

Ability Awareness Program

How-To Manual: Week-Long Program



Developed by the SELPA I CAC



This AAW manual is the work of many people.

On the SELPA I CAC Elizabeth Ball, Patty Hurley, Karen Mueller, Nan Recker, and Phil Shemanski were instrumental in developing various elements of the program and in helping to write this manual. A special thanks goes to Louise Sumpter of the California Children's Services Medical Therapy Unit at Juana Briones in Palo Alto who has provided the physical therapy equipment, trained the PT volunteers, and wrote the PT script. And you would not have this manual in front of you without the brilliant layout work of Shari Arensdorf.

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Introduction

We first became inspired to try an Ability Awareness program in our local school district when it became painfully clear that there is a real need for children with special needs not just to be “mainstreamed,” when it is appropriate, but to be understood and accepted by all students.

As parents of children with special needs, we spend inordinate amounts of time making sure that our children see the right doctors, therapists, and teachers. But what our children need more than anything is to be accepted by their peers, to have friends who include them, who say hello to them, who ask them to join their playground games.

We are all aware of how widespread teasing and bullying is among children and how painful it can be, but for a child with any type of special needs this behavior can make their school years a nightmare.

“Ability Awareness,” as we choose to call it, is not new. There are various programs that have been compiled and held in schools across the country. Along with my friends at the SELPA I Community Advisory Committee (CAC), we incorporated a number of ideas from previous programs and added some of our own. In January 2002, we conducted our first Ability Awareness Week program (AAW) at Almond Elementary School in Los Altos, California. It was a roaring success, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. It is clear that it is a much-needed program in our schools, with a positive message for all children.

The program is meant to be fun and attention-getting, presented with lots of energy. It is not intended to be an educational program where we teach students about different disabilities and diagnoses. Where questions are asked we, of course, are willing to engage in explanation. But diagnoses can become another label setting children apart. For the same reason, it is no accident that we try to avoid the word disability. Instead we choose to use words such as special and differently-abled.

Our message is that we are all different in some ways, but all have the same needs for respect, acceptance, inclusion and friends. We used the concept that we are all on a “Rainbow of Ability.”

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This manual provides guidelines, based on our experience, on how we made an Ability Awareness Week work at our school. It explains how we did it, what we included, what worked best. Most of these activities should work in your school.

We sincerely hope that this manual will inspire you to educate all children that it is OK to be different and encourage you to hold an Ability Awareness Week program at your school.

Elizabeth Ball
Ability Awareness Program Chairperson
Member, SELPA I CAC

AAW Basics

As you read through the following pages you will see suggestions for many AAW activities. The way we have done AAW is to tailor it to each school's culture. There is no one right way. There are certain elements that we deem essential and others that are useful if you can fit them in. This program works best when the children experience the messages of AAW in a variety of settings across their school week. Each time they are exposed they absorb more, perhaps in a different way.

The core of AAW is the in-class presentation. Every classroom is visited by a team of adult volunteers who present hands-on simulations of differing abilities along with a discussion of strengths and weaknesses and how all of us have weaknesses but prefer to be seen for our strengths. Further, the children are drawn into a discussion of many ways to adapt their play so that everyone can be included.

During our discussions, we try to stay away from diagnoses as much as possible, partly because it becomes another label and partly because we are not qualified to make diagnoses.

The next most important activity is physical therapy. The children get to experience wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, and grabbers. With the framing discussion the children come to appreciate what it might be like to need to use these tools all the time. Several children have commented about understanding grandparents better due to this activity.

We have had books about people with different abilities read during library time at every school. PE has been most consistently available to include changes for AAW. Parents love the Sh-h-h homework for an evening of silence. Student council members very much enjoy putting on the help walk during one lunchtime, and children line up endlessly for a go at experiencing being dependent. We have always used a special guest for an assembly in order to create a larger group focus on the AAW message, but have found it useful to do the assembly twice, once for lower grades and once for upper grades. The hello lunches push children to try something new and gives them a chance to be self-directed. We love the AAW essay because after talking to the students all week, this is a time for them to talk back – and a good way to see how much of the message they have internalized.

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We always offer extra, optional materials for classroom teachers to use during the week. Most teachers feel that it is a challenge to teach the usual curriculum for the week with two to three hours already devoted to AAW. But some teachers enjoy having these ideas or materials available.

Many schools have a tradition of quick morning assemblies at the very start of school. Some schools do this once a week and some do this daily. This is the most variable piece of AAW for us. We have done an opening or kick-off assembly either on Monday morning or on Friday morning of the week before. A closing assembly is effective on the last day.

AAW Planning

Timing

We recommend that you hold an Ability Awareness Week (AAW) in the fall of the school year rather than later in order to have the greatest impact on the students. This will give the children plenty of time to explore and implement the ideas presented during AAW. The date will be determined by the school calendar and dates requested by the principal.

A suggested planning timeline is included in Appendix 1. As the timeline suggests, AAW planning should begin at least three months before the planned AAW date.

Format

The week kicks off with a beginning assembly on Monday morning and ends with a closing assembly on Friday. If your school does not have a Friday assembly, ask the principal to hold a special event closing assembly for that week.

We included all grades 1 through 6. It would be up to the individuals involved as to whether kindergarten should be included.

For more detail on the in-class format, see the chapter on “In-Class Activities.”

Key People

There are five key AAW participants: the school principal, the AAW leader(s), the teachers, the PTA and volunteers. Having them all work together is the key to a successful AAW.

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The School Principal

The school principal's support is the key to success. It is a good idea to approach him or her as early as possible in the school year – or even better at the end of the year before – to discuss the AAW program. A proposed outline of events to discuss is included in Appendix 2.

The AAW leader will need the following information from the principal as early as possible:

1. An agreed-upon week for the event.
2. One or two teachers' names within the school who would be interested in working as teacher liaisons with the AAW team. The teachers of special needs children typically are fine liaisons.
3. Number of classes by grade/teacher and number of students in each class. Also, a daily class schedule of subjects, recess, lunch, etc. Also, anything special about the school, including which classes have students with learning differences. Maps of the school's layout can also help volunteers find rooms.
4. Introduction to the chairperson of the PTA and a schedule of their meetings.
5. Permission to attend teachers' meetings and possible dates for an AAW presentation. Consider giving ongoing updates up to AAW week.

AAW Leader

The AAW leader is usually a parent of a special needs child with a passion for helping their child to live in a positive environment. The leader's responsibility is to coordinate scheduling with all parties, have responsibility for the volunteers and their training, and manage directly or by delegating all facets of Ability Awareness Week. The leader will meet with the school principal and teachers as described here. There can certainly be co-leaders if the interest is there. A recent AAW had three co-leaders: one handled physical therapy, one upper grade in-class exercises and publicity, and one lower grade in-class exercises and logistics.

The Teachers

When the date of the week is established, attend a teachers' meeting. Give a short talk about the program and get their enthusiasm going. Describe the in-class exercises. Your job will be a lot easier if you have the teachers on your side.

Make it very clear that this is *not* going to entail extra work for them. The AAW team will come into the classroom to do all the presentations. You are, however, asking that they participate by doing the in-class exercises and including activities in their classes

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during the week related to the topic, such as class discussions, book readings, essays and artwork. This is very important to the effectiveness of the AAW message.

Give the teachers a written overview of the week (see Appendix 2) and a time request sheet for when you may hold the 45-minute or one-hour in-class presentations and physical therapy exercises. Have them provide three time preferences for each. Another way to handle this is to have the teachers all sign up during one staff meeting. In this way they can negotiate with each other and trade off time slots among themselves.

Ask each teacher if there are specific items he or she would like the AAW team to know or address in their classrooms.

Ask the teachers to return completed sheets during the meeting or to the principal by the end of the week. Then you will be able to start on your schedule.

One or two teachers that were selected as liaisons between the teachers and the AAW leader should be introduced. These liaisons can be the teachers from special needs classes.

Try to get invited to other teachers' meetings. A five-minute presentation by the AAW leader close to the AAW will help to remind the teachers of the activities and their roles during the week. Review the in-class activities with the teachers.

The PTA

It is very helpful to have the PTA involved. Meet the president and vice presidents of the PTA and explain what you are doing and that you will be needing volunteers. You can also ask them if they would be willing to fund the AAW. Attend the PTA meetings and ask for some time to present the program. Ask for suggestions and volunteers. (See Appendix 3.)

Volunteers

While our CAC could have created a presentation team that visits each school site, we feel it is important to have AAW presented by volunteer parents from each school site. This gives parents a chance to have AAW experience, too. Most importantly, this sends a message to the children that adults who they know and respect think that this information is important. We found we needed two types of volunteers:

Group 1: volunteers who are committed, enthusiastic and willing to give one or two hours up front to learn the program, particularly the "in-class" activities. They should expect to attend two to three in-class presentations on the days that they are available. Some will be leading in-class activities. The total number of this type of volunteer depends on how many hours each can give. The number of people can vary from 12 to 16. Hopefully you have at least three people who can help on all

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days. Make these three people be the leads for the upper grades in-class, lower grades in-class, and PT. This provides a necessary consistency. Because the upper grades presentation is the most demanding, put the volunteers who can work several days there. Put the rest of your larger time volunteers in the lower grades in-class group. As long as PT has a leader for all of the days, the helpers can be group 2 volunteers.

Group 2: volunteers who have limited time but could step in to help with other parts of the program. This group can include:

- Library readers to read short stories to students during their library periods (depending on schedule and availability)
- Two to three helpers for the physical therapy presentation
- Others to pitch in as needed. The more help you have, the better.

Again, the total number of this type of volunteer depends on how many hours each can give. The number can vary from 12 to 20. It's a good idea to make provisions for illness, etc., in Group 1 in particular.

Classroom mothers are a good source of volunteers, although they have a lot on their plates. They may need a good deal of encouragement and reminders!

The Student Council is also a good place to look for help and ideas; in fact, it is a great way to have school students involved. They organized the "Help Walk" for us.

Suggestions to find volunteers:

- Ask people from your CAC.
- Consult with the PTA president and ask for his or her advice/assistance in finding volunteers.
- Ask for volunteers at "back to school" nights and other school activities for adults.
- Ask for the names of room mothers, and then ask them to locate volunteers.
- Put a request for volunteers in the school newspaper.

Finally, use email (vs. phone) whenever possible in coordinating the volunteer group as AAW approaches.

Publicity

AAW should be advertised several weeks before the event.

Posters

One volunteer made eight large posters that we put up in the multi-purpose room. She took her ideas from the book, “It’s OK To Be Different.” We also had posters made up of names of famous people who have different abilities, such as Whoopi Goldberg, Tom Cruise, several presidents (see Appendix 6 for a list of who they are). This enabled children to see that people with differences can be very successful.



Example of posters made for Loyola Elementary’s AAW. The same graphic was used for nametags for all the participants.

A poster can also be made to be hung at the front of the school. You might also want to post a notice about AAW on the school’s bulletin board.

Newspapers

Approach your local newspapers and tell them about the program well in advance. Invite them to come and take pictures. Perhaps they could write an article both prior to the event and afterwards. Tell them how important it is and suggest good coverage.

School Newspapers

Make sure articles appear in the school newspaper in the weeks prior to the event to build up enthusiasm and inform parents. This is usually the best way to reach parents, as opposed to trying to send something home in the kids’ backpacks. And, of course, report on the event afterwards, with some pictures. Some example articles are included in the appendices.

Budget

See Appendix 7 for a draft budget for AAW.

In-Class Activities

Overview

These are probably the most important activities of the week. We have the opportunity to reach each student with our message, and so focusing on these sessions is very important. We found that a 45-minute to one-hour time slot is optimum for grades 3 through 6, 45 minutes for grades 1 and 2, and 30 minutes for kindergarten. There is an AAW class leader and two to three Group 1 volunteers in each class.

First, the purpose of the in-class time is to give the students some idea of what it would be like to have different abilities and how frustrating it would be to have to operate like that on a daily basis. In order to do this, we have the students participate in two to three activities (described below). After each activity, the class leader engages in a discussion to cover various important points (how the students felt, implications of having on-going frustration, etc.).

The point of the exercises is not to teach children how to perform the activities, or to focus specifically on the activity itself. The activity simply is the vehicle for the message. It hopefully gives the participant the experience of what it is like to have different abilities, and our intent is to create feelings of frustration.

In order to achieve a level of frustration, **it is important that activities be completed under time pressure.** This factor is key in the fine motor and visual activities. It is important that the class leaders remind the children constantly of the time left to complete the activity. This mirrors the level of frustration that special needs children have to deal with all the time.

It is not helpful to engage in discussion of ways to strategize around the difficulty. One of the common misconceptions about children with different abilities is that they are not smart, that they would otherwise be able to strategize their way out of difficulty. This of course is just not the case. They have to live with the day-to-day frustrations of their limitations.

Detailed sample scripts can be found in Appendix 16.

Introducing the In-Class Activities

A picture of the rainbow of ability is hung up in front of the class or drawn on the blackboard. The leader sets the stage by asking several students to relate things they were good at doing; one of the volunteers should write what is said on one side of the rainbow. Then the leader asks the students to say what they were not so good at; these are written on the other side of the rainbow. This allows us to establish the fact that we all have things that we are good at and things that we are not so good at. Often, one student volunteers a strength that another student indicates they are not good at.



During each in-class activity, we also write students' comments on the board, such as "This is hard" and "I can't do this," etc. This makes for a good start for discussion as to how frustrating some differences are.

It is very important for the volunteers to maintain time pressure during the activities, on a student-by-student basis. After each activity, engage in some discussion as to the purpose of the activity and how the students felt having such limitations. Challenge them to think about how it would be to have to deal with those limitations on a daily, on-going basis.

After the activities, advise the students, if they had a problem with the activities, that that was to be expected since the activities were set up that way. If they ever feel that they are having difficulties at school, they should make sure that they tell a parent or a teacher. It is OK to admit to problems and to ask for help. In grades K-2, we forewarned the class that the dot-to-dot exercise would be very frustrating.

You could relate a story of the student who went through school thinking he was not as bright as the other kids, only to find out in high school all he needed was glasses to see the blackboard.

Talk about how some differences are easy to see, such as children who are in wheelchairs or use walkers. But some children look the same as the other kids but act

very differently. Try to engage in class discussion about this important topic. (Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, NLD, etc.)

Ask children how they feel when they encounter someone who is different. Do they know someone who is different? Talk about how they should not be afraid, that these children are all the same inside and want the same things. Relate this discussion back to the rainbow. They should not assume they are not smart; usually, children who seem different are very smart in certain areas, just as they are.

The rainbow can be a very useful tool to tie back into the starting discussion and now ask, “Would you want someone else to be looking at you and focusing on this end of your rainbow, or that end of your rainbow?” Naturally, the children prefer to be noticed for their strengths. Point out that it is natural when someone has an obvious problem to notice that first, but that with the skills learned in AAW they will be smart enough to notice the problem and then look right past that for what that person has to offer – and that they always have something to offer.

Grades K through 2 Activities

The students are first separated into groups of six to eight by the teacher. The activities described here occur simultaneously in each group. A Group 1 volunteer runs each small group.

Fine Motor

Cheerios (or beads) on a string. Students must try to thread Cheerios on a string while wearing socks on their hands. This activity has to be timed and the children should be hurried. We timed it to three minutes. We found it effective to have the students put two to three Cheerios on the string before putting on the socks. This highlights the increased difficulty when the socks were put on.

What you will need:

- About 25 Cheerios (or beads) per student in a small sandwich baggy
- A piece of string (or a shoelace), knotted on one end, for each student
- A pair of socks for each student



Cheerio activity. (Fruit Loops can also be used.)

At the end of the exercise, ask the students to put the Cheerios back in the baggy and tie up the socks.

**Auditory
Processing**

Dot-to-dot. Students are asked to listen to a tape and follow the directions to connect the dots given on the tape, even though there is a lot of background noise.

What you will need:

- Audio tapes to copy the ones we have
- Cassette tape player
- Dot-to-dot paper (lower grades version)(see Appendix 10)

Inclusion Exercise

Have an empty seat available in front. A group of adults pretending to be students walk in a huddle and act like they are having fun, laughing, going out to play at recess, etc. An outsider tries to get into the group.

She might say something like, “What are you guys doing? Can I play too? I want to come in.”

But they won’t let her in. The group members say, “We are already playing our game...You can’t join us...We don’t want to play with you....You can’t come in...You are not invited...” etc.

The lonely adult leaves and sits in the empty chair at the front of the class, looks sad, covers her face with her hands and continues to maintain this position for several minutes.

The AAW class leader goes over to the adult in the chair, puts a hand on her shoulder , and asks the class how this feels. Have you ever been left out? Discuss examples. Have you ever left somebody else out? Discuss how everyone should be included. It takes just one person to make an invitation. If the rest in the group won’t go along, then you can leave the group to play with that kid.

Grades 3 through 6 Activities

Fine Motor

Buttoning a shirt. Students were asked to button a button- down shirt with socks on their hands. It is very important that this activity is timed and that the leader is vocal about the time factor.

Sixth graders at Almond Elementary test their fine motor skills.



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What you will need:

- One button-down shirt per student
- One pair of sport socks per student

Visual/Perception

Mirror box. Students are asked to write their names while looking in a mirror, so that the writing appears the right way in the mirror. This activity should have a time factor. This activity simulates visual perception problems such as dyslexia and visual-motor processing problems where the brain sends a message and the hands don't cooperate.

What you will need:

- A mirror box for each student (see Appendix 8)
- A short (golf) pencil and paper



Decipher a message. We also asked students to try to decipher a “dyslexic” written passage (see Appendix 9).

Auditory Processing

Dot-to-dot. Students are asked to listen to a tape and follow the directions to connect the dots given on the tape, even though there is a lot of background noise.

What you will need:

- Audio tapes to copy the ones we have
- Cassette tape player
- Dot-to-dot paper (upper grades version)(see Appendix 10)

Learning Disability

The “N” Story. This activity should be conducted in small groups of about five students with one volunteer leader. The leader chooses the title of the story, e.g., “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” The leader starts off the story with one sentence and then goes around the group with each student providing another sentence to continue the story line. The caveat is that words containing the letter “N” cannot be included.

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The volunteer leader can write the sentence down on a large sheet of paper for everyone to see, which can help with the impact of the exercise.

This activity mimics a child who has problems choosing words and completing their thoughts.

Social Cognitive Deficits

The Sixth Sense. The students are lead through a series of exercises that demonstrate aspects of not knowing how to adjust for personal space, control voice modulation, follow social cues and rules, and read non-verbal information.

This activity demonstrates some of the problems that children with ADHD, Non-verbal Learning Disability, and Autistic Spectrum Disorders have.

Inclusion Exercise

Have an empty seat available in front of the class. A group of adults pretending to be students walk in a huddle and act like they are having fun, laughing, going out to play at recess, etc. An outsider tries to get into the group.

She might say something like, “What are you guys doing? Can I play too? I want to come in.”

But they won’t let her in. The group members say, “We are already playing our game...You can’t join us...We don’t want to play with you....You can’t come in...You are not invited...” etc.

The lonely adult leaves and sits in the empty chair at the front of the class, looks sad, covers her face with her hands and continues to maintain this position for several minutes.

The AAW class leader goes over to the adult in the chair, puts a hand on her shoulder , and asks the class how this feels. Have you ever been left out? Discuss examples. Have you ever left somebody else out? Discuss how everyone should be included. It takes just one person to make an invitation. If the rest in the group won’t go along, then you can leave the group to play with that kid.

Role Play. Have one volunteer or student come up to the front and call the other volunteer a few names. The second volunteer should look really upset and put his or her head down and walk away. Ask the students how that looked -- “victim,” “beaten down,” etc., etc.

Then repeat the exercise, and when the volunteer or student calls the second volunteer a name, the second volunteer uses positive body language. Stand up straight and face the person, look them in the eye and say “I don’t like what you are saying. You are not

being respectful.” And walk away “walking tall.” Ask the students how that was different. Encourage students to use positive body language and words in a non-confrontational way when they are being harassed.

Some leaders have engaged each student for a few seconds. Each student stands tall, looks the leader in the eye, and says an “I” message. For example, “I don’t like when you call me stupid.” This helps each student experience how they can respond to teasing. Very effective.

Teasing

An extensive teasing discussion/exercise was presented to special day classes. (See Appendix 16.)

Reading and Discussion

Depending on time, you can read a book to the class after the in-class activities are completed. We chose the book *It’s OK to be Different* by Todd Parr. It’s just a great little book with great pictures and is especially effective for children in grades K-2. Reading takes about six minutes.

In the course of reading the book, talk about **what to do** when you have someone in your life or meet someone who is different. Students may respond with, “help them,” BUT the most important thing these kids need, that everyone needs, is to be included, to be a part of the group, to have people say hello to them, to be invited to play, to be invited to join the group for lunch or at recess, to be asked to parties. If you are playing a game that is hard for them to play, then think how you can change that game so that they can join in. Make sure you are patient and understanding, as they may play the game differently. Before doing something for someone always ask, “Would you like some help?” Often the best way to help is to wait patiently when they are slow, allowing them the pride of doing it by themselves.

Talk about **what not to do**. Remember the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Do you think that is true? Words can be very hurtful, and we remember teasing for a long time. Talk about teasing and bullying. Teasing is a sugar-coated word for an activity that can very easily be abusive and hurtful. Even a little teasing is hurtful.

Discuss how to empower children if they are the victim of teasing or bullying, such as the use of positive body language. It is best to address the behavior, name it, and confront the teaser with his behavior. For instance: “If a child is teasing you by pulling on your backpack, then say to him: ‘Why are you pulling on my backpack? Please stop.’”

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Also remind them that if they are aware that another child is being teased or bullied and do nothing and say nothing, they are in effect supporting the teasing or bullying, which is just as bad. This is called passive participation. It's important to stand up and say it is wrong. One should never be afraid to do that. The student that is being hurt then knows they have a friend.

Talk about other behaviors that are hurtful, such as staring. Staring is a silent, very hurtful behavior. We understand that we sometimes look at a person if they are different. But try to check that behavior, and make sure you say hello, and certainly smile at them.

Other AAW Activities

Assemblies

Ask the principal if you can have dedicated 20-minute opening and closing assemblies for all grades involved in the AAW week. An opening, kick-off assembly on Monday is particularly important. There are many ideas that can be included:

- You can have young people, such as former students, or adults from the community who have any sort of disability or difference come and speak to the school about their experiences.
- At the closing assembly, introduce an opportunity to write an essay or draw a picture about what they have learned through AAW. At one school where we did this 2/3 of the children voluntarily participated. Essays were posted on a school wall and some were read at future assemblies to keep the spirit of AAW alive.
- Children can sing a song in sign language at the closing assembly that they learned in preparation for the week. (See below for more on this activity.)

In addition to using a beginning of school assembly to open and close the week, it is valuable to have a major assembly at some time during the week. At one school, we had a mid-week assembly in the multi-purpose room where all the classes came to see a puppet show.

At another school, Gary Lapow, a singer and writer of children's songs, sang pertinent songs in two 45-minute assemblies for K-3 and 4-6 grades.

Gross Motor Activities: Physical Therapy

Local physical therapy specialists can come to the school with physical therapy equipment and provide 30 to 40 minutes of training to volunteers for gross motor activities. This can be held in an available separate room at school

First and second graders at Almond try out walkers and crutches.



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or in the multipurpose room.

Activities can include instruction and activities in wheelchairs and with grabbers and walkers. The children can try on foot braces and have a session on a physical therapy ball. With four volunteers to run the room, this activity is offered to children in all grade levels, with thirty minutes per classroom group.

Because of logistical constraints, sometimes only grades 1 and 2 may be able to participate in this activity. Consider having the room available to grades 3 through 6 at recess and/or lunch, staffed by volunteers. However, our surveys show that this was the favorite AAW activity for grades 4 to 6, so all grades should participate if possible.

Music Department

Approach the music department to ask them to participate in the week. Ask if they have any ideas. The music department at one school taught grades 1, 2 and 3 a song in sign language, which they performed for the whole school at the week's closing assembly.

See Appendix 11 for a copy of the song that was taught.

PE Department

Approach them and ask if they have any ideas. At one school, we provided an old wheelchair that the students used in games. At another school, the PE teachers created a variety of activities, including having one hand tied loosely to inhibit its use.

There are also several children's games that can be played, such as "Bat and Moth." The children gather in a circle, and two children are within the circle. One is blindfolded and is the bat, and the other is the moth. The object of the game is for the bat to catch the moth by noises he or she makes, without the use of sight.

Consider a discussion about involvement of all classmates on teams, versus the need to win at all costs. How does it feel for the student with physical limitations to be chosen last, or not at all?

Art Department

Approach them and ask if they would be willing to focus artwork on the topic for that week. Ideas include painting with the brush held in your mouth or building a model out of clay while blindfolded.

Library

Approach the librarian and ask if they would be willing to participate and if they have any ideas. We were able to check out all kinds of books on the subject from the city

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library (see a list in Appendix 12), and make them available for checkout to classroom teachers to read to their classes. We also had volunteers come in and read these selected books to the children during their 30-minute library period. At another school, the librarians preferred to do the reading.

Homework

Invite the school to have SHHHHHHHHHH!! homework. Each student is asked to communicate without words for different time periods, depending on age (e.g., 15 minutes for kindergarten, 2 hours for grade 6), one evening that week. Send a flyer out to the parents to ask for their family's involvement. Each student is also given a homework sheet to fill out, with the reverse side to be filled out by a parent. (Examples of these are in Appendix 13.) Ask the teachers to have a ten-minute discussion on the following morning about the assignment: what was difficult, how the family reacted, etc. Parents give this activity rave reviews.

Lunchtime Hello

This is a very popular activity and can be done at two lunch periods in the week. This gives the students time to “warm up” to the activity. At lunch, have each student eat lunch with a “grade mate” they rarely talk to and learn three things about that person. Each student is given a “Hello Lunch” sheet to fill out (see Appendix 14). Teachers can lead a discussion about the experience. Ribbons or stickers can be handed out to participants.



“Help Walk”

Organize a “Help Walk” during a lunchtime. Any student who wants to participate is blindfolded and led by another student around a particular route that is laid out in the school. Include a sitting activity, going up and down small stairs, etc. Often, the student council organizes and runs this activity.

Essay

At the end of the week, upper elementary students are asked to write a short essay on what they experienced during AAW, what they learned about how we are the same and how we are different, and how their lives might be different because of what they learned. This allows the students to process the information during a creation process, which is quite different than other people giving you inputs all week. The essays are posted on a rotating basis on a wall on campus so that the message of AAW is kept alive for weeks to come. Some outstanding essays could be read at weekly school

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK

assemblies. This was done as an optional activity, yet two-thirds of the children participated. (See sample in Appendix 17.)

Braille Cards

Obtain Braille cards from the local society for the blind. They are instructional cards that list each letter in Braille. The student is then given a sentence in Braille to decipher. This activity can be offered to teachers as an optional item they might do with their class. Students were fascinated to see a copy of Harry Potter in Braille.

Teacher and Student Feedback

It's a great thing to do at the end of the week. A sample survey is in Appendix 15. Ask teachers to send this survey sheet back to you to see how things went. Students in grades 4-6 can complete student surveys (see Appendix 16).

Your Feedback to Us

Please forward all successful new AAW ideas to us, so that we can consider including them in our yearly updating of the AAW manual. Be sure to include any appropriate appendix items. Call or email Elizabeth Ball at 650-969-7049 and rehlball@aol.com.

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Timeline for AAW Activities

3-4 MONTHS AHEAD

Decide on the chair and possible co-chair of the AAW:

- Study AAW manual and decide on responsibilities.

Meet with the principal:

- Present the program.
- Decide on which elements of the program will work for your school.
- Request:
 - A date
 - Permission to attend the next appropriate site council meeting
 - The names of 2 teachers who would be interested in being an inside liaison
 - Permission to attend and speak to the teachers at their regular staff meeting
 - An introduction to the PTA president or contact in the PTA

Once a date for the week is established:

- Attend a School Site Council meeting:
 - Present the program.
 - Ask for support and suggestions.
- Meet with the PTA:
 - Present the program.
 - Ask for:
 - funding
 - volunteers
 - any ideas
 - any ideas or input

3 MONTHS AHEAD

Chairpersons to start to approach and identify volunteers, particularly Group 1 volunteers.

- Announce activity at local CAC group and invite volunteers to participate.

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK
APPENDIX 1

Attend a teachers meeting:

- Present the program.
- Elaborate on their role in the week.
- Give out information sheets and the in-class activity and physical therapy sign-up sheets. Ask for three times for each sign-up sheet. Try to get the sign-up sheets completed at the meeting; otherwise, ask that they be returned to the principal in one week.

2-3 MONTHS AHEAD

Speak with:

- Outside Physical Therapy department to plan time availability.
- Music department or music docents to plan activities.
- Librarian to plan activities and check out books.
- P.E department to plan activities.
- Art department or docent to plan activities.

Meet with the Principal:

- Confirm a date and location for the mid week assembly time.
- Request a room for PT activities.

Continue to identify volunteers:

- Contact room mothers and have them advertise AAW to parents and look for volunteers.
- Have a meeting of Group 1 volunteers to discuss program and training.

Start to plan schedule of activities, including class-by-class schedule of in-class and physical therapy activities.

2 MONTHS AHEAD

Identify and approach individuals for the assembly activities: speakers etc.

Design and complete poster for the front of the school.

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK
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Speak with the appropriate people to decide on lead up articles, and advertising in the school newspaper. If this article is written by the principal this gives AAW more import. Some example articles are included at the end of this section to assist in this.

Speak with local newspapers to advise them of the activity and plan coverage.

1-2 MONTHS AHEAD

Continue to plan schedule of activities:

- Contact and firm up times with the teachers, Group 1 volunteers and Group 2 volunteers, particularly for the library.

Meet with the student council and discuss how they would like to be involved:

- Discuss the Help Walk.
- Ask them for any other ideas and any activities they would like to be involved with.

2 WEEKS AHEAD

Hang poster on the school grounds.

Attend teachers meeting again to confirm arrangements and encourage their commitment.
Discuss in-class exercises.

Meet with Principal the confirm AAW arrangements.

1 WEEK AHEAD

Confirm all arrangements with all participants: i.e., volunteers, speakers, outside agencies etc.

Send AAW flyer to parents.

A DAY AHEAD

Hang posters around the school and in the multi-purpose room.

Sample Letters from the Principal to Publish in the School Newspaper

2 weeks before:

Your School is excited to embark on the Ability Awareness Week program at the end of the month, from January 28th to February 1st.

This is going to be a great week including lots of activities where students will have the opportunity to experience and learn about different abilities. The goal of the week is to help all of our students to understand that we all have a variety of differences as well as similarities. Some people simply need additional assistance or a different way of participating in order to function in our world.

Volunteers will be leading activities in the classrooms. The music department, PE department, and the library will all be involved in different learning activities as well.

We have an assembly on the afternoon of Wednesday, January 30th which will explore learning disabilities in a very positive way. We will be asking you as parents to support some activities and discussion at home on this important topic. We will keep you posted with more details next week.

We are all looking forward to a week of “Learning Our Differences.” If you would like some additional information or a chance to assist, please contact the school office.

1 week before:

Please be sure to speak with your child next week regarding our very special events that will be taking place during Ability Awareness Week.

What kids want, more than anything else, is to belong, to be part of the group, to be asked to play at recess with the other kids, to be asked to join others for lunch. Children who are differently abled are often excluded and can be seen at the edge of the playground or seated alone. This program has the entire student body go through hands on exercises that will help the children appreciate the frustrations of various disabilities. There is a discussion of how we are all on a rainbow of ability – better at some things and worse at others. It is emphasized that everyone has some quality or talent that is worth finding out about and enjoying through friendship, and that certainly every human being deserves respectful and kind treatment. There is a discussion of teasing and how that hurts people. The children are then directly instructed what to do when they come across someone who is differently abled.

In this exciting, fun-filled week students will have the chance to experience fine and gross motor, as well as visual and auditory processing and communication activities. Volunteers will be leading

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK
APPENDIX 1

activities in the classrooms. The music department, PE department, and library will all be involved in different learning activities as well. There will be an assembly featuring XX on Wednesday afternoon. Look for the handout for Sh-h-h-h homework on Wednesday night.

We look forward to a fantastic week!

Teachers' Letter Introducing AAW

Date_____

Dear _____ teachers:

Please find attached a copy of the activities for the Ability Awareness Week. Check the times of the scheduled activities for your classroom and let me know if the times allotted do not work.

Please plan to be present for the activities for your class, as we do not know your students and their idiosyncrasies! We may ask you to be the timekeeper for us.

Please note that there are two concert performances of "Kids on the Block" on Wednesday: grades 1,2 and 3 at 1:00 PM and grades 4, 5 and 6 at 1:45 PM. The performance will be approximately 20 minutes long.

On Wednesday evening we are planning a home assignment where children will be asked to communicate non-verbally for three hours. It will be announced in the Thursday Word, and we will put a reminder in the take home backpack material. Please try to remind your students on Wednesday before they go home. We would ask that you have a discussion time with your students on Thursday at some time to ask them how it went and how they felt, and how they think it would feel to have to always live that way. I think you will have some interesting discussion.

We would also ask that you assign your class an essay assignment on the topic of ability awareness and the things they have experienced and learned during the week. For the younger grades some other activity might be appropriate.

We would also ask that where possible you have class discussions on the topic, and if there are any activities in the week that would lend themselves to this subject it would be most helpful in making this a very memorable experience.

We are approaching this that we are all on the "Rainbow of Ability."

Suggested topics might be:

- The "Rainbow of Ability"
- It's OK to be different.

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK
APPENDIX 2

- How can I include someone who is different?
- We are all the same, we are all different.

We also have lots of special library books on loan from the Los Altos library on the topic. Please go over to explore what we have to possibly read to your class.

The 1st and 2nd grade activities are being led by _____.

The older grades are being led by myself, _____. Grades 3 – 6 will all be doing a fine motor, visual and auditory activity. It might be slightly different than your original schedule.

If anyone is interested in doing more activities with your class, please let me know. I have some very easy, effective ones that we might not have time to fit in.

If you have any questions please email me at _____.

I will be asking you to fill out an assessment form after the week's activities to get your feedback as to how it went.

Thank you all so much for your help. I know we are going to have a fun and important week of learning.

With kind regards,

Sample Handout to Recruit Volunteers

Ability Awareness Week



Learning Our Differences

Ability Awareness is a program about learning our differences. It will be a fun-filled week of activities at _____, where we try to help students understand that we are all different and special in some way. We explore the issues of acceptance and inclusion of others. We also address teasing and bullying which can make school life so hard for so many students.

There will be in-class activities for all grades, special library activities, physical therapy activities, lunch time activities, special assemblies and much more.

We need lots of volunteers to make this week happen. If you or anyone you know has any time to spare during this week please provide your name and contact information on the attached sheet.

Thank you.

Name:

Email (preferred):

Tel:

Sample Instructions for Assistants for K-2 Class Activities

First of all thank you all so much for giving of your precious time to help us with this. And I know how precious time it is!

You will have a person leading the class, so you will be able to follow as to what to do as the activity goes along.

Here is a run down of things to do:

- Please go into the classroom about five minutes beforehand to set up.
- Please put up Ability Poster at the front of the class.
- Put one pair of socks on each desk.
- Put a small bag of Cheerios or beads on each desk.
- Grades 1 & 2 only: Put a dot-to-dot paper face down on each desk.

The students will be asked to thread the Cheerios on the string with socks on their hands demonstrating a fine motor activity. Try not to help the students too much with this activity. The idea is for them to feel a little frustrated.

After this is finished please collect the socks and Cheerio bags.

Inclusion Exercise

The assistants come to the front on cue from the leader and huddle with the leader and whisper together. One assistant is not let into the group. They whisper together for awhile and then the assistant looks hurt and goes to sit on the chair by herself.

The leader will then break up the group and talk to the class about inclusion and hurtful behavior.

That is the end of the in class exercises. If there is another class directly afterwards please proceed over there to set up.

Sample Instructions for Assistants for 3-6 Class Activities

First of all thank you all so much for giving of your precious time to help us with this. And I know how precious time it is!

You will have a person leading the class, so you will be able to follow as to what to do as the activity goes along.

Here is a run down of things to do:

- Please go into the classroom about 5-10 minutes before hand to set up.
- Please put up Ability Poster at the front of the class.
- Put one shirt on the back of each chair (don't forget the teachers!).
- Put one pair of socks on each desk.
- Put a mirror box kit with short golf pencil on each desk.
- Put a "this is what it is like" paper face down on each desk.

Exercises

The students will be asked to button the shirts with the socks on their hands. They are meant to feel the frustration of what fine motor limitations would be like on a daily basis. Hurry them along and hassle them. After this exercise collect the shirts and the socks for the next class.

After the mirror box exercise, collect the boxes. Put out a "Dot to Dot" paper on each desk.

During the sixth sense exercise clap twice EVERY time the speaker says "sixth sense" until the social rule is explained.

Inclusion Exercise

The assistants come to the front of the class on cue from the leader and huddle with the leader and whisper together. One assistant is not let into the group. They whisper together for awhile and then the assistant looks hurt and goes to sit on the chair by herself.

The leader will then break up the group and talk to the class about inclusion and hurtful behavior.

That is the end of the in-class exercises. If there is another class directly afterwards, please proceed there to set up.

Famous People with Disabilities

AD/HD or Learning Disabilities

Ansel Adams	Bill Gates
Terry Bradshaw	John F. Kennedy
Charlotte & Emily Bronte	Abraham Lincoln
George H.W. Bush	Mozart
Jim Carrey	Jack Nicholson
Samuel Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain)	Elvis Presley
Salvador Dali	Pete Rose
Emily Dickinson	Sylvester Stallone
Thomas Edison	Vincent Van Gogh
Henry Ford	Robin Williams
Benjamin Franklin	The Wright Brothers

Dyslexia

Hans Christian Anderson	F. Scott Fitzgerald
Ludwig Van Beethoven	Danny Glover
Harry Belafonte	Whoopie Goldberg
Richard Branson, founder of Virgin	Ernest Hemingway
President George W. Bush	John Irving
Stephen Cannell, producer of “A Beautiful Mind”	Thomas Jefferson
Lewis Carroll	Bruce Jenner
Prince Charles	“Magic” Johnson
Cher	John Lennon
Agatha Christie	Jay Leno
Winston Churchill	Greg Louganis
Bill Cosby	Isaac Newton
Walter Cronkite	Paul J. Orfalea, founder of Kinko’s
Tom Cruise	General George Patton
Leonardo da Vinci	Robert Rauschenberg
Walt Disney	Nelson Rockefeller, former U.S. vice president
Albert Einstein	Charles Schwab
Dwight D. Eisenhower	Wendy Wasserstein
	Woodrow Wilson

Physical Disabilities

Musicians Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles are blind.

Violinist Itzhak Perlman and president Franklin Delano Roosevelt had polio.

Actress Marlee Matlin is deaf.

Stephen Hawking, scientist and author of *A Brief History of Time*, has Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease).

Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Hannibal, Harriet Tubman, all had epilepsy.

Senators Bob Dole and Daniel Inouye both sustained disabling injuries during World War II.

Baseball player Jim Abbott was born with one hand yet pitched in the major leagues.

Did Poorly in School

Peggy Noonan, speechwriter for President Reagan and author.

Jim Clark, founder of Silicon Graphics and Netscape.

Tobias Wolff, author of *This Boy's Life*, graduate of Oxford and Stanford English professor.

Charles Schulz, creator of "Peanuts" comic strip.

Budget

Items needed by the district to be used by all schools:

30 mirrors for visual exercise (WalMart/Walgreens)	60.00
Box of golf pencils (for visual exercise)	10.00
70 sport socks (Costco) (1 set each K, 1-2, 3-6)	50.00
Strings for K and 1-2 grade fine motor exercise	10.00
Art supplies for posters	140.00
Blindfolds for the “Help Walk”	<u>20.00</u>
	\$290.00

Items needed by each school:

Poster for the front of the school (Kinko’s)	100.00
Entertainment (optional), e.g., “Gary Lapow” concerts	375.00
Poster board	25.00
Misc.: paper, tape, Fruit Loops etc.	<u>20.00</u>
	\$520.00

Other items:

30 men’s used button-down shirts

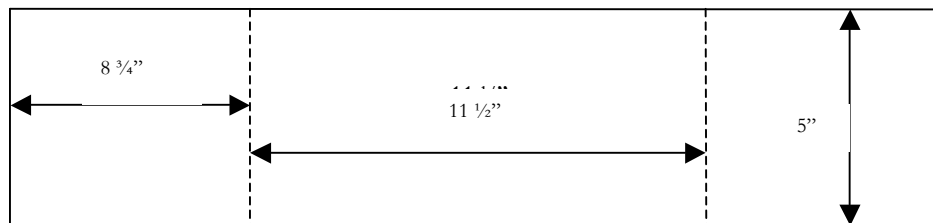
Cardboard for mirror casings

Lots of photocopying ; lots of paper

How to Build a Mirror Box

The mirror boxes are built out of cardboard. Cardboard boxes that copy paper come in are ideal. Mirrors were purchased from Walmart very inexpensively. They were Goody brand, but any 5" x 7" mirror is fine. I picked the Goody ones because they had the thinnest profile so the box folds over it easily. Any taping is done with Scotch thick white foam double stick tape, 1/2" wide. This thick tape compensates for the mirror back not being flat and makes the frame supports stick out farther.

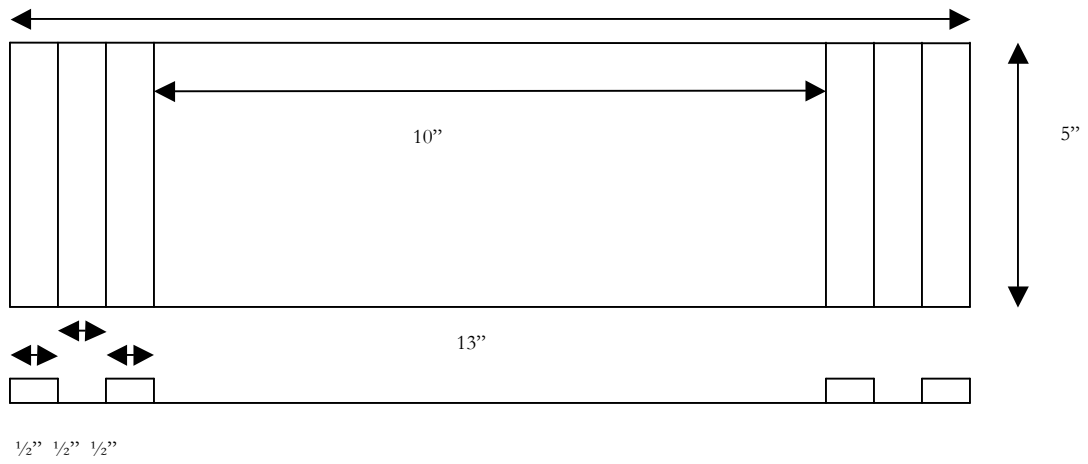
The main frame is cut across the copy paper box so that the bends that are already in the cardboard (the dotted lines in the illustration below) become the bends of the mirror box. You can get three frames from one copy paper box. The mirror is taped in the center of the middle portion of the frame.



Mirror Box Frame

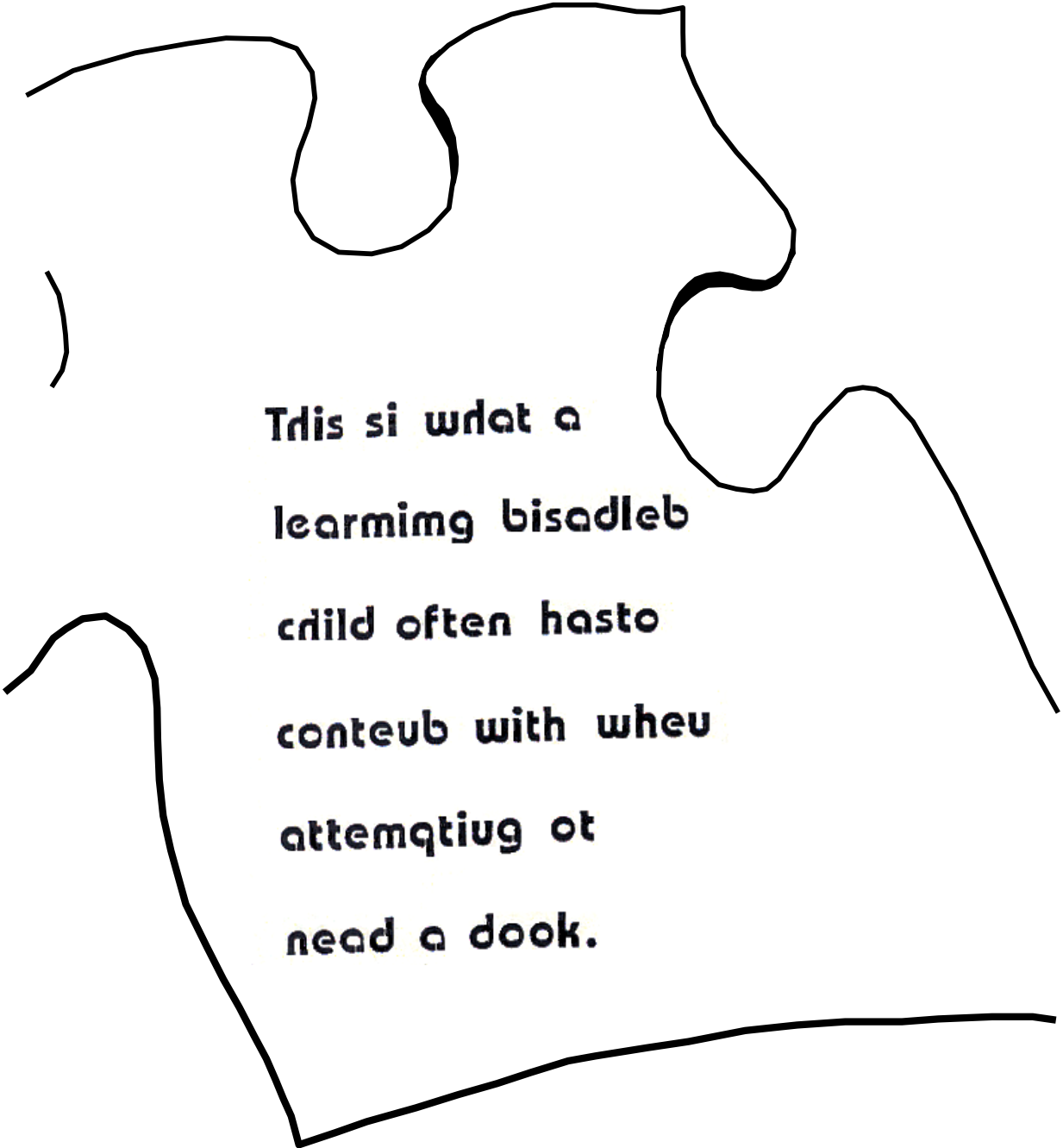
The cover serves to stabilize the frame and also to keep the user from seeing their writing directly, since they are supposed to only look at the mirror as they write. In use, it is positioned close at the user end of the frame arms. The covers can be cut from the lids of the copy paper boxes. There are two support bars at either end of the cover. The arm of the frame is meant to sit between these supports, which keeps the box stable.

And finally, for easy transport, you can fold the frame closed over the mirror, set the lid on cover of it, and rubber band the set together. It helps to use short pencils for the users.



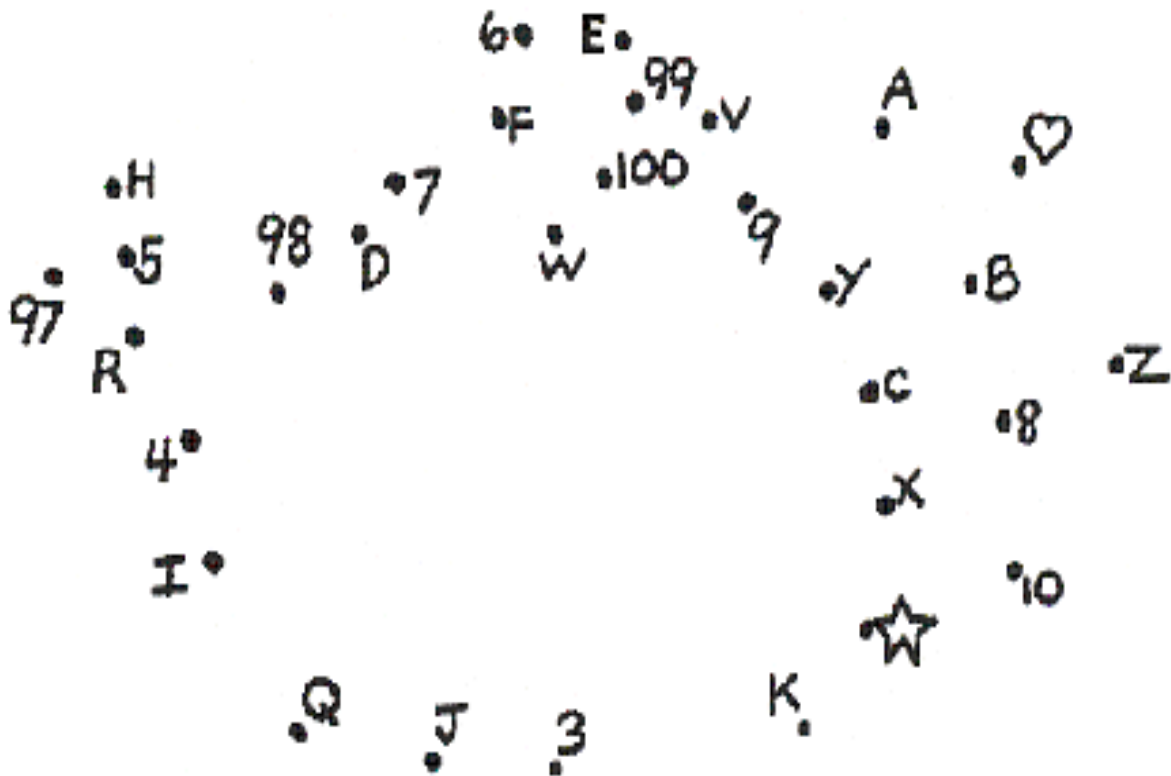
Mirror Box Cover, bottom and side views

Written Passage



This is what a
learning disabled
child often has to
contend with when
attempting to
read a book.

Dot-to-Dot Paper for the Upper Grades



Connect the dots on this picture while listening to the tape. This is how a classroom might sound to someone who has trouble ignoring background noises.

Sign Language Song

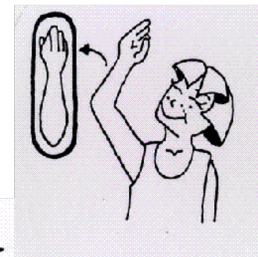
May There Always be Sunshine

- adapted from Charlotte Diamond by Jeanne von Gunten and Lyn Lee



May there always be sunshine

May there always be blue skies



May there always be caring



May there always be love



May there always be sunshine

May there always be blue skies



May there always be kindness



May there always be friends

Books for Library Reading

This is a list of books recommended for the reading program in the library.

Kinder: "Different Just Like Me" by Lori Mitchell
 1st grade: "Author : A True Story" by Helen Lester
 2nd grade: "We're All Special" by Arlene Maguire
 3rd grade: "Beverly Cleary : She Makes Reading Fun" by Patricia Stone Martin
 4th grade: "The Don't Give Up Kid" by Jeanne Gehret
 5th grade: "Be Good to Eddie Lee" by Virginia Fleming
 6th grade: "Ian's Walk" by Laurie Lears

We have also successfully used:
 grades K-2 "My Friend Leslie" by Maxine Rosenberg
 grades 3-6 "Thank you, Mr. Falker" by Patricia Polacco

The table below is a list of books checked out from the city library for general classroom use.

Title	Author	Disability	Description
Extraordinary People	Kent & Quinlan	many	short bios of famous people with a variety of disabilities
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (5 vol)	J.K. Rowling	blind	entirely in Braille
Redbird (2)	Patrick Fort	blind	text and Braille picture book
What is the sign for Friend? (2)	Judith Greenberg	deaf	picture book, some signing, story about a deaf child's day and experiences
Sara's Secret	Suzanne Wanous	Cerebral Palsy and MR	picture book 39 pages great coverage of feelings and attitudes
Somebody Called Me a Retard Today ... and My Heart Felt Sad	Ellen O'Shaughnessy	MR	picture book, quick read great coverage of feelings and being "normal"
We Laugh, We Love, We Cry	Thomas Bergman	MR	picture book, 41 pages shows day including school and therapy
Be Good to Eddie Lee	Virginia Fleming	Downs, MR	picture book story about friendship
My Brother Sammy	Edwards & Armitage	Autism	picture book story about acceptance
Ian's Walk	Laurie	Autism	picture book

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	Lears		story about seeing the world a different way
Nick Joins In	Joe Lasker	wheelchair	picture book, 29 pages kids at school learn about a boy in a wheelchair and include him
Our Teacher's in a Wheelchair	Mary Ellen Powers	spinal injury	picture book, a day in the life...
Just Kids - Visiting a Class for Children with Special Needs	Ellen Senisi	many	picture book, 39 pages a bit long, but unflinching look at disability, methods in special ed, and acceptance
Let's Talk About Dyslexia	Melanie Gordon	dyslexia	picture book, 22 pages
Let's Talk About Needing Extra Help at School	Susan Kent	resource kids	picture book, about a spectrum of abilities
Ben Has Something to Say	Laurie Lears	stuttering	picture book
Hometown Hero	Aiello & Shulman	asthma	37 pages plus Q&A
A Portrait of Me	Aiello & Shulman	diabetes	37 pages plus Q&A
Trick or Treat or Trouble	Aiello & Shulman	epilepsy	43 pages plus Q&A
Friends for Life	Aiello & Shulman	AIDS	47 pages
It's Your Turn at Bat	Aiello & Shulman	Cerebral Palsy	37 pages plus Q&A
Business is Looking Up	Aiello & Shulman	blindness	29 pages plus Q&A
I'm Deaf and It's OK	Aseltine, et.al.	Hearing impaired	Picture book, 34 pages About a boy who wears hearing aids
The Don't Give Up Kid	Jeanne Gehret		26 pages learning differences are OK

SHHHHHHHHHH!! Homework Handout to Parents

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK

SHHHHHHHHHHH!!

(Date)

DEAR PARENTS,

AS PART OF OUR ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK, WE ARE ASKING THAT YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD IN EXPERIENCING WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO COMMUNICATE WITHOUT THE GIFT OF SPEECH.

WE ARE ENCOURAGING EVERY STUDENT TO COMMUNICATE NON-VERBALLY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE HOURS THIS EVENING WITH ALL FAMILY MEMBERS.

WE REALIZE THERE MAY BE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MIGHT MAKE THIS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT ARE ENCOURAGING EVERYONE TO DO THE BEST THEY CAN.

YOUR CHILD WILL DISCUSS HIS OR HER EXPERIENCE IN CLASS TOMORROW.

IT WILL MAKE FOR AN INTERESTING EVENING!!

HAPPY QUIET TIME.

THE ABILITY AWARENESS COMMITTEE

SHHHHHHHHHH!! Homework Sheet

SHHHHHHHHHH!! Homework

Name: _____

I have to stay quiet and “talk” without using words for 60 minutes. I was quiet for _____ minutes.

Tell me how it felt to Shhhhhh for 60 minutes.

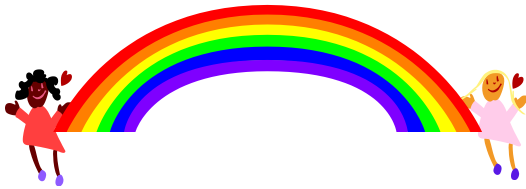
Side One

Parents: Your reaction to tonight's homework:

[illegible]

Side Two

Hello Lunch/Help Walk Sheet



Ability Awareness Week

Name: _____

Thursday:

I ate lunch with my new friend: _____

They are in Room: _____

Their teacher is: _____

I learned these three things about _____

Help Walk:

I _____

I lost my sense of _____ but my sense
of _____ was very strong.

Teacher Feedback

Dear _____ Teachers,

We would like to thank you so much for your kind cooperation during the Ability Awareness Week. It was a very beneficial week for all. We would love some feedback from you as to how the week went and wonder if you would fill out the questionnaire with your feedback and comments to help us learn from this experience.

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK EVALUATION

Please rate the activities provided during Ability Awareness Week:

(Circle answer.)

In-class simulations:	great	good	fair
Reading time in the library, if applicable:	great	good	fair
Kids on the Block assembly:	great	good	fair
Assemblies/guest speakers:	great	good	fair
Room 14's hands-on equipment activity:	great	good	fair

(Circle yes or no.)

Did the AAW Staff present a clear "lesson plan" to your students?	YES	NO
Were your students enthusiastic about what they experienced?	YES	NO
Did you sense that the students talked about some of their AAW experiences in the days that followed?	YES	NO

What was the feedback concerning the assigned evening of silence?

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK
APPENDIX 15

Do you feel that this program is valuable enough to continue in other schools in the future?

What changes would make it better?

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED EVALUATION TO _____ 'S
MAILBOX BY _____ (insert date) _____. THANK YOU.

Student Feedback

For each statement, please circle the answer that best describes how you feel. Answer honestly!

- | | | | |
|---|-------|----------|------------|
| 1. I feel OK around students with physical differences | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 2. People with physical differences can marry a person who does not have a physical difference. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 3. Kids who have physical or learning differences have trouble with friendships. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 4. It's OK to tease a little bit. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 5. During recess, I now will try to play with kids with physical or learning differences more often. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 6. Kids with differences are in most ways the same as those without physical or learning differences. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 7. Kids with differences are not as smart as kids with no differences. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 8. My attitudes towards my fellow students have changed due to AAW. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 9. After AAW, I will make a greater effort to include all classmates in recess group activities. | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
| 10. We should hold an AAW every few years. If you agree, in how many years? (1-4) ____ | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |

11. Circle your two favorite AAW activities:

Assemblies In-class exercises Physical therapy in multi

Shhh night Hello lunch AAW PE AAW art

Library reading Lunch "help" walk

Please return your completed survey to your teacher by ____ (insert date) _____. Thank you so much for participating in this survey.

Follow-up Activity: A Letter to the Principal

Dear Mrs. _____

We hope you have learned a lot about yourself, and others, through our Ability Awareness activities. Mrs. _____ would like to hear from YOU!

Write a letter to Mrs. _____ telling her what you learned.

Here is a suggested format for your letter to get you thinking! To make your letter your best, follow the writing process of rough draft, revision, and final copy.

Turn your letter into Mrs. _____ by _____.

Introduction - - first paragraph

Grab Mrs. _____'s attention with an interesting first sentence!

Describe some of your experiences during Ability Awareness Week, and relate what you learned from them.

Body Details - - middle paragraph (or paragraphs depending on how much you say!)

Describe the understanding you now have about kids' differences.

Relate about at least one example of a time you saw that, "It was okay to be different."

Explain how, even though we are all different, we are also the same.

Conclusion - - last paragraph

End with a pledge to Mrs. _____ (and to yourself!) about how you will act on the playground and in the classroom when you see someone who has qualities that are unique or different than yours.

Sample Essay Written by a Student

10/22/02

Dear Mr. Celeste,

Fumble fingers! That is what you might say to a person on your football team if they blow a beautiful catch during a game. You probably didn't know that there are people out there, just like you and me, who have difficulty with fine-motor control, meaning it to be impossible to button a shirt or open a can, or things like that. That is one of the things I learned during Ability Awareness Week.

During Ability Awareness week, I also learned that though some people may have obvious disabilities, no one is without some disabilities. Someone might be a dyslexic, someone else may be terrible in math, they both have their ups and downs, abilities and disabilities. I also learned two people can be different and the same at the same time. I also learned that even though wheelchairs are cool and fun to ride in temporarily, they are no fun to have to use for your whole life, not to mention give you arthritis, so that if you see someone in a wheelchair, be friendly, help them out, and most of all, treat them the way you would anyone else.

Ability Awareness Week taught me a great many new things, including to treat people with disabilities kindly, and not to recognize them for their disabilities, but for their abilities. Oh, and get to know them, a disabled person could turn out to be your best friend.

Sincerely,

Daniel Son-Bell
6th grade student at Springer

Sample Speech Given at a Morning Assembly

I am here today to talk to you about my daughter Kaitlin.

She is in fourth grade at Springer. In many ways she is just like all of you. She loves being in girl scouts. She loves to dance. She loves to read – this summer she read all 15 of the Redwall books, and then read them all again because she loved them so much. Her favorite movie is Treasure Planet. She loves cats. She loves to climb trees. She loves jumping rope on our trampoline – her record is 223 jumps in a row. She loves pizza. She really loves ice cream – on her birthday she had ice cream for breakfast, lunch, and dinner!!

Kaitlin is pretty smart. She is very proud of being in the advanced math class. She gets excellent test scores. She is a GATE student, which means that she is a gifted student.

Although Kaitlin is much like many kids her own age, she is also very different from them because of the way her brain works. She is autistic. Her brain is wired a little differently and she was born that way. Because of her autism she doesn't recognize body language, tone of voice, or social cues. She has trouble imagining what other people are thinking. I bet you can look at someone and figure out what they are doing and how they are feeling and even figure out what you should be doing because of that. I bet you can easily guess that your teacher is mad at you without her saying anything, and you probably quickly get quiet and start working. Kaitlin hasn't a clue. She gets very frustrated, because she knows that she doesn't know.

For first and second grades she was in a special class called a special day class. There are 3 of them here at Covington. This is a small class where learning is prepared for the kids in an individualized way. She already knew how to read and spell and do math. She came to school to learn how to behave properly in a classroom and do all the things that you do without thinking – how to sit in a group, how to have a conversation, how to handle frustration, how to get the teacher's attention in an appropriate way, even how to handle being bored gracefully. During first and second grades, if she was uncomfortable with what someone else was doing, she would let out a blood-curdling scream to make them go away. It worked, but kids thought she was really weird.

Last year, for third grade she was ready to be mainstreamed back at Springer. It was an interesting year. If you met her she would look very small, so if she couldn't handle what was going on in the classroom, she hid under the furniture. The teacher would turn around and wonder where she was. The other kids would point, and the teacher would go get her out. One time she got in a lot of trouble because she hid a book under her shirt and excused herself to the bathroom. The bathroom is a comfortable place to settle in with a book! Actually, aren't there days when YOU would love to do that??

This year she is in fourth grade and doing what she is supposed to do without any extra help. Hooray! Lots of people believed in her and helped her along the way. This made her feel loved and supported, which helped her to grow and learn.

Kaitlin really looks just like any other kid. Her disability is what we call invisible because you can not really see what is wrong when you look at her. And yet, after you meet her, it takes very little time before you realize that she behaves in an unusual way and that she is quite different.

So, once you notice that she is different, it might be easy to focus on her difficulties. Hopefully, through your Ability Awareness activities this week, you will have learned to have a new set of eyes – eyes that look beyond what someone has difficulties with and instead looks for what they are good at, what is fun about them, how you could enjoy being with them. It is always great when you can look for the best in someone!

At times she can be annoying, but there is lots that is fun and funny about Kaitlin. She tells lots of jokes, she is very imaginative in her play, and she loves to play with her friends.

She has friends – smart kids who can see the good in her.

She loves going to birthday parties. She just went to one at Winchester Mystery House. She came home reciting all sorts of facts about Mrs. Winchester – she had pretty much memorized the tour.

At our recent walkathon Kaitlin's friend Reyna walked the whole walkathon with her, and they really enjoyed each other's company.

After school at Springer a group of kids likes to stay and play in the sand box. They wet the sand and build structures and make sand bombs. They like Kaitlin playing with them – she has some good ideas about construction techniques.

This summer we swam a lot at Eagle Pool. Often we would bump into Isabella and she would swim with Kaitlin for the whole afternoon.

One evening we went out to dinner at Fresh Choice. Sasha saw her and came over to say hi; we ended up eating together.

Another time during a difficult moment, when Kaitlin was having a fit about who was sitting where in the van, Laura figured out to give her a cookie and helped her calm down.

What a wonderful bunch of friends she has! Today I want to ask you to be like these friends.

There are lots of kids like Kaitlin in the world, even right here at Covington.

- You could be that smart person who knows how to look for what's good about them.
- You could be that kind person who plays with them.

ABILITY AWARENESS WEEK
APPENDIX 18

- You could be that thoughtful person who invites them to your parties.
- You could be that caring person who comforts them when they don't understand.
- You could be that great human being who helps them grow.

The Scripts

Suggested In-Class Script for Grades K - 2

We place a poster of a rainbow up by the board. (Estimated 5 minutes)

Good morning. My name is _____, and this is _____ and _____ (introduce other volunteers).

We are here as part of the Ability Awareness program that is going on this week at _____ and are going to be leading you through some interesting and fun activities. (Draw rainbow on the board.)

Put up your hand if you can tell me about something that you are really good at doing. (Pick two or three students. Ask them what it is and enter into a brief discussion. Write things on one end of the rainbow.)

Is there anyone who can put up your hand and tell me about something that is harder for you. (Pick one or two students and enter into a brief discussion. Write things on the other end of the rainbow.)

You see, we all have things that we are good at and then we all have things that we are not so good at doing. We might say we are all on a "Rainbow of Ability" -- a big rainbow of colors and a rainbow of abilities. Some of our abilities are at one end of the rainbow and some of our abilities are at the other.

This morning we are going to be doing some activities that will perhaps help you to understand different abilities.

I would like you all to pay close attention.

(Ask the teacher to separate the class into groups of six to eight, each group at its own table. Follow the teacher's rules with respect to classroom decorum.)

Fine Motor/ Bead Activity (Estimated time: 7 minutes)

(Leader asks volunteers to hand out Cheerios bags.) I would like you all to open the little bag in front of you and take out the string. Now I would like you to put the socks on both hands.

When I tell you to start, I would like you to thread all the beads on the string. I will start the clock and you will have four minutes to do the activity.

(Volunteers roam the room to assist the students and indicate the students' feelings to the leader. After a few minutes, ask several children how they are feeling and write their answers on the board in the classroom: "frustrated," "UH this is awful," "I

can't do this," "I don't have enough time," etc. Remind the students of the remaining time.)

(At the end of the four minutes ask them to stop. Engage in some conversation around the words on the board, i.e., That was difficult, wasn't it? You couldn't use your hands properly. It was very frustrating. It took you a long time to do it. You felt silly. You felt people were watching you. It didn't feel very cool.)

You know, there are people, and lots of children, who have these kinds of difficulties, who have to deal with this every day, all the time. Can you imagine what that would be like? Can you imagine how difficult that would be in writing, at P.E.? (etc., etc.)

Now let's go into our second activity. (This is optional.)

Braille cards/sight activity

Pass out the braille cards and ask them if they know what they are.

This is called a Braille card, and it is used by those individuals who are sight impaired. Now I want you to close your eyes, and run your fingers over the dots. Now imagine that this is your language, and just the way there are different spoken languages, there are also unspoken languages, and this is the language of the sight impaired. To you, this might seem very difficult to learn and to understand because your world has been set up for someone with sight. But for someone who is sight impaired, this is not hard to learn because it is all that they know, and their sense of touch is so heightened that they become better able to cope through the world in the way of touch. Do you know of anybody like this?

Do you think that this person is not smart? No, he or she is just as smart as you, but she has to be taught in a different language. So I want you to think about this the next time you meet someone who is sight impaired. Think about whether or not you would want to make friends with this person, why or why not? You never know, he or she may become the best friend that you have ever had.

(A discussion may follow.)

I'd like to collect the cards now, please; I need to use them for the other classes. Let's go into our next activity.

Hearing Exercise/Dot-to-Dot Exercise (Grades 1 & 2)

Now we are going to do a listening exercise. You need to listen very carefully. There will be a lot of noise in the background, so just do the best you can. If you lose your place, put your pencil down, and pick it up and continue where you can. Do not get upset at not being able to do this.

The helpers will pass out the dot to dot activity paper. You will play the tape. When it is over you will ask: “how many thought this was easy?”, “how many thought this was hard?” There are people in the world who can not filter out all that background noise, they hear every little noise that is made in the classroom all the time. There are also kids with something called ADD attention deficit disorder. So if you are tapping your pencil, the person sitting next to you may not be able to concentrate because he is hearing you tapping your pencil. So when your teacher says to be quiet, she means, be quiet for the sake of not only yourself, but for others who might have this problem. (Discussion follows.)

Teasing and Bullying Exercise (Grades 1 & 2)

The world can be a harsh place for children who have weak social skills. Bullies and Teasers can spot them from a mile away.

Teasing is when someone says or does something to you that bothers you and he keeps doing it, even though he knows you don't like it. Teasing often means that we have excluded others, when we know that he or she would like to join us.

What is Bullying:

Bullying as the act of being violent or threatening violence towards another. Teasing can turn to bullying in an instant! Bullying could include taking or damaging one's personal property or threatening over the internet

Why do they tease/bully:

Typically, they are seeking power, control, and attention, although there are other possible reasons. He will repeat this negative behavior as long as he sees it bothers this child.

What can you do:

BODY LANGUAGE and EYE CONTACT

Your body language tells a lot about you. If someone is teasing you, and your body says “I'm afraid”, the teaser is more likely to keep doing it. Try holding your shoulders back to allow very straight posture, hold your head high, and face your harasser.

Imagine a straight line going from both your shoulders to his.

If you are diverting your eyes, it tells the teaser that you are afraid. Look him straight in the eye! This tells him that you are standing up to him.

ZINGERS

Now that you are using good body language what do you say???

Here are some zingers for you to practice. Say them with FEELING:

- Quit it.
- I don't have to take this.
- Save your energy.
- So???
- Thanks for noticing!!

Or try Humor (It can be very effective if you are comfortable using it). It can often take the teaser off-guard.

Try "I" statements. "I feel ____ when you say/do this. Please stop."

We all have challenges. What are yours?

INVISIBLE SHIELD

Even when the target of teasing uses these strategies, being teased does not feel good. Imagine a shield or dome all around you when a teaser starts to bother you. Like an umbrella that stops the rain, this "shield" won't allow the mean words to reach you.

Taking it a step further, imagine the hurtful words hitting the outside of their shield and shattering like glass, or going up in smoke. Another idea is to picture the teasing words disappearing into thin air or blowing up.

WALK AWAY

Once you have used eye contact and strong body language, and said one zinger, Walk Away! If you stay there after he says his zinger, he will usually still be teased.

Now, we are going to practice this:

Pretend that you were the teaser. Have the kids stand up and and practice the posture. Have them fold their arms over their chests and say "quit it" or "stop" and walk away.

Friendship Discussion/Inclusion/Exclusion Activity (Estimated time: 5 minutes)

(This is optional; omit if you are running short on time.)

Can you tell me the best thing to do when you meet someone who is differently-abled? Yes, we might help them, but the MOST important thing for us to do is to include them. You need to talk to them, to make sure they are part of the group, that they are part of the game that you are playing, to ask them to your parties, to ask them to come to recess with you, to ask them to join you for lunch. Remember that we are all different in some ways, as we have talked about this morning. We are all part of the rainbow.

What is the worst thing you can do when you meet someone differently-abled? (Enter into a discussion about teasing: "Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can break your heart"; intervening when you see teasing on the playground; helping with P.E. or with play participation.)

How can you help?

Story: *It's OK To Be Different* (Estimated time: 5 minutes)

(Read if time permits. Comment as appropriate.)

Conclusion

I would really like you to think about what you have learned here today and all the things you will be learning this week. Try to think how it would be to be a person or a classmate with different abilities, on the different end of the "Ability Rainbow."

I hope you have enjoyed yourselves and I hope you will enjoy this week and take some of the things you learn and hold them close to your heart. Think about them the next time you meet someone on the "Rainbow." (Give out rainbow stickers.)

Suggested In-Class Script for Grades 3 Through 6

Set the classroom up ahead of time if you can, or while the speaker is going through the introduction. Attach the rainbow poster to the chalkboard. Place one shirt on the back of each student's chair along with a pair of socks, a mirror kit and paper, and "This is what a learning disabled child, etc.," placed face down on the side of each desk.

Good morning. My name is _____, and this is _____ and _____ (introduce other volunteers).

We are here as part of the Ability Awareness program that is going on this week at (school name) and are going to be leading you through some interesting and fun activities.

Put up your hand if you can tell me about something that you are really good at doing.

(Pick two or three students. Ask them what it is and enter into a brief discussion. Write suggestions on the board at one end of the rainbow poster.)

Is there anyone who can put up your hand and tell me about something that is harder for you?

(Pick one or two students and enter into a brief discussion. Write things on the other end of the rainbow.)

You see, we all have things that we are good at and then we all have things that we are not so good at doing. We might say we are all on a "Rainbow of Ability" -- a big rainbow of colors and a rainbow of abilities. Some of our abilities are at one end of the rainbow and some of our abilities are at the other. (Often, the same skill shows up on both sides of the rainbow: this is a great opportunity to point out that the thing that one person is good at can be the thing that is very hard for another person.)

How do you feel about the good side of your rainbow? (Proud, enjoy those things) And how do you feel about the things you are not good at? (Embarrassed, avoid) What can you do about the things you are not good at? Well, you could practice, but I want you to think about the fact that some things cannot be changed. I can practice all I want and I will not stop wearing glasses. What is best is to have acceptance. (This is a key point, so write "acceptance" underneath the rainbow.) Accept what you are good at. Accept what you are not good at. Accept yourself exactly the way you are. And accept others, exactly the way they are. (Save this rainbow and skills list -- you will refer back to it at the end of the session.)

This morning we are going to be doing some activities that will perhaps help you to feel what is like to have different abilities.

Dressing Activity (Estimated time: 8 minutes)

I would like you to stand up at the side of your desk for this activity. Please put the shirt on and put a sock on each hand. Now I want you to button up the shirt. You have five minutes. Let's see how you do. Go!

(Have the volunteers go around the class and harass the students a little: "Come on, the bus is coming, you are going to be late for school," "Your friends are waiting for you, come on, let's go, hurry, hurry.")

(The actual time is unimportant. It is getting the feeling of frustration that counts. So after two minutes:) Only three minutes left!

(Ask several children how they are feeling and have a volunteer write their answers on the board in the classroom: "frustrated," "UH this is awful," "I can't do this," "I don't have enough time," etc.)

(At the end of the five minutes ask them to stop. Then engage in some conversation around the words on the board, i.e., "That was difficult wasn't it? You couldn't use your hands properly. It was very frustrating. It took you a long time to do it. You felt silly. You felt people were watching you. It didn't feel very cool.")

Can anyone tell me the ability is called when you use your fingers? Fine motor. You know, there are people, including children, who have these kinds of difficulties, who have to deal with this every day, all the time. Can you imagine what that would be like, how frustrating that would be? Having to get dressed quickly, trying to keep up with others in school, trying not to get left behind?

Does this mean that someone is not smart? NO! It has nothing to do with being smart. It just means that people have are on different parts of the rainbow. So the next time you see someone having a hard time with "fine motor" skills, be patient, kind and respectful.

(Volunteers clear all the shirts and socks.)

Now let's go into our second activity.

Visual Activity (Estimated time: 5 minutes)

(Demonstrate to the children how to set up their mirror box. Put the written passage -- "This is what..." -- face down in the mirror box so that they can use the back of it.)

I want you to write your name so that it appears the right way in the mirror. You will have about two minutes. You will have to sit up straight so you look over the top of the cardboard and into the mirror.

(Volunteers help students get started. Make sure they are looking in the mirror and not directly at the paper. As they do the activity, ask students to tell you how they are feeling and write words on the board for discussion after. Hurry them a bit; tell them this might be an exam or that perhaps their friends are waiting for them.

After they write their name try their last name and the number 5.

End the activity when time is up.

There are students who have difficulties like this when they write. Does anyone know what this might be called? This is a visual-motor processing problem. Can you imagine having this problem all the time? That would be very frustrating.

Does this have anything to do with being smart? (Discuss famous people who are dyslexic: Tom Cruise, Whoopi Goldberg, etc., etc.)

Now turn your paper over and silently read what is on the other side. Put your hand up when you have read the entire page. (Volunteers clear the mirror boxes while the children are reading.)

Can one person read it to the class. This is what a learning disabled child very often has to contend with when attempting to read a book.

The next time you see someone having a problem with reading or writing be kind, patient and respectful.

Auditory Activity (Estimated time: 8 minutes)

(Volunteers pass out the upper grades dot-to-dot page.)

This is a connect-the-dots activity. I am sure you have done lots of these exercises before. You will hear a lot of background noise, but I want you to listen to the instructions and connect the dots.

(Leader plays tape. After the activity, show the completed dot to dot picture.)

Did anyone find that very easyand anyone find it difficult?? You see we have a rainbow of ability in this classroom.

This activity shows you what it is like to be hard of hearing or to have some kind of attention disorder, when you cannot pick out some sounds from others or cannot stay focused on what is being said.

Lots of children have these problems. Can you imagine how hard is be in class to concentrate if you have this problem and there is a lot of noise going on. You should try to think about this the next time your teacher asks you to be quiet in class. There

may be other students feeling this kind of frustration, the kind of frustration you experienced doing this exercise. (Discuss frustrations with the students.)

The Sixth Sense (Estimated time: 8 minutes)

Now I am going to ask you to start using your brains! Can anyone tell me what are the five senses are?

Sight, Touch, Smell, Hearing, Taste. (Write these on the Board as the students say them.)

Did anyone ever teach you how to taste?

Did you go to class to learn how to feel?

No, you just know how to do those things. They are the senses that you were born with.

Did you know there is another sense that we call the “sixth sense,” which is what we call the “social sense?” It’s the sense that we have that we know how to act towards other people and in our surroundings. (Add this to the list on the board.) Most children develop their sixth sense by the end of kindergarten. But some children have a problem in this area. Their sixth sense is either partial or almost absent.

Let me give you a sixth sense example.

(Personal space: make an example by going up to a child, standing way too close to them and talking to them loudly. Ask the child how they felt when you did that.)

(The children will also react to the behavior. Discuss the feelings they have when someone comes too close and is talking loudly. Explain that this is part of the sixth sense. Did anyone teach them these things? NO. But some kids don’t have this sixth sense and don’t know this is not appropriate.)

(It is a great thing to have an arrangement with your volunteers that every time you say the words “sixth sense,” they clap. The speaker makes sure to say “sixth sense” many times. This, of course, is very confusing and the children react to it.)

Hey, what’s all this clapping going on? How does it make you feel? (uncomfortable) Well, our presentation team decided on a SOCIAL RULE of clapping every time they heard the words “sixth sense.” Because you did not know the social rule you felt uncomfortable and didn’t know what to do – just like the child with a sixth sense problem. What social rules do you have? (putting your hand up if you want to talk, being quiet in an assembly, waiting in line without bumping into people and without cutting...) Imagine what life would be like if someone had to teach you each social

rule – because you are not able to automatically figure it out. This is called being able to READ a social situation – and some kids have a hard time doing this kind of reading.

People with a sixth sense issue have problems guessing what other people are thinking.

For instance, does your teacher ever come into school in a bad mood? (This will make the children laugh and involves the teacher in the activity!)

How do you know he or she is in a bad mood? You know that by the look on her face and what we call her body language. Did anyone teach you that or do you just know that? You know what other people feel. Right, you just know that. Show me how you would look if you were angry. Show me how you would look if you were bored. Show me how you would look if you were anxious to leave because you are about to be late for an appointment.

Well, there are some kids who don't have the sixth sense who just don't know that. They cannot read body language and will react inappropriately.

What would be the consequences of the sixth sense difficulty?

- Don't read level of interest in one's speech, so on wrong topic or talk too long.
- Don't understand what others think of one's actions such as personal space, eye contact, talking too loud.
- Don't know the correct response to a given situation.

A person like this might have trouble making and keeping friends and can experience the world as scary and unpredictable. Even though kids like this sometimes have difficulty playing with others, they very much want to and do feel the pain of being left out and teasing. It's easy to think of these children as being stupid or that they are intentionally behaving badly. BUT THEY ARE NOT!

Do you know anyone who has this problem? Did you know that in this school (e.g., 500 students) about 40 kids will have this difficulty? That's a lot!!

Lots of these children are, in fact, very bright. Famous people with this difficulty include Albert Einstein, Thomas Jefferson, and Bill Gates.

* * *

If you had problems doing these activities, don't be worried. The activities were set up to show you what it is like to have different abilities. But if you find you are having

difficulties in class and you think you might have a problem, don't be afraid to talk to your teacher or to your parents about it.

Can anyone tell me how you feel when you see someone with different abilities – for instance someone in a wheelchair, someone who has trouble walking, someone who acts differently than you expect?? (Discussion.)

Can anyone tell me about someone you know like that? (Discussion.)

Remember that someone who has different abilities is not unintelligent or unfriendly or someone to be afraid of. They are just someone who does things a little differently than regular people.

Can you tell me the best thing to do when you meet someone who is differently-abled? (Discussion.)

Remember that someone who has different abilities is not unintelligent or unfriendly or someone to be afraid of. They are just someone who does things a little differently than others.

Can you tell me the best thing to do when you meet someone like that?

Yes, you might help them. Before doing something for someone always ask, "Would you like some help?" Often the best way to help is to wait patiently when they are slow, allowing them the pride of doing it by themselves. What is the most important thing for you in school? Is it the principle? Is it your teacher? Is it your desk? Or is it your friends? (Most will answer "their friends.")

Yes, friends are very important to all of us. Some kids who are different sometimes don't have many friends

The MOST important thing for you to do is to include them. You need to talk to them, make sure they are part of your group, that they are part of the game you are playing, to ask them to your parties, to ask them to come to recess with you, to ask them to join you for lunch.

For schools that wish to address the topic of Special Day Class students

Does anyone know what the Special Day classes are?

The classrooms have a chalk board and computers and books and desks, just like all the other classes.

Have you ever needed any help? When you are having trouble understanding a word, or having a hard time with math?

Well, some kids need a little more help. It's hard for them to concentrate in a regular class with so many other students. In a special day class there are fewer students and they get more help. But they are kids just like you.

And what do you think is the most important thing to these students about school?? Yes, it's friends. So make sure you smile at someone you don't know. Include them in your games at times and be their friend.

Remember that we are all different in some ways as we have talked about this morning. That we are all part of the rainbow.

Inclusion Activity (Estimated time: 5 minutes)

(Use your volunteers from the class. Have them come up to the front and huddle together, whispering, but leave one person out. This person tries to break into the group; they will not let him/her in. After a while one of the group says to him/her something like, "Go away, don't you get it. We don't want to be friends with you." She puts their head down and walks slowly to a seat at the front and looks very sad, perhaps covering her face with her hands.)

(The leader then goes to the person in the chair, puts a hand on their shoulder and asks the students how this would feel. Have they ever been left out, and have they left anyone else out.)

I am sure that you would never intentionally leave someone out and make them feel like this. Sometimes we get busy with our friends and forget about others. Remember the next time to make sure no one is being hurt in this way.

Discussion Topics

What about staring? It is really hurtful to stare. Sometimes when someone is different they will catch our attention. Don't stare, but say "hello."

Always acknowledge someone. How does it feel when some one just "looks through you"?

And what about words – can words be hurtful? Have any of you heard of the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me?" Do you think that is true?

Has anyone said anything to you that is really hurtful? Can anyone tell me any of the words you have heard out on the playground? (“Stupid,” “dork,” “retard...you can write them up on the board.”)

And what about teasing? Is teasing hurtful? Sometimes we say, “Oh, I was only teasing.” That makes it sound that teasing is OK and that it does not hurt others, but if you are having fun at someone else’s expense, that is not OK. Calling people names and having fun at someone else’s expense is NEVER OK.

I heard a true story of a boy, who had just moved into the area and was new to the school. Two other boys said they wanted to help him and be his friends. For the first two weeks these boys hid his pencils, they hid his back pack, they told him that classes were in rooms where they were not to deliberately get him lost, and it went on and on. After a while the boy did not want to go to school, he was so hurt and upset. When the principal asked the boys what they were doing they said “Oh, we were only teasing!” What do you think? (Discussion.)

Why do you think some kids bully and tease other kids?

Because it makes them feel tall and the other person feel small.

Teasing Role Play

(Have one volunteer or student come up to the front and call the other volunteer a few names. The second volunteer should look really upset and put his or her head down and walk away. Ask the students how that looked -- “victim,” “beaten down,” etc., etc.)

(Then repeat the exercise, and when the volunteer or student calls the second volunteer a name, the second volunteer uses positive body language. Stand up straight and face the person, look them in the eye and say “I don’t like what you are saying. You are not being respectful.” And walk away “walking tall.” Ask the students how that was different.)

(Encourage students to use positive body language and words in a non-confrontational way when they are being harassed.) People tease because it makes them feel tall and the other person feel small. If they don’t make you small they will eventually give up.

(Some leaders have engaged each student for a few seconds. Each student stands tall, looks the leader in the eye, and says an “I” message. For example, “I don’t like when you call me stupid.” This helps each student experience how they can respond to teasing. Very effective.)

I want you to remember that whenever you see someone else being hurt and you stand by and do nothing, you are part of the problem.

What should you do?? Use positive body language and words: “Don’t do that – you are not being respectful.”

This WILL make a big difference.

It will make a difference if one of you take a stand and do this. Can you imagine how powerful it would be if ten of you did this? Or if twenty of you did this?!?

Conclusion

Let’s return to the rainbow that we made at the beginning. Would you want someone else to be looking at you and focusing on this end of your rainbow, or that end of your rainbow? Naturally, you would prefer to be noticed for your strengths. It IS natural when someone has an obvious problem to notice that end of their rainbow first. With the skills you have learned today, you will be smart enough to notice the problem and then look right past that for what that person has to offer – and that they always have something to offer.

Remember that we are all different in some ways, but we all need friendship, acceptance, inclusion and RESPECT.

I would really like you to think about what you have learned here today and all the things you have been learning this week. Try to think how it would be to be a person or a classmate with different abilities, on the different end of the “Ability Rainbow.”

I hope you will enjoy this week and take some of the things you learn, and hold them close to your heart. Think about them the next time you meet someone on another part of the “rainbow.”

Suggested Physical Therapy Script

Hi, my name is _____. Let me introduce you to all the other volunteers, _____.

We are here today to give you all a chance to try out some equipment that might be used by kids here at school who have some physical problems. That means these kids or an adult you might one day meet who uses this equipment has difficulty walking. They could have had an accident or maybe they were born with some type of problem that caused problems with their muscles. Please remember that sometimes people who are in wheelchairs can walk but maybe they can't walk for far without becoming tired. Some kids you might meet use a wheelchair on the playground but they will walk around their classroom. This can also be true with the kids who use a walker. Kids may use a walker on the playground because if someone were to bump into them they may not have good balance, and they would fall and get hurt. In the classroom, people don't run around bumping into each other so they may not need the walker, or they can walk around using furniture and desks for support.

We thought it would be cool/neat to give all you some time to try three different types of equipment that kids who have some problems physically with their muscles or balance might use. We set up three stations for you to try, and we promise that everyone will get to try everything.

Let me tell you about each station. Station one is the wheelchair station. Here you will sit down in a wheelchair. First, you put on your seatbelt — just like the one you use in your car. Second, you take off your brakes on the wheelchair. (The brakes on used to keep the chair from rolling when you are getting in and out.) Now, to make the chair move you use the hand rims mounted next to the wheels. If you push both wheels at the same time, the chair will go straight. If you push only the left wheel, the chair will turn right, and if you push the right wheel only, the chair will turn to the left. We want you to move the chair down the cone and then go around the cone and come back to the starting line. You will then set your brakes, take off the seatbelt and let the next person have a turn.

In station two, we have several different types of walkers for you to try. Therapists usually pick which type of walker is best for each child/adult. One of the walkers you can try is called the reverse walker, which is pulled behind you like this. (Demonstrate.) This walker provides you with support and balance. The next type is a forward walker, and it is pushed by a person, like this. (Demonstrate.) It also provides support and balance to the child. Also, we have some different types of canes. These canes can be used as two together or just one at a time. Using two together gives more support, and one gives less support. The first canes for us to talk about are called quad canes. Quad means "four", so please notice the bottom of

the cane has four little legs. The next type of canes/crutches are called Canadian crutches. They fit on like this and are used like this. (Demonstrate.)

The last station you will visit is a reacher station. Sometimes in class you may drop an item on the floor. How many of you have to ask for help to pick it up? Probably no one. Most of you can easily pick up an item on the floor without leaving your seat, or if the item rolls too far away, you get out of your seat to pick it up. Sometimes, when you are in a wheelchair, you can't easily get items from the floor. So that's what we are going to show you at this station. You are going to sit in a chair and pick up these items (show them) and put them in this box using the reacher. Here is how it works. (Demonstrate.)

Now, we have a lot to do. Does anyone have any questions? (Might want to hold questions for the station. Young children usually don't have questions but want to share stories, which takes a lot of time.) As you came into the room, we gave you each a colored yarn necklace. So can all the red necklaces go to station one, blues to station two and yellows to station three. Every 7-8 minutes we will rotate the groups.

Suggested Script for K-2 Special Day Classes

Teasing (Estimated time: 30-35 minutes)

Note: See the Teasing/Inclusion script for 3-6th to receive a further explanation of the information below.

Introduction: Rainbow of Abilities

Act out Inclusion scene: How does this person feel? Has this ever happened to you? Ever seen it happen to others?

Act out the verbal abuse scene. Discuss. Why do you think the teaser teases?

Now, what can we do when someone tries to tease us?

- Tools: List things to say back in response to being teased. Use posters here (refer to 3-6th grade script). Pair off kids to act out teasing responses. Choose a few to act in front of the class. Discuss.
- Invisible Shield: The volunteer calls the leader names. The leader writes these insults on a piece of paper, crumbles it, and then throws it at the volunteer. "I will use the shield and not let words get to me."

Briefly talk with class about how the shield represents an "imaginary wall" between the teaser and the person being teased. At this age, most kids are great at imagining, so this should work well.

Ask for some comments/questions from the class.

Suggested Script for 3-6 Grade Special Day Classes

You will need a rainbow poster to tape up on the board.

Good morning. My name is _____, and this is _____ and _____ (introduce other volunteers).

We are here as part of the Ability Awareness program that is going on this week at _____ (name school) _____ and are going to be spending some time in your classroom this morning doing some fun activities. We hope you will learn some things too!!

Put up your hand if you can tell me about something that you are really good at doing. (Pick two or three students. Ask them what it is and enter into a brief discussion. Write talents on one end of the rainbow.)

Is there anyone who can put up his/her hand and tell me about something that is hard for you to do? (Pick one or two students and enter into a brief discussion. Write challenges on the other end of the rainbow.)

You see, we all have things that we are good at and then we all have things that we are not so good at doing. We might say we are all on a "Rainbow of Ability" -- a big rainbow of colors and a rainbow of abilities. Some of our abilities are at one end of the rainbow and some of our abilities are at the other.

Inclusion Activity

Use your volunteers from the class: two to four people (teacher, aides, parents). Have them come up to the front and huddle together whispering, but *leave one person out*. This person tries to break into the group, saying things like, "Can I play?" "What are you guys doing?" etc. BUT the group will not let him/her in. They could say mean things to the "outsider" (i.e., "We don't want you around" or "Get lost").

After awhile, the adult who is being teased retreats to a seat at the front of the class looking very sad, covering her face with her hands.

Talk to the children about how this would feel. Have they ever been left out? Have they left anyone else out? How does this feel? What could we do instead?

Teasing/Verbal Abuse Exercise

The teacher will need to predetermine appropriate student pairs for the following activities.

Have one of the volunteers sit at the front and the leader start to name call: "You're a loser!" "Why are you in the Dumb Class?" "Loser," etc.

Have the volunteer act hurt or pained.

Talk about “teasing” and how teasing is something that we shouldn’t do, that it is disrespectful and hurtful.

Talk about the payoff for the teaser, that it makes the teaser feel better about him or herself. Suggest reasons that they may tease: to feel better about themselves, for power, they may be loners too, they may be teased at home or it can be a way of releasing their frustrations/anger. (We made a poster entitled “THE PAYOFF.”)

Then give them some tools to deal with teasing.

Verbal Tools

Have a volunteer and the leader play the same scenario as above with the leader name-calling and the volunteer looking hurt. Then talk a little about what the term “verbal skills” means and repeat the same exercise, but instead of looking hurt, have the receiver of the teasing use some verbal tools.

- **Acknowledgment of differences:** “Yes I am in the special day class” (she could go on to explain the good things about this); “I do have a big nose” (looking surprised); “This stuff you are saying doesn’t bother me. Why does it bother you??”
- **Trick teaser or use sarcasm:** Call the teaser by the wrong name; their name is Patty and you call them Peggy; “Why are you teasing me? You must be having a bad day”; “Thanks for noticing!” (in reference to specifics insults). Any of these types of comments will probably seem unexpected to the teaser -- hopefully confuse them enough to give up.
- **Zingers:** The younger child, or the child with less mature verbal skills, will need to practice these short-but-sweet statements for their teaser: “You aren’t being nice!” “I don’t have to listen to this!” “Save your energy!” “Talk to someone else.” “Are you always so negative?”

Suggest that the victim says this and then turns and boldly walks away without looking back. This should cut off the teaser and put space between them.

Have the children split up into pairs and practice verbal tools with the help of an adult.

Body Language

Have the volunteer and the leader come up as before and name call as before and the volunteer act in a usual hurt way. Then explain what the term “body language” means and repeat the same exercise, with the volunteer using “body language” tools instead of looking hurt:

- Maintain eye contact
- Stand facing the person with feet straight.
- Stand up straight
- Shoulders facing their shoulders

Have the class pair off again, and with the help of an adult, practice these tools. (One adult per student pair works best.) Afterwards, choose a few pairs to role play at the front of the class.

Invisible Shields

You will need some shields and paper airplanes or just pages of blank paper. One shield could be used by the leader; extra shields are optional.

Have the volunteer and the leader repeat the name calling. Maybe the children could suggest some words/phrases they've heard on their campus. Then talk about an invisible shield and what it represents, how the student can learn and practice using an invisible shield when kids say mean things, so the words won't hurt them.

To show them how to do this, the leader writes a mean word or phrase on one of the paper planes or blank pieces of paper. (The words should be in large black letters on the plane/crumpled paper so everyone can see them.)

The leader looks at the words and reads them out loud to the class: "This one says 'STUPID.'" She crumples up the paper and throws it at the volunteer, who holds up a shield and deflects the plane/crumpled paper along with the word.

This is repeated as much as needed.

If you have enough shields for the class, students can take turns throwing the paper words and holding the shields.

After the shields are put away, remind them that they cannot use actual shields in the real world. What they CAN do is to picture the mean words hitting this Invisible Shield and then:

- shattering like glass and falling into pieces on the ground
- going up in smoke
- disappearing into thin air
- reflecting back to you like a mirror -- blocking them from view.

One thought to leave them with is, “The next time anyone says anything mean or hurtful to you, I want you to imagine your shield surrounding you to stop the words from getting to you.”

For our visual learners -- and to make the main points last -- make big colorful posters. Some ideas to put on the posters:

- “Teasing Is Never OK”
- A list of the “toolkit” ideas
- Summarize the teasers’ “pay off”
- Examples of good/bad body language