

Disability Awareness

This information is designed for parents and educators to use when discussing disabilities with children. For more in depth conversations and research ideas, additional topics are included in parentheses. The second page is designed for students to reflect on the information discussed and thoughtfully imagine how living with different disabilities could affect one's daily life. It is illegal to discuss a specific student's disability.

What is a disability?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) describes a disability as a “condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them.”

This includes but is not limited to conditions that affect:

Hearing (hearing aids / cochlear implants to improve hearing, deaf, sign language, lip reading)

Speaking or Communicating (make sounds differently, cannot make some or all sounds/tones, unable to understand language, devices that may be used, body language)

Vision (glasses, blind, progressive vision loss, assistance dogs, mobility cane)

Moving, controlling, or the absence of one's body parts (wheelchair, walker, braces, prosthetics, adaptive equipment)

Concentrating or Remembering (modifications at school and home)

Ability to read, write, complete math, reasoning/organizing (often called learning disabilities, modifications in school)

One's ability to understand and use social rules or cues (example: turn taking, eye contact)

Sensory Systems (hypersensitivity example: A person who is hypersensitive to touch may not like to be touched or may be bothered by certain types of clothing. Hyposensitivity example: A person who is hyposensitive to vestibular input may love to keep their bodies constantly moving)

Eating or breathing (allergies, asthma, diet, inhalers, EpiPen, tracheostomy, ventilator)

You may hear individuals use a diagnosis when discussing disability (ex: autism, quadriplegia, dyslexia). A diagnosis is a medical term mainly used by health care providers to describe all types of medical conditions, some that cause disabilities, and some do not. It is important to remember that even individuals who have the same diagnosis, may be affected differently.

Imagining Life with a Disability

Choose one of the disabilities you just learned about.

Imagine you woke up tomorrow with this disability. What are some ways this disability might affect your home routines?

How might this disability affect your ability to participate in school or activities?

Now that you have done this activity, how could you help make sure people with all different abilities are included in school and activities?
