

3rd-5th Grade Down Syndrome Education Program

Adapted from Special Olympics Get Into It

and

We'll Paint the Octopus Red by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen

Overview:

An interactive discussion and project about people's differences and similarities, teasing, Down syndrome and the Buddy Walk for students grades 3-5.

Contact Dawn Durante, 2008 Buddy Walk Education Chair, at dawnd@homesc.com with questions or comments.

Estimated length: 1 hour
Materials needed: poster board
School-approved wall adhesive

Ask:

Look around the room at your classmates. Just from what you can see, they are alike in some ways and different in some ways. What are some ways they are different? What are some ways they are alike?

Encourage factual answers like clothes, color of hair, skin or eyes, likes and dislikes.

Say:

All of you are alike in some ways and different in some ways. Sometimes people behave unkindly to people who are different. But we will all be better off if we accept and celebrate each other's differences. Each one of us is a unique individual. Each one of us is special. We all have strengths, talents and abilities.

What would it be like if we said, "There is something wrong with people who are different"? And what if we were all the same? Wouldn't that be boring? If everyone had the same interests, then lots of discoveries wouldn't be made and there would be fewer choices in the world.

Ask:

What happens when people your age don't respect each other's differences here at school?

Encourage answers that lead to the conclusion that intolerance and disrespect of others at this age occurs through teasing.

Say:

Teasing is one way young people show disrespect and intolerance for others. Sometimes you might think teasing is just joking around and doesn't do any harm. Sometimes teasing can be vicious. But even when people think they are just joking, teasing can be mean and cruel.

For example, some people tease others by calling them a "retard" or saying "that is retarded". Using the word retarded is never OK.

Say:

Let's divide into small groups of 4-5 students and discuss the following questions:

Write these questions on the board...

1. Have you ever been teased? Has someone you know ever been teased?
2. What were you or this person teased about?
3. How did you or this person feel as a result of being teased?
4. How did you or this person handle the situation?

Allow 5 minutes for small groups to discuss answers. Each group should decide who will report to the class on the group's discussion.

Allow time for student's to share their answers to the large group.

Back to small groups...

Say:

Now, each group's task is to brainstorm ways to respond to teasing that will help to create a more positive school and classroom climate.

Encourage students to discuss solutions such as:

Walk away from the teasing.

Tell the person you don't like the teasing.

Avoid people who tease.

Tell a family member or teacher that you are being teased and ask for help in handling it.

List your results on a piece of poster board.

Now we have some ideas that represent the best thinking of the class about how to stop teasing. Let's keep them posted in the room so we can remember them. Let's all make a commitment that this class will be as close to the ideal as we can get. We may not be perfect, but we can all say "no" to teasing.

Say:

One way we are different is that some people have Down syndrome and others do not.

Ask:

Do you know anyone with Down syndrome?

Do you know what Down syndrome is?

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Explain:

Down syndrome is something that causes differences in the way a person looks and learns. No two people with Down syndrome are quite the same, but they are often extra flexible, have eyes that slant upward, have small ears and a small nose, and grow more slowly than other kids. They also tend to learn more slowly than other kids. But every person has his own personality and will look like other members of his family.

People with Down syndrome are born with one extra chromosome in some or all of their cells. Chromosomes are tiny, thread-shaped things inside your body. They contain the directions that tell your body how to grow. These directions tell your body what color your eyes and hair will be, how big your nose will be, whether you will be a good singer, and many other things. When a person has an extra chromosome, it mixes up his body's directions a little. That is why kids with Down syndrome look a little different from other kids and have to try harder to learn.

Nobody knows why some people are born with Down syndrome, but we do know it is nobody's fault.

Sometimes people say that kids with Down syndrome are special because they need extra time and help to learn some things. But they are also special in the same ways that other kids are special. All kids, with or without Down syndrome, are special because they have their own interests, talents, and personalities.

The Buddy Walk is a celebration of all people with Down syndrome. It will be here in Charleston in a few weeks and we would love for you to come. We will have lots of jump castles, face painters, games and food. We could all go together and have a great time. You will see kids with Down syndrome there doing all the same things you enjoy doing.

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Other project ideas

1. Make Buddy Walk posters to hand around school.
2. Make posters about Down syndrome to hang around school.
3. Read a book about Down syndrome, write a report about the book and present the report to the class. Many local libraries have books about Down syndrome.
4. Create and produce a TV show about Down syndrome and show it to the school during the morning broadcast.
5. Write a letter to the newspaper in support of people with Down syndrome and the Buddy Walk. ***Please submit this letter to the Down Syndrome Association of the Lowcountry by way of Dawn Durante at dawnd@homesc.com before submitting it to the paper.***