

LESSON 1.2e – Inside Out

Learning Objectives:

Unit 1: Awareness / Orientation to the Curriculum

- A. Identifying and understanding various types of disabilities
- B. Understanding the origins of discriminatory terms and how to use respectful language
- C. Understanding differences among individuals and the ways in which attitudes, fears, and stereotypes are formed

Materials:

- Shoe box or other box
- Paint, construction paper, markers, crayons, and other art supplies
- Inside Out Worksheet (older students)

Time:

One class session

Setting:

Small or large group discussion (depending on grade), and individual art projects

Directions:

Lesson Preparation

Refer to the suggested implementation for younger and older students listed below and prepare classroom materials as needed.

Lesson Implementation

The purpose of this activity is to help students explore the differences between visible and hidden disabilities. By examining the visible and hidden characteristics that make each student unique, they will gain an understanding of how people with hidden vs. visible disabilities are viewed by society. In addition,

students will begin to explore how people with disabilities face various types of attitudinal and environmental barriers depending on the visible or hidden nature of their disability.

For example, people with visible disabilities may feel they are too frequently put in the position of having complete strangers ask them to explain their disability (and sometimes their medical history). People with hidden disabilities may feel their disability accommodation needs are not acknowledged because their disabilities are not seen as “real.” An individual with a hidden disability may also feel it is easier to not identify himself as a person with a disability because of concerns about negative attitudes and stereotypes.

Ultimately, the goal of this lesson is to help students make personal connections, both positive and negative, with how it feels to be different. Through personal connections, students can explore how their own identity is related to their visible and hidden characteristics.

Using one of the implementation options below, have students create art projects that identify their visible and hidden characteristics. When facilitating this lesson, be mindful of the fact that some students may feel intimidated about identifying characteristics that may result in ridicule from other students. The fact that students will be cautious about their differences is part of what they should be learning from this lesson. This concern about self-disclosure is an issue people with hidden and visible disabilities experience in their day-to-day lives. For students with and without disabilities in the classroom, this activity will help them realize everyone has both visible and hidden characteristics that play an important role in how a person views the world.

Examples of visible differences –

- hair, eye, or skin color
- presence of freckles or other skin variations
- use of glasses or orthodontic braces
- use of hearing aids
- use of mobility aids

Examples of hidden differences –

- unusual skills, interests, hobbies (i.e., can blow super large bubble gum bubbles, knows the sign language alphabet, raises pet parakeets, etc.)
- interesting facts about the child’s family (i.e., shares the same birthday as another family member, is a twin, has two dozen cousins, etc.)

Revisit the classroom rules from Lesson 1.1e as a reminder that students should treat each other with respect and not use the information revealed in this lesson to taunt their classmates.

Working with Younger Students –

Using one of the art project options listed below, have each student create a project identifying the visible and hidden characteristics the student feels are important aspects of his/her identity. After completing the art projects, students may work in pairs or small groups to describe their projects.

- Give each student a large piece of butcher paper. Working with a partner, each student uses a crayon to trace the outline of their partner's body on the partner's paper. When outline drawings are complete, each student will work independently (or with support as needed) to complete the picture with "visible differences" drawn onto the body outline, and "hidden differences" depicted around the border of the picture.
- Use the same activity as described above, but use a letter or legal size paper with the body outline already copied on the paper. An alternative version with the smaller paper is to copy the body outline on both sides of the paper so that students can draw the visible differences on one side of the paper and the hidden differences on the back.

Working with Older Students –

Using one of the art project options listed below, have each student create a project identifying the visible and hidden characteristics the student feels are important aspects of his/her identity. After completing the art projects, students work in pairs to describe their projects. Students use the Inside / Out Worksheet to identify the differences and similarities among student pairs. Show students how to record the information on the worksheet.

- Using shoe boxes or other boxes about that size, students cut a piece of blank paper (sketch or paint grade) to cover the top of the box lid, and one piece of paper to fit the inside of the box bottom. Using crayons, markers, paint or other mediums, each student will create a picture representing his/her visible characteristics that will then be glued / taped to the box lid, and a picture representing his/her hidden characteristics that will be glued / taped to the inside of the box bottom. Students use paint, construction paper, stickers, and other mediums to decorate the exterior and interior sides of the box as they choose.
- Use the same project concept as above with students creating a picture of their visible characteristics for the box lid. For the inside of the box, have students create a diorama representing one or more hidden characteristic.

Lesson Wrap-up / Follow-up

Review what students learned about themselves and each other. Emphasize the importance of respecting each person's differences whether they are visible or hidden characteristics and how that relates to communicating with or about people with disabilities. Explain when the next lesson will be scheduled.

Supplementary Activities:

As an optional extension of this activity, show the film "Finding Nemo" in class. In preparation for the movie, tell students to observe how visible and hidden differences are portrayed in the movie. Instead of showing the whole movie, the instructor may choose to focus on one or more specific scenes that relate to disability issues, examples include the scene where Nemo goes to school, and the scene where Nemo and Gill meet. After viewing the movie, have students express the observations verbally or in a writing assignment.

Use the questions below as discussion or writing prompts. Facilitate discussion about how fear or lack of understanding can contribute to negative responses to differences.

- How was the main character(s) different from the others?
- How was the main character(s) the same as others?
- Why do people act in a negative way toward people who are "different?"
- Why might people think of individual differences as positive attributes?
- How did the main character(s) use his / her differences to an advantage?

Prompt students to identify ways that seemingly "negative" disability-related differences may be seen as an opportunity or skill by the person with a disability rather than a disadvantage. For example, a student who is Deaf / hard of hearing has the opportunity to be fluent in two languages (English and American Sign Language). A student who uses a power wheelchair can race with non-disabled kids riding their bicycles. A student who has diabetes knows about the importance of maintaining a healthy diet.

As a conclusion to the movie activity, use the following movie review as a reading activity. When working with younger students, read the review to the class. When working with older students, assign the review as independent reading or take turns having students read aloud. This review was written by a ten-year-old girl and identifies the disability / differences aspects of the movie.

Refer to Disability World e-zine, Issue 22, January – February 2004 at http://www.disabilityworld.org/01-03_04/arts/nemo.shtml

Notes: