

## Disability Awareness Unit Plan

**Goal:** To raise the awareness of disabilities by having students experience and discuss the barriers people with exceptionalities live with.

**Objectives:**

- 1.) The students will experience a variety of different types of disabilities.
- 2.) The students will discuss how it felt to experience a different type of disability.
- 3.) The students will discuss what they could do to remove barriers from school, homes and the community.

**Age:** A fourth to sixth grade classroom.

**Duration:** Five different activities with one each day of the week, the times of each activity will vary by day.

**Day 1:** On the first day as the students come in the classroom there will be a table blocking part of the door way. There will be a small opening, students can either go through the opening or go under the table. On the board before the students get in the room, the teacher should write "Today we are going to discuss barriers." When all of the students are in the classroom discuss how they felt about not understanding what was written on the board and not being able to get in the classroom. Tell them that this week we are going to do different types of activities to see some of the barriers that people with disabilities face every day. The assessment of this unit will be if the student was able to tell how they felt because of the table in the door and the words on the board when they came into the classroom.

**Day 2:** On the second day the students will be broken into two separate groups. In the first group the students will all take turns going around school for the day in a wheelchair. The second group will all wear heavy winter socks on both of their hands for lunch, recess and math. The objective for this activity is for students to develop an awareness of the barriers people with physical disabilities face throughout their days. At the end of the day the students will be assessed by sharing with the class the barriers they encountered and the way they felt (e.g. did people look at them funny, did they view things differently sitting in a wheelchair instead of walking, did they become frustrated when they couldn't get through a door or when they couldn't use their pencil very well to write?).

**Day 3:** The students will again be broken up into two different groups. The first group will experience what it may feel like to be blind by doing two different activities. For the first activity the students will sit around the table with blindfolds on. Before they put the blindfolds on they will set up the materials to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Once they are blindfolded I will move the jars of peanut butter and jelly and tell them they can start. For assessment on this activity they will talk about how they felt when they couldn't find what they needed to make their sandwich. The next activity for this group will also be done wearing blindfolds. There will be about 15-20 different small items in a bag and the students will each take one or two out and try to identify it without using their sight. For assessment the students will discuss what other senses they used to identify the object and how they felt if they were unable to identify it. The second group will experience what it may feel like to be deaf. These students will wear ear plugs during reading, recess and lunch. With the ear plugs the students may be able to hear some noise, but they will have to strain to hear or try to read lips. For assessment this group of students will discuss how they felt not knowing what people were saying or how difficult it was to try and read lips.

**Day 4:** Students will do two different activities today. First throughout the entire day they will go through school with an altered appearance. They may alter their appearance by wearing a sling, eye patch or large band aid on their faces. At the end of the day the class will discuss the way other people looked at them and how they felt throughout the day. The second activity is that the teacher will check out technical and unfamiliar books from the library (e.g. Beowulf) and have the students sit down and read the material. For assessment the students will discuss how it may feel to have a reading disability and not be able to understand what they read.

**Day 5:** On the last day to wrap up the unit the students will be given an assignment to write a paper describing their experiences throughout the week and what they learned by doing the variety of activities. The students will also discuss as a whole class what we could do to reduce the number of barriers that people with disabilities face in our schools, homes and communities. The class will go through the school and make changes (e.g. moving a table farther from the door to give room to get through) to reduce the number of barriers.

### **Resources:**

Miller, N.B. & Sammons, C.C. (1999). *Everybody's Different*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

The South Dakota AgrAbility Project (2004, June 13). Retrieved October 4, 2004, from

<http://agrability.sdstate.edu/BNG4H.html#Drinking>.

Turnbull, R., Turnbull, A., Shank, M., Smith, S. & Leal, D (2002). *Exceptional Lives Special Education in Today's Schools* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.

VSA Arts (1999) *Express Diversity an Educational Resource Guide*. Washington D.C.:

VSA Arts.