

DISABILITY

STAFF & VOLUNTEER TIPSHEET



How to use this document

This tipsheet offers some language and practices to keep in mind when facilitating lessons and conversations about disability. It is designed to help you feel more confident in creating an inclusive learning environment, and also includes links to resources where you can learn more.

Key concepts

- **Ableism:** Ableism is discrimination that is based on the idea that there is a “right” way to have a body/mind.
- **Accommodation:** Accommodations are changes made to *content delivery* in order to make it accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Adaptation/Modification:** Adaptations and modifications are changes to *the content itself* that make it more accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Disability:** A disability is any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for an individual to do certain activities and interact with the world around them. Personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support can impact the extent of disability.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** UDL is a set of principles that makes learning as accessible as possible, regardless of age, disability, or other factors. The principles are:
 - **Multiple means of representation:** different ways of representing information. This may include text, video, dialogue, audio, and/or interactive activities.
 - **Multiple means of expression:** different ways of inviting learners to share what they know, such as presentations, peer instruction, worksheets, writing or drawing assignments, and/or movement activities.
 - **Multiple means of engagement:** using different strategies to tap into learners’ interests, provide challenges, and motivate learning.
- **Language:** Different people prefer different language to describe themselves in relation to disability.
 - **Identity-first language:** “Disabled person” or “autistic youth” are examples of identity-first language. Some people prefer this language because it emphasizes that disability is a core part of their identity, or draws attention to the barriers that make disability an issue for them.
 - **Person-first language:** “Person with a disability” or “youth with autism” are examples of person-first language. Some people prefer this language because they do not want to feel that they defined first by their disability. We use person-first language in this guide, but when possible, ask people which they prefer.

To learn more about UDL, visit <https://dpi.wi.gov/universal-design-learning>.



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Recommended general practices

- **Approach with an attitude of friendliness, openness, and curiosity.** Many of us make mistakes while accommodating one another's needs, but this is part of working together. Don't let your fear of making a mistake keep you from saying hello, smiling, or talking with an individual with a disability. If you mess up, just apologize and figure out how to do it better next time!
- **Embrace, don't minimize, difference.** Having different bodies and minds in a group makes for a richer, more interesting, and powerful experience! There is nothing wrong with being disabled. Making accommodations to help everyone meaningfully participate is an act of care.
- **Communication is key.** Encourage older youth to advocate for themselves or talk with parents of younger participants about what they may need to fully participate in the program.
- **Educate yourself on disability.** People with disabilities often dedicate lots of energy to learning how to interact with able-bodied people and navigate an ableist society. Seek out resources to educate yourself so that those with disabilities have less work to do to bridge the gap. Notice and challenge your implicit biases, privilege, and assumptions about disability as they come up. Approach this as a life-long commitment, and be patient with yourself.
- **Use inclusive language.** There's nothing bad about disability! Avoid euphemisms like "differently abled," "special needs," or "handicapped," which suggest that disability is something to talk around.
- **Follow the leadership of people with disabilities.** When teaching about disability, use resources that are created by and share the perspectives of people with disabilities. When organizing events on disability, co-organize with people who have lived experience.
- **Identify and address ableism when you encounter it.** Some examples:
 - "Sometimes, we might use words like 'crazy' or 'lame' to mean that something isn't great, but that's not respectful to people with lived experiences of disability.



Can we try to use different terms?"

- "When we tell people that they don't seem disabled, that we are impressed by their intelligence, or that they are an inspiration to us, it can make them feel like we're judging them based on a standard where some bodies and minds are better than others. Is there a different way to express appreciation and kindness?"
- **Guidelines for interacting with people with disabilities:**
 - When speaking to someone with a disability, speak directly to them, even if they have a companion or sign language interpreter.
 - It is appropriate to offer to shake hands. This includes shaking hands with people who wear artificial limbs or use their left hands to shake.
 - When meeting with someone with a visual impairment, verbally identify yourself and others who are with you. When speaking in a group, identify who you are talking to.
 - Before offering assistance to someone with a disability, reflect on whether they are capable of doing that thing on their own. If not, offer support, but wait until the offer is accepted to act.
 - Treat adults as adults, not children.
 - Do not touch other peoples' bodies, service animals, and mobility devices (i.e. wheelchairs, canes, etc) unless invited to do so.
 - If someone has difficulty speaking, listen attentively and patiently. Do not interrupt or correct them. If you have trouble understanding, tell them what you heard and ask them to repeat or clarify the rest.
 - For longer interactions with people in wheelchairs, you may want to pull up a chair so that you can be at eye level.
 - When interacting with people who are hard of hearing or Deaf, you may wave your hand in their field of vision to get their attention. Not all people with hearing loss can lip read, but for those who can, make sure that your mouth is always visible when speaking.
 - Don't be embarrassed if you use common expressions that seem to relate to peoples' disability (i.e. "Did you hear about this?", "I've got to run!" or "See you later").



Recommended programming practices

- **Design programming with accessibility in mind from the beginning.** When possible, follow universal design practices while designing your program, rather than modifying it later, so that participants don't have to go out of their way to be included.
- **Before programming, ask for accommodation requests so that access is as seamless as possible.** Offer people an opportunity to share what they'll need to be comfortable in a space. This might be accessible transportation to/from an event, dietary accommodations, ASL interpretation, a remote attendance option, or the ability to take breaks. Adding this as a field in a registration survey form helps ensure peoples' privacy. It also sends participants the message that you consider it part of your responsibility to make the event accessible. Provide your contact information and encourage parents to contact you, and address access requests in a timely manner.
- **Practice access check-ins.** At the beginning of an event, ask the group to share if they have everything they need to be as comfortable and present as possible. For example, if people need to use the bathroom, drink some water, take their medicine, change the lighting or seating in a room, or just give others a heads-up about something (i.e. "I might need to stretch or move around during our time together"), this offers them an opportunity to do so. It's much easier to share in response to a prompt than to interrupt the flow to advocate for oneself.
- **Actively seek out feedback and improve processes so that they are as accessible as possible.** When possible, consult and implement best practices for universal design and accessibility so that people with disabilities can participate in mixed-ability spaces (separate is rarely equal).
- **If you are facilitating disability simulation activities, please keep the following guidelines in mind:**
 - Involve people with disabilities in designing and meaningfully debriefing simulation experiences.
 - Present a positive disability culture. Simulations are a way to show a different life experience, rather than sharing or reinforcing negative stereotypes about disability.
 - Emphasize inclusion through increased awareness of adaptation. Avoid simulations that treat people with disabilities as "other" or separate.
 - Use effective delivery methods (play, thought experiments or mental simulations, disability awareness day with stations, participating in adaptive sports together, simulated virtual reality games, and/or demonstrations of adaptive technology).
 - Simulations can be used to teach about inaccessibility in society, adaptive technologies and skills, and/or how to make places or programming more inclusive.



Examples of accommodations, modifications, and adaptive technology

Accommodations

Planning inclusive programs may be easier than you expect! Simple adaptations are often low cost and easy to implement. Here are a few examples:

- Providing fidgets or playdough can help youth who are anxious or have difficulty focusing
- Parents may be able to provide specialized equipment such as mounted scissors or tri-grip markers
- Planning ahead for field trips allows presenters to prepare for accessibility for youth who use a wheelchair
- Developing plain-text versions of readings, activities, instructions and large-print versions of printed materials can help youth process visual information
- Visual schedules help youth with autism participate
- Sign language interpretation can help youth who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Sharing step-by-step instructions (1-2 at a time) and providing short breaks throughout can help youth prepare, process, and ask questions to stay engaged with an activity
- Adding a fourth dimension to a storytelling activity (i.e. sensory materials or using a fan to simulate wind in a way that ties in to the story) can help youth pay attention

Adaptations/Modifications

To include learners with cognitive disabilities, you can simplify activities or invite them to do just part of an activity.

Adaptive Technology/Equipment

People with disabilities may attend programming with equipment, products and services that help them to fully participate. These may include:

- Magnifiers, screen reading technology, and/or guide dogs for blind and visually impaired participants
- Personal amplification systems (i.e. hearing aids, headphones) for Deaf or hard of hearing participants
- Voice amplification systems, electronic fluency assistance devices, artificial larynxes, and/or communication boards for people with speech disabilities
- Memory aids, notetaking support, and mobile devices with specialized apps for people who need assistance with learning, attention, memory, and organization
- Wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, scooters, and/or power chairs for people who need mobility assistance.

ABOUT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

This information in this tipsheet was developed through UW-Madison Extension's Curriculum Jams process.

Curriculum Jams bring together people with lived experience to review and recommend learning resources for Extension programming.

Check out our website to learn more:



REFERENCES:

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- Washington State Governor's Office, Rooted in Rights, Rosenberg, A., Arvey, S. (2020). One Out of Five: Disability History and Pride Project. Education Ombuds. Lessons on <https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en/education-issues/one-out-five-disability-history-and-pride-project>

DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

TEACHING RESOURCES

Disability as Diversity is a resource that discusses portrayals of disability, disability and design, language of disability, ableism and non-disabled privilege, and access as a civil right.

Format:

- 5 modules
- facilitator scripts
- first-person videos
- discussion questions

Audience:

- most adults
- some youth leaders



Source: University of Arkansas - Partners for Inclusive Communities

These resources have been recommended through the Curriculum Jams process for teaching about disability.

One Out of Five is a training that addresses disability, intersectionality, history, and allyship.

Format:

- 5 hands-on lessons
- 30-45 minutes each
- student voice videos
- slides
- hands-on activities
- discussion guides
- worksheets

Audience:

- grades 3-12
- classroom or virtual



Source: Washington State Governor's Office, Rooted in Rights, Adina Rosenberg, Sarah Arvey

BACKGROUND RESOURCES

These resources have been recommended through the Curriculum Jams process for developing background knowledge about disability.

Demystifying Disability is a book that discusses disability history, language, ableism, etiquette, media representation, and allyship.

Format:

- 167-page book
- audiobook

Audience:

- primarily adults

Additional notes:

- can be paired with discussion guide: kit.org/demystifying-disability



Source: Emily Ladau

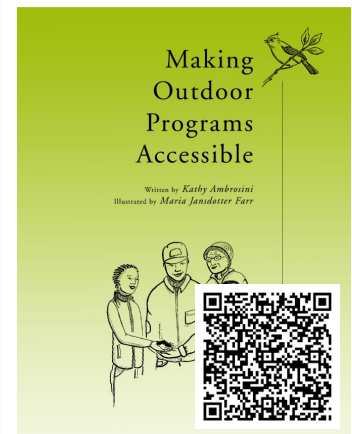
Making Outdoor Programs Accessible is a guide that addresses planning for inclusion, partnerships, accommodations, environmental considerations and assistive strategies.

Format:

- 70-page guide

Audience:

- outdoor program leaders (e.g. rangers, youth leaders, educators, interpreters, instructors)



Source: Kathy Ambrosini

DISABILITY ADVOCACY TRAINING

TEACHING RESOURCES

These resources have been recommended through the Curriculum Jams process for teaching self-advocacy and allyship skills to youth with and without disabilities.

The **Self-Advocacy Guide for Students with Disabilities** is a curriculum that guides learners through the process of developing self-advocacy skills.

Format:

- facilitator instructions
- hands-on activities
- worksheets

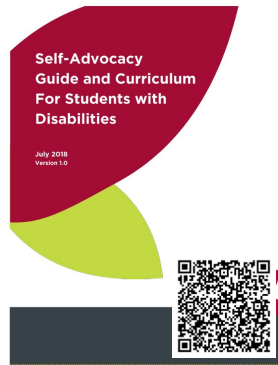
Audience:

- grades 7-12

Recommended parts:

- lessons 1-4
- lesson 7
- lesson 10

Source: Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education



One Out of Five Lesson 5: Allyship and Solidarity is a lesson plan that teaches learners how to identify ableism and practice allyship.

Format:

- introduction
- slide deck discussion
- hands-on group activity

Audience:

- grades 6-8
- could be adapted for other ages

Source: Washington State Governor's Office, Rooted in Rights, Adina Rosenberg, Sarah Arvey



Supporting Disability Awareness is a subscription-based database that offers resources for youth with and without identified disabilities to learn more about a range of disabilities

Format:

- videos
- activities
- lesson plans
- additional resources
- curriculum planner

Audience:

- grades 1-12

Source: Changing Perspectives Now

Note: contact the Curriculum Jams team at stepha.velednitsky@wisc.edu to arrange access to a subscription



BOOKS WITH GUIDED ACTIVITIES

We Move Together is a plain-language book whose characters joyfully navigate interdependence, disability advocacy, and community.

Audience:

- grades 1-5

Authors: Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire

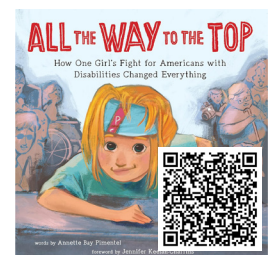


All the Way to the Top is a book that tells the story of Jennifer Keelan, who participated in the Capital Crawl to support the passage of the ADA.

Audience:

- grades 1-5

Author: Annette Bay Pimentel



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