

TEACHER TOOL KIT: Lesson Plan



Title: Autism Awareness Lesson(s)

Grade Level: Kindergarten-2nd Grade

Objective:

1. Students will learn what an *ability* is.
2. Students will learn that everyone has different abilities and be able to verbally give examples.
3. Students will become familiar with the word “autism.”
4. Students will learn what it might feel like to have different abilities than they do now.

Materials:

1. Autism New Jersey’s Kids Booklet on Autism
2. Book of your choice (recommendations are below)
3. Items for one of the three sensitivity activities you choose

Opening Activity (5-7 minutes total):

1. Ask the students what an “ability” is. **Answer:** an ability is something a person can do.
2. Ask them the following questions or make up your own:
 - a. Who can ride a two-wheeler?
 - b. Who has very neat hand writing?
 - c. Who can knit?
 - d. Who can roller blade?
 - e. Who can do a cartwheel?
3. Ask the students if EVERYONE raised their hand for all 5 questions. Explain to them that everyone has different abilities.
4. Describe the following scenario: What if you were playing baseball and it was your turn to bat. You tried as hard as you could to hit the ball but did not have the ability to do it. What would you like the other kids to say? “Don’t worry it’s okay.” “Nice try.” “You can do it,” or would you like them to tease and make fun of you?

Procedure:

1. Tell the students April is Autism Awareness Month. Start a discussion about autism and different abilities. (7-10 minutes) Use the Autism New Jersey’s Kids Booklet on Autism to choose age-appropriate topics. Here are some suggested topics to include:
 - a. What is autism?

- b. Are all people with autism the same?
 - c. Why can't all people with autism talk like other people?
2. Read a book to the class. Have a short discussion about the book and what it might feel like to have autism and different abilities. (total time: 15 minutes) Some recommended books are:
- a. Amenta, C.A. (1992). *Russell is extra special: A book about autism for children*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 0945354444. 32 pages.
 - b. Edwards, B., & Armitage, D. (1999). *My brother Sammy*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press. ISBN: 0761304398. 32 pages.
 - c. Thompson, M. (1996). *Andy and his yellow frisbee*. Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 0933149832. 21 pages.
 - d. Thompson, M. (1992). *My brother Matthew*. Baltimore, MD: Woodbine House. ISBN: 0933149476. 26 pages
3. Now it's time for the class to learn what it might feel like to have different abilities. These exercises may give you some idea of what individuals with autism can be experiencing everyday.

Choose one or more of the following activities (7-10 minutes for each exercise):

a. Understanding what's expected of you:

Have one volunteer leave the room. The rest of the class chooses an action for the person to perform. Bring the person back in the room. Don't talk or provide gestures. As they begin to walk around the room, clap your hands to give them feedback that they are on track. Clap more when they are closer to the desired object or action, similar to the "Hot and Cold" game. After the person figures it out, ask him or her to explain his or her experience.

b. Simulate sensory overload:

Turn on the classroom radio to a high volume. Try to complete a worksheet for a higher grade level, which requires concentration. Were you able to complete the work?

c. Try communicating without words or gestures:

Have someone in a group ask for something s/he wants (a drink, to use the restroom, help using the computer) WITHOUT using any words or hand gestures. Then, have the person describe what that experience felt like.

Closing:

Ask the students: What can you tell me about autism? Does everyone have the same abilities? Is it okay to have different abilities? If you do not understand why someone is doing something, what do you do?

Extra Time

Ask Autism New Jersey for a kid's autism awareness month activity book that includes puzzles, word searches and other fun activities students can complete.

Bulletin Board Idea

Ask Autism New Jersey for an awareness ribbon for students to color or download from our website, www.autismnj.org. These ribbons can be displayed on bulletin boards for Autism Awareness Month. For older grades: have each student write a sentence about autism on a sentence strip and post it under his/her colored ribbon.