

No Place for Hate[®] Activity Library

People with Disabilities and the Importance of Accommodations

Lesson Plan and Overview

Lesson Plan: [The Tools I Need: Disability and Accommodations](#)

Every day, in schools, workplaces, communities and online, people with disabilities face obstacles and barriers that prevent them from accessing information, participating, and feeling safe and included. Specific accommodations and tools are essential for people with disabilities but they are not always provided or available, which is a form of exclusion and ableism. Using a video of a girl pushing for captioning on Instagram as a jumping off point for discussion, students will explore what the lack of accommodations means for people with disabilities and how students can advocate for them getting what they need.

Grade Level

Grades 6-8

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand the importance of tools and accommodations for people with disabilities.
 - Students will reflect on what it means to have a disability and what people with disabilities need to feel safe, included and respected.
 - Students will explore their spheres of influence and identify actions they can take to improve accommodations for people with disabilities.
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Materials Needed

- [Instacaptioning](#) (Video: 1 min., 30 sec.) For alternative links, use one of these: https://www.instagram.com/p/B_kbbKPFY6P/?hl=en or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trc9dad1PKY>
 - Spheres of Influence: Sample
 - Paper and pen/marker for each student
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Words You Might Use

Ableism: The marginalization and/or oppression of people who have disabilities, including temporary, developmental, physical, psychiatric and/or intellectual disabilities. (maybe include elementary definition)

Ally: Someone who speaks out on behalf of or takes actions that are supportive of someone who is targeted by bias or bullying, either themselves or someone else.

Bias: An inclination or preference, either for or against an individual or group, that interferes with impartial judgment.

Disability: A mental or physical condition that restricts an individual's ability to engage in one or more major life activities (e.g., seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, communicating, sensing, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working or caring for oneself).

Note to Educator

As you use this activity, be mindful that you likely have students in your classroom who have disabilities, or they may have family members with disabilities. These disabilities may be visible or not visible. Students with disabilities may have a range of thoughts and feelings about discussing the topic of disabilities when it's so close to home. Students with disabilities should never be asked to discuss their disability with the class or group, or looked to as an "expert" on the topic. It must be their choice to share. While teaching the lesson, be especially attuned to their needs and possible discomfort about discussing this topic. In addition, avoid using terms like "differently abled" because some consider the term condescending, offensive or a way to avoid talking about disability because of discomfort. Also, be mindful not to speak about people with disabilities in stereotypical terms, even if those terms are seemingly positive such as "courageous," "determined" or "strong."

Core Activity

First, show the video [Instacaptioning](#). After watching, engage students in a discussion by asking:

- Have you ever seen this video before?
- What is happening in the video?
- Why does the girl say, "Instagram, we have a big problem!"
- Why can't the girl understand the videos she is watching?

- What does it mean to be deaf? What does it mean to be hard of hearing?

(Explain that deaf means unable to hear and hard of hearing means partial loss of hearing.)

- Why do you think the girl made this video? What is her message?
- Who is she trying to influence?

Elicit and explain that the girl who made the video is Shaylee Mansfield and she is Deaf*. Shaylee made this video in 2020 when she was eleven years old. At the time Shaylee made the video, there was no automatic captioning on Instagram, but now there is. Elicit from students that because Shaylee is Deaf and because there was no captioning on Instagram, she could not understand what was happening in the videos and what people were saying, thinking and doing.

Then ask students: *What is captioning and why does Shaylee need captioning (or captions) to understand what's happening? Have you ever seen or used captions or know others who use captions? Why are they needed?*

Elicit/explain that captioning in videos, films, TV shows and live events provides a text version (words written out) of the words, sound effects and other non-verbal sounds (i.e., phone ringing, scary music) on a screen or monitor. People who use captioning include those who cannot hear the sound in a video because they are deaf or hard of hearing and people who have challenges taking in information through audio (sound) exclusively, due to learning disabilities or other reasons. Introduce the word “accommodations” briefly by saying that Shaylee needed an accommodation because she can't hear the videos.

Next, discuss with students what it means to have a disability. Ask students: *What is a disability?* Elicit and define disability as a mental or physical condition that affects a person's movements, senses or activities. Ask students: *What kind of disability does Shaylee (from the video) have?* Elicit that Shaylee is Deaf, and share that people who are deaf have profound hearing loss, which means they can hear very little or not at all. Provide other examples of disabilities such as: vision loss and blindness, learning disability such as dyslexia, speech and language disorders, physical disabilities such as an inability to use legs, arms or the body trunk, mobility and movement disabilities, etc. Draw out and emphasize the important point that while people with disabilities may have some limitations in what they can do, this doesn't mean they are incapable of doing most things.

Explain to students that many people with disabilities need tools and “accommodations” to help them access information and participate. Explain that a tool is something that a person with disabilities brings with them, like a hearing aid or a wheelchair. An accommodation is what helps the person use that tool. For example, a wheelchair

is a tool and a ramp or an elevator is an accommodation to help a person who uses a wheelchair move around. Explain that providing an accommodation means to change, adjust, modify or adapt something so that people with disabilities have access to work, play, learn and participate in regular life activities. Have students turn and talk with a person sitting near them. Invite them to share an example of a tool or accommodation for people with disabilities. Have them respond to the question: What tool or accommodation does a person with a disability need to participate? Give students five minutes to discuss this in their pairs and explain that they should come up with one or more responses to the question. Reconvene the class and ask some students to share their ideas from their pairs. Explain that we are going to talk about how to influence the people in our lives to provide accommodations for people with disabilities.

Finally, ask students: *What is an influencer?* Remind students that they probably already know influencers on social media and others in their lives. Come up with an informal definition of influencer that includes the following aspects:

- Someone who inspires or guides the actions of others.
- Someone who can persuade or have an impact on others.
- Someone who has built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic.

Remind students about Shaylee and the video they watched and how, through her social media presence, she tried to influence Instagram (to provide captions) and also to influence others around her and who follow her to understand the importance of captioning and also push for captioning on Instagram.

Explain to students that one of the ways we can make a difference for equity and inclusivity is through influencing the people in our lives: family, friends, peers, classmates, school staff, neighbors and other personal relationships. Explain to students that they are going to create a graphic that illustrates their “spheres of influence.”** Share or project the illustration below, as an example.

Distribute a sheet of 8 1/2” x 11” paper to each student and give them about 10 minutes to work independently to create a visual representation of their own personal spheres of influence. Have students first draw a circle with their name in the center. Then draw overlapping spheres (circles), each representing a group they belong to or have regular contact with through family, friends, school, etc. They can also include groups, clubs or sports they are involved in, online communities, and other possible spheres of influence. After identifying their spheres of influence, invite them to identify one specific action they can take within the group to make that space or place more accepting, inclusive, respectful and equitable for people

with disabilities, especially around providing accommodations. Share an example such as: asking your soccer coach if they can push for wheelchair accessibility for the soccer stands or asking your parents to use the captions while watching TV and movies or when you have friends over.

When students have completed this task, invite them to share their spheres of influence charts with a partner (or the whole class/group, if time permits). To share with the whole school, post the charts on bulletin boards around school or have students make short videos with them explaining their spheres of influence and possible actions and then share a compilation of the videos within the school community.

* Note to teacher: Some people refer to this disability with a capital D (Deaf) and others use lower case d (deaf). They are not interchangeable. "Deaf" with an uppercase 'D' refers to people who identify with Deaf culture and view it as a part of their identity. Often, people who are Deaf prefer communicating in sign language. When spelled with a lowercase "d," "deaf" refers to the audiological condition of not hearing. People who refer to themselves as deaf often don't have as strong of a connection to the overall Deaf community and prefer communicating orally rather than signing. You can share this information with your students if it seems relevant, but it is not necessary.

**Adapted with permission from Diane Goodman and Steve Schapiro, "Sexism Curriculum Design" in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee A. Bell and Pat Griffin (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 127–128, 139. Reproduced by Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, a division of Informa plc.

Optional Follow-Up/Going Further

Note: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- Based on their ideas generated in the Spheres of Influence activity above, invite students to talk with a partner about their different action ideas and choose one to pursue. Depending on what action they choose to pursue, have students write up the action plan, including some or all of the following components: (1) their overall goal, (2) what success looks like (i.e., expected or desired outcomes), (3) tasks needed to reach the goal, (4) who is responsible and who else needs to be involved, (5) timeline and workplan. Have students then share their action plan with their same partner, get feedback and revise the plan. Help students then execute the plan and evaluate the extent to which it worked and if not, what changes need to be made.
- Engage students in a discussion about how to make their school and community more accessible for people with disabilities. Elicit and explain that people with disabilities often face bias in a variety of ways: (1) they experience different and unequal treatment compared to people without disabilities, which is discrimination, (2) they may not have or be provided with what they need (tools and accommodations) to fully participate in life's activities (3) people with disabilities are often not visible or represented well in

books, TV shows, movies, games, and (4) people with disabilities often face interpersonal bias including name-calling, bullying, slurs, biased “jokes,” microaggressions, etc. Engage students in a brainstorming session about how their school or community could be safer, more inclusive and more accessible for people with disabilities. After the discussion and brainstorming, have students write an essay or a persuasive letter about one of the ideas and then share all of these school-wide and/or with a specific person who can do something about the need they identified.

Home Connection

(optional)

Share ADL’s Table Talk [People with Disabilities and the Accommodations they Need with families.](#)

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

All students will learn about and reflect on the importance of tools and accommodations for people with disabilities. They will engage in discussions about the importance of respect, inclusion and equity for people with disabilities. Fostering students’ understanding of and empathy for people with disabilities and their needs will have a school-wide impact with a focus on equity, inclusion, diversity and a sense of belonging.

Spheres of Influence: Sample

