY WORKSHEET

REFLECTIONS

What does the word disability mean?

When I see someone in a wheelchair, I feel...

Do you know someone with a disability? Tell us about that person:

Question #1:

All kids with disabilities are slower learners than other kids.

Answer #1:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: Having a disability doesn't necessarily mean that you learn differently than kids without disabilities. A lot of disabilities merely affect how the body works. Some disabilities, like Down Syndrome, do affect how the brain works, making it a little harder for the person to respond to questions. It may take longer, but they will respond. Other disabilities, like Dyslexia, do make it harder to learn certain tasks, like reading. That doesn't mean our buddies can't learn. It just means they need extra help, just like you and me. Who here struggles with a subject in school, like math?

Question #2:

Children who
have Autism don't
want friends.

Answer #2:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: Autism is an invisible disability that changes the part of the brain that allows you to interact with other people and find words to communicate with others. Remember that it affects everyone differently. No two people with Autism are the same, just like none of us in this classroom are the same. It can also intensify a person's senses: touch, sound, light, etc. For some kids, bright lights and loud noises can be overwhelming. Children and adults with Autism can have a harder time making eye-contact, talking, hanging-out, or playing like other kids are used to. There is no known single cause for Autism.

Question #3:

People who are
blind can get
around without
the help of
other people.

Answer #3:

ANSWER: TRUE

WHY: There are many supporting tools that allow people with vision impairment to independently get around. For example, seeing eye dogs and walking canes are helpful tools that allow people to live and function without significant help. Brail, a reading system using raised bumps on the page, allows people who are blind to read. Can anyone think of any other ways that people with vision impairment can get support?

Question #4:

People who can't
speak don't
understand what
you say to them.

Answer #4:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: Just because someone can't respond with words doesn't mean they don't understand yours. Some disabilities affect how the brain processes words, but we can't assume they don't understand ours.

If your buddy can't talk to you, how will you know how he or she is feeling?

- Look for facial cues
- Sounds or hand gestures
- Be a detective! You have to use powers of observation to learn more about your buddy if she or he can't speak.

Question #5:

People who
use wheelchairs
can't drive cars.

Answer #5:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: People who use wheelchairs can drive! Not all can, but those who can control their hands and arms can drive adaptive cars.

There are a lot of things a person using a wheelchair can do. Who can think of examples? (skiing, swimming, dancing, painting...even sky diving!)

If you have a buddy using a wheelchair, should you say words like run, jump, and dance? Yes! Your buddy probably uses those words, too. What you might want to avoid are questions like “What’s wrong with your legs?” or “What’s wrong with my buddy?” (if said in front of him)

Question #6:

You can always
tell that someone
has a disability by
looking at them.

Answer #6:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: There are many people who have “invisible” disabilities such as Autism and learning disabilities. You may never know that they have a disability. Just goes to show..you can't judge a book by its cover!

Question #7:

The best way to talk
to someone who has
a hearing impairment
is to speak loudly and
repeat yourself.

Answer #7:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: You can talk in a normal tone and pace, no matter what.

A good tip is to make eye contact and speak directly to your buddy. It may feel strange at first, but if your buddy can't hear, talk to him/her anyway, even if he/she has an interpreter. It is more respectful to address the person and that way, they can read your lips, see the emotion on your face, etc. Also, explore other ways to communicate: pointing to the area you want to go, touch, play. There are a lot of ways that we speak to each other without ever using words.

Question #8:

If you have a
disability, you
are sick.

Answer #8:

ANSWER: FALSE

WHY: People with chronic illness may have ongoing physical or mental challenges that require them to do things in a different way or need a wheelchair. But, people with disabilities do not always have a chronic illness or sickness. Can you catch a disability? No!

Question #9:

Children with disabilities can use computers.

Answer #9:

ANSWER: TRUE

WHY: Many children can use computers. Some disabilities limit our ability to grasp or use instruments, but many children with disabilities use computers every day to communicate, play, and learn.

BUDDY GUIDELINES

Be a Detective

Find out as much as you can about your buddy, rather than making assumptions.

What kind of questions can you ask?

- How old are you
- What's your favorite color
- What's your favorite music
- Where do you live
- Do you have brothers or sisters
- What do you like to do on the weekends...?

Use “People First” Rule

People with disabilities are people first who also happen to have a disability. They want to be recognized as people, just like you and me. Instead of saying disabled boy, how about: boy with disability. What can you say instead of blind girl? Recognize your buddy as a person, not a disability.

Do My Best to Ask Before I Help & Touch Equipment

Assume that your buddy CAN do something. If you see him/her struggle, ask if you can help rather than helping first. If your buddy has a hard time talking, then you have to look for clues or always ask the teachers if you are uncertain.

Always be respectful of your buddy's equipment and don't touch it without asking. For someone in a wheelchair, that equipment is like a part of his/her body. If there is a guide dog around, don't go up to him and pet. He's on the job! Ask first, you may distract him from helping his buddy.

Don't be afraid to play but also keep your eyes open – your buddy may have a hard time balancing or doing a particular activity. If you are uncertain, ask your buddy if he or she needs help.

Do My Best to Make Direct Eye Contact & Speak Directly

If your buddy can't hear, talk to him/her anyway, even if he/she has an aid or helper teacher. It is more respectful to address the person and that way, your buddy can read your lips, see the emotion on your face, etc. What if your buddy can't talk to you, how will you know how he or she is feeling?

Look for facial cues, sounds or hand gestures.

Be a detective! You have to use powers of observation to learn more about your buddy.

Yes I Can, Use Words Like Play And Run And Jump

If you have a buddy who uses a wheelchair, should you say words like...run, jump, and dance. Yes! Your buddy probably uses those words too! What you might want to avoid are questions like:

What's wrong with your legs?

What's wrong with my buddy? (if said in front of him)

We know you are curious, but your buddy (and his mom and dad) don't think there is anything wrong with him. That's just the way he or she is!

And most importantly... HAVE FUN!