



Everyone Can Learn!

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Kindergarten, Exceptional Children/Literacy, Social Studies, and Science

Keywords: Integrating disability. How to children with a disability see the classroom. Everyone can learn.

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for Common Core standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: Everyone can learn! In today's classroom, teachers are teaching students coming from all walks of life. Teachers are also teaching students, who might face a disability. The disability can range from learning, sensory, to physical. Teachers must work to engage all students and discover ways in which all students can succeed. However, it is also important to discover the world and the classroom through the eyes of these students. It is also essential that we teach tolerance and advocacy in the classroom. This unit provides lessons on how all students can be involved in the learning process. The lessons provide the "normal" student insight into the mind of a student or person that faces a disability. They will observe how they see the world and the classroom. The students will also see how students with disabilities use their disability for success. The unit provides real life situations and people, who have overcome disability to find success. The unit ends with a class project, where the students create advocacy and accessibility for all students in the school. I hope the unit will provide tools for teachers to help all of their students succeed in the classroom.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 21 students in Science, Social Studies, and Literacy in Kindergarten.

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Everyone Can Learn!!!

Courtney Pender

Background

Every child can learn. However, not every child learns the same. As we continue to teach in the public school system, the diversity of our students has changed dramatically. I am not talking race or socio-economically; I am talking about the minds of our students. I am talking about the physical needs and the mental needs of our children. We now see classrooms with students, who are autistic, blind, hearing impaired, and have physical needs, students with Down Syndrome and Autism. As teachers, we are not just teaching everyday “normal” children. We are teaching children, who face mental and/or physical needs. Our classrooms are as diverse in this area as they are racially, gender wise, or socially economically. However, we must know that these children can learn and we must teach them. Also as teachers, we must learn how these students see the world and perceive everything around them. By seeing the world through their eyes, we can get a better understanding of how they learn. Also, we can give our other students a good insight in how they learn and how they perceive the world around them.

In my class, I have a child with autism. He relies heavily on visual aides to help his instruction throughout the day. During transitions, he has to have a “First this,” “Then this” chart (insert picture). This helps with transitions times and gives him a time frame of when an activity is going to take place. I also have two children, who are developmentally delayed. They are repeating Kindergarten and again, visual aides are great tools for their instruction. In addition to these students, I have a child, who speaks very little English. I have discovered that he too needs visual aids. I use my charts to show pictures of what we are doing, so he will have a better understanding of the steps in each lesson.

How do we teach them? First, it is recognizing they can learn. This is not a new idea. Throughout this paper, I will introduce people from history, who faced adversity but could learn and in some cases changed the world. I will provide literature to help give a better understanding to these children and give them a voice. I will also give lessons to help other students understand adversity rather than pity it. Sometimes, in teaching children facing mental or physical adversity, a teacher finds a new method of teaching all children. From my experience, I have discovered new methods every year that work with all children thus helping me engage all of my students.

In my background as a teacher, I have taught students with various forms of autism, hearing loss, and students with Down Syndrome .I have also taught a student, who was

physically sick from a long term illness and it affected how he learned and functioned in the classroom. I didn't go about it alone. I had to use the resources around me. I also had to build a strong relationship with the parents of these students. We were there to support not only the student but each other. They were my best resource for they knew their child the best. I also used my Exceptional Children's teacher and together we collaborated on strategies to best teach each child and to help them learn in all circumstances. We would co-teach in the classroom and in small group settings. These children are a part of the whole classroom experience and it is my job to give them strategies to learn and to succeed to their best ability. I also want my classroom to have a tolerant environment that includes all children.

In my class this year, I have 21 Kindergarten students. My school is an inclusive school. My school has children with various disabilities included in the classroom setting as well as pulled out in a non-inclusive setting. The students, who attend pull out sessions go to our EC (Exceptional Resource) teacher and work on skills that help them in the mainstream classroom setting. I have two children, who are both pulled out by the EC teacher and mainstreamed in my classroom. Sometimes, the EC teacher and I co-teach to help mainstream my two students, so they can work on the skills and concepts I am teaching. Through co-teaching in the classroom with the EC teacher, my students observe how we all work together to ensure the success of all of the students. They also get to observe how my two children see the classroom while working with the EC teacher. She and I create strategies for them to use in the mainstream classroom.

Throughout this paper, I will give lessons to not only teach children with a disability but to show all students that everyone can learn. It is a goal in my lessons for my more typical students to not "baby" or feel as sorry for those with a disability but look to them as equals and peers. When I say "baby," I mean the students can look at students with a disability as a child who can't function. They take pity on that child, yet they interact with the child as well. Also, it will be a tool to help teachers. When you have 20-25 children in the classroom, the task of teaching children with various disabilities can be daunting. However, it is imperative that these students don't walk around with a label and that they find success in the classroom while using their disability as an asset.

An inherent to teaching this unit will be involving my whole class. How do I reach all of my learners? I want each of my students to find success with this unit but also learn. This will take collaboration with my EC teacher, knowledge about all of my students, and research. At the end of the unit, I want all of my students to not only find success but to have a new understanding of students with disabilities. I also want my two children with learning disabilities to be involved and to teach the rest of the class how they see the world. They can portray this through their art, class discussions, and through their writing. They are not toys, they are not to be pitied, and they are not unteachable. They are students, who can learn despite their disability. I also want fellow teachers to walk away with lessons to not only help students but to raise awareness that people should not

be labeled or forgotten and that all children can learn. My hope is that by beginning this in a young age, their acceptance and awareness will stay with them throughout the grades. I hope that they too will become advocates for all people.

Objectives

My students are all different, they all learn differently, but I have no doubt they can learn. I have students with autism, students who are developmentally delayed, and all in between. I have students who are left handed and right handed. You might not think left handed is a disability but our society is geared mainly toward right handed people. I have to adjust some of my demonstration to help those students who are left handed. Though, our educational environment doesn't try to force a student to favor the right hand, school "tools" are still geared toward the right handed student. Some of my students are still trying to figure out which hand they favor and it is my job to make it easier for them to find success with whatever hand they choose.

As a teacher, it is important to help all of my students. I also want to make sure they come away from this unit with the knowledge that all children can learn and to perhaps have a greater empathy for children with a specific disability.

This unit fits into our North Carolina Social Studies Core Standards. It will align with Standard **K.C.1. Understand how individuals are similar and different**. We will talk about how all of us are alike and different. In the unit, we will discuss how children learn the same and learn differently but how all children can learn. The unit will also align with standard **K.C.1.1 Explain similarities in self and others**. The objectives of this goal will be 1.01 Describe how individuals are unique and valued. 1.02 Identify different groups to which individuals belong. 1.04 Recognize that families and groups have differences and similarities. My unit also falls under the standards taught in Guidance. Our School Counselor teaching Guidance; however, I take the skills she teaches and apply them to the classroom. **RED.SE2 Understand the relationship between self and others in the broader world. RED.SE.2.2 Understand how to support positive relationship building**. The Guidance and the Social Studies objectives are the basis of the unit. I want the students to see the differences and similarities with each other and other children and how they all learn. Through the Common Core standards, I will raise an awareness of differences and similarities but also that all of us can learn and can succeed in and out of the classroom. The objectives and goals taught in our curriculum provide an opportunity for the students to view each other with respect and tolerance rather than with pity or sympathy. It is important to *"create a classroom that is truly responsive to all diverse learners."* (Joyful Learning: Active and Collaborative Learning in Inclusive Classrooms)

My unit will spread across the curriculum in my lessons. Many of my lessons will incorporate the discussion of the five senses. Although, Kindergarten does not teach the five senses in Common Core anymore, it is a concept typically taught in Science. We will

talk about the five senses and with some of the activities students will have to rely on their senses to complete the activity. The students will have to use four of their senses to overcompensate for not having the use of one major sense. I teach all subjects and it is important to integrate this unit across the curriculum so the students will see how students can learn in multiple areas.

This unit will bring in literature and writing as well. Through writing, students will be able to portray their own reflections on some of the lessons and what they have learned. The Literature I have selected to be read throughout this unit will reflect how people use their disability for success and will give my students a better insight in their perception of the classroom and the world. I will read Literature that will be both Fictional and Non-Fictional. The students will complete several writing activities to correlate with some of the readings. Due to the fact that this is Kindergarten and many of them are just learning how to read, the writing activities will come at the end of the unit and will take place over several days with help from the teacher.

Introduction/Rationale

All children can learn. Children should not be labeled, pitied, or forgotten. How do we teach children about disabilities but in a way that produces a positive experience and success for everyone? How do we teach our students to see children, facing a disability, that they can learn and they don't need to be pitied or babied? In my experience as a teacher, my students love to nurture and protect those with an adversity or a disability. Though I am appreciative that they respond kindly to all children, I also don't want any child to be labeled by another student or pitied. So, it will be my goal to show my students that everyone can learn. My child with Autism is reading more words than my other students. However, I have to adjust or modify his schedule to help maximize his learning. My goal is for my mainstream students to see how these children learn and how they perceive the classroom. I want them to see how they use their disability to succeed.

In order to have my students gain a better understanding of disability and that everyone can learn, I have created lessons where my students will take on a disability or an adversity to understand what some students face on a daily basis. Due to the fact that I teach Kindergarten, I want my students to walk away from these lessons with an understanding not with a fear. I want them to understand that all people can learn but to not fear students, who have a disability. Through this unit, they will see how people with a disability perceive the world. Through co-teaching in the classroom with the EC teacher, they get to witness this first hand. Through the hands on experiences in the unit, they get to witness the minds of people with a disability.

The best way to present this understanding is through literature. One of our favorite book series is the Franklin books by Paulette Bourgeois. In the series, there is a character with braces on her legs and she must walk with crutches. It is never mentioned what happens

to this character, but she is accepted and she is smart. My students can relate to Literature and with this character. Very rarely, do I have a student point out Badger's disability. They seem to think it is acceptable and part of the character.

I want my Literature to go beyond Franklin; I also will read books that clearly deal with disability. Disabled Fables is about Aesop's famous fables but take on a different perspective. It is told through the eyes of artists with development disabilities. This book helps give voice to those struggling with disabilities and it is a book that hopefully some of my students can relate to and enjoy. Disabled Fables gives insight to the students how the authors see the world and walk through the world. Having a perspective from authors with disabilities, will provide opportunities for students to see that everyone can learn and anyone can succeed. It will also help them understand how my two students, who see the EC teacher, learn and see the world and the classroom.

Another selection of books I will read will be more specific to disabilities. It is a selection of books by various authors that will provide insight to individual disabilities such as blindness, wheelchairs, autism, and deafness. The books show how people with these specific disabilities learn. The books are very specific to different disabilities. They address both physical and mental disabilities. My unit is geared more toward physical disabilities because my students understand the physical part more than a mental disability. The book on the wheelchair shows what a wheel chair is, how it used, why it is used. The books are designed to help educate younger students on disabilities. They tell what a specific disability is and how people might function or cope with that disability.

So, how will I establish a classroom that includes all learners? Though, I don't have children with severe disabilities, I developed some lessons to illustrate to my students how some children learn and how they perceive the world. I want my students to walk away at the end of my unit with a knowledge that all people learn. They will have an understanding that though a child might have a disability of some kind, they can learn and they can understand. This unit will provide a chance for the students to "actively learn" about disability and how a person uses his/her disability for success through activities and lessons.

My unit will take place in the spring as student's writing skills become more independent, and they become more expressive with their writing skills. It will take place over several weeks. Some of the lessons will overlap and will take a few weeks to develop the goal. For example, I will teach the alphabet in sign language and it will take several weeks for the students to grasp this concept and to apply it to the lesson I am teaching. Teaching this unit over several weeks will help the students truly experience how some of these people learn and experience the world.

Content Background

Why bring this awareness to your students? All children are in our classroom. We work in Inclusive classroom settings, where all students must be included and taught. It is important for children to see that every child/person can learn. However, it is also important that they see beyond the classroom. How often do we walk the streets and see people in wheelchairs, or with a Seeing Eye dog? We see veterans returning from the duties with an arm or leg missing. I often find myself looking at them with a sympathetic eye. I look with pity and sometimes forget they are functioning, they are working among us. It is important with our students to view all people as people regardless of their adversity. It is important that students don't view people with diversity with a patronizing eye. Lindsey Athias writes in the Huffington Post, "*When it comes to teaching our children about kids with disabilities, the notions of "connectedness" and "sameness" are essential and something we must foster as a society.*" She also goes on to say, "*It includes working to ensure typical kids, without these challenges, grow up with the understand, empathy, and patience needed to create a truly integrated society; hone in which they see kids with disabilities just as much a part of their network of peers.*" That is what I want to convey in my unit that all children must work together, respect each other, and include one another in and out of the classroom. The unit connects my "typical" students with students who have disabilities by giving them an insight in how they see the world and how they experience learning in the classroom setting. My unit connects all of my students and makes them aware that people with a disability can use their disability to succeed and to learn.

Over time, we have seen different groups and cultures thrown together in the mainstream classroom and it works. Why not in the classroom? The more children without disabilities work with children with disabilities, the more they will learn to work together. Bringing students with disabilities into general classrooms will hopefully result in true, long-term acceptance. *Disability education brings attitudes to the surface, where they can be examined consciously, rather than putting students together and hoping for the best.* *Disability Awareness: We're In it Together* So, it is importance to bring this to the surface to children at a young age so as they journey through the grade levels and life, and they will have a sense of how to work together with other children, who may have a disability.

When I first introduce my unit, I will introduce it using a book. The book will show a classroom where all of the children are different. A student is in a wheelchair, a student is blind, and a student has Down Syndrome. However, all of the children are learning and they are playing and working together. This also leads into a discussion of how we are all different and yet we can all learn. My students need to understand that we are all different yet we can all learn. Literature is very important in my unit because it shows pictures that the students will be able to see and they will become more connected to the characters, who are struggling with a disability. Through literature, students can make connections from text to self.

In the classroom, I teach differences through our Social Studies Curriculum. I teach my

students about differences and similarities. However, the differences and similarities are not just between the students in my classroom, they are between people in our world. By learning about differences, the students get a better grasp on how we all perceive the world differently and how we all learn differently. The goal of this unit is for the children to not have pity but have understanding. Also, I want the students to walk away with the knowledge that everyone can learn and everyone can succeed.

Literature is great tool to reach students at this age. They can relate to stories and characters and they can relate text to self. However, I don't want them to concentrate on just the adversity of a character but how the character functions in the story. As we read the literature I have selected, my goal is for the students to see how the characters use their disability as an ability, how they use their disability for success. This also helps illustrate further to the students to see that we view people's character not their physical appearance.

A literature selection I will also use throughout the unit identifies specific disabilities. The books are geared toward various disabilities, such as Autism, Blindness, and physical disabilities. The books are a great tool to describe the disability, what it is, and how people cope with the disability. One of the books is of a wheelchair. It simply describes the wheelchair, why, and how it is used. These books will also be a great tool for the children to have text to self. They might identify with the disabilities not because they have it but because they know of someone who does. It will give more clarity on the disability and thus give the students more awareness of people facing a disability in our classroom, school, and in our culture.

The book Disabled Fables is a wonderful book written by authors with disabilities. It is a retell on the classic Aesop's Fables. The stories of Aesop are shown through the eyes of authors with developmental disabilities. This is a great story to illustrate how people with a disability can not only learn but teach. It has wonderful illustrations and each fable teaches a lessons. The stories can spark a text to self and can help my own students believe in themselves. After reading these fables, I would work with my students on a writing activity to create their own Fable. They would write their own story, perhaps using a life experience to bring their story to life. At the end of their story, they would have to include a lesson. This is a story that will take place over a few days and will need some guidance by the teachers.

I don't want to simply use Fictional children's literature to drive my unit, but I want to use people from history. Henri Matisse faced a disability and yet he became one of the most influential artists of our time. The children's book, Drawing with Scissors, describes Matisse and gives a glimpse into his struggles and successes. It describes how a young girl finds inspiration through learning more about Matisse. The book is rather long and perhaps difficult for the students to grasp. I would use this book at either the middle or the end of the unit. The book is a great tool to illustrate adversity and success. It is full of

wonderful illustrations which is a necessity when teaching Kindergarten. There is also a great website, www.ducksters.com/biography/artists/henri_matisse.php that illustrates some of Matisse's great pieces of work and gives facts about his life. It talks about how Matisse came into painting. This website is a bit advanced for the Kindergartners but it gives simple facts that they can identify with. In addition to learning about Matisse, the students will create a piece of art. Matisse started to use collages and cutouts to create art. The children will create the same but the art will need to represent something meaningful to them. We will talk about how art can be personal and represent a person's personality. I want the students to connect art and literature to self. Matisse will be brought in throughout the unit; however, the students will do a major end of the unit project which involves creating a collage of the school and how the school can become more accessible to students with physical disabilities. These collages will illustrate how my students see the school and how they represent it through cut outs and various art tools.

Another great person to pull from out of history is Franklin Roosevelt. At the present time, my students see a President, who is young and strong. They can't imagine our country being run by a man, who was sitting a wheel chair. The book, Franklin Delano Roosevelt for Kids, is a book for children and gives an insight in his life and accomplishments. The book gives a detailed account in his life and the culture during his time as President. The book is advanced but it illustrates what people can do despite their disability. I won't read the book in its entirety but use it as a guide to talk about FDR and his successes. This could tie into a great writing exercise, where I would have students write about being President and how he/she might advocate for people with disabilities. How would they create communities, schools to make it more accessible for people with disabilities to learn and to get around? What laws might be in place to make sure places are accessible for people with disabilities? This is a writing activity that would take place at the latter part of the unit and would take place over several days. It gives the students sense of great accomplishment regardless of a disability or adversity. How amazing it will be to teach these young children that a US President accomplished so much and he was in a wheelchair. For this age group, that is an amazing idea to grasp. Also, after showing FDR in his wheelchair from the FDR monument, it would show a very humanizing and friendly part of him and perhaps give the students more ideas for their writing.

Teaching about disabilities is important but teaching tolerance and advocacy is important too. I want my children to understand that we are all different but they we all must exercise tolerance as well. The website, www.tolerance.org provides resources, publications, and even lessons on how to create a welcoming classroom while teaching tolerance and differences to our children. It is important that students learn tolerance both in the classroom and in everyday life. Bullying is a very hot topic in schools right now. While at a young age, they rarely see differences but it is important that they take what is taught to them at this age and apply it as they get older. Depending on the school system, students with disabilities will go with the other students through the grade levels. It is

important for the teacher to set a standard for his/her students that all students can learn and all students can succeed; therefore, we must uphold a positive setting for all students to feel tolerated and accepted.

I will also teach the students what it is like to lose one of their five senses. We will read the book Kevin's Big Book of the Five Senses and discuss what it's like for a person to lose one of those senses. To help further illustrate this topic, I will do mini lessons where the students will have to rely on 4 of their senses after they have lost one major sense. This will give them an understanding of what it's like for people, who have to rely on their other 4 senses. The students will also have to rely on others to help them and guide them through some of the activities. These lessons will help the students have a better understanding of how people might see the world differently yet still learn. In addition to these activities, they will learn about various artists, who struggled with loss of a sense and how they still create art. The students will be able to see how some of these artists created art prior to the loss of their sense and how they created art after the loss of their sense.

So many wonderful artists had vision disabilities. Their art changed over the course of time as their vision progressively got worse. As you look at their art, you can see how it changed from when their eyesight was good to when their eyesight got worse. In the new article, *The Visual Difficulties of Selected Artists and Limitations of Ophthalmological Care During The 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, the author explains, "Artists can be markedly affected by ocular diseases that change their ability to see the world." He then goes on to say, "Diseases of the eye may profoundly influence artists by altering their perception of the world." Throughout the careers of some of these artists, their perception of the world changed due to the change in their vision. Henri Harpignies was a prolific artist who created landscapes and would paint his landscapes looking directly at the sun. As his career progressed, his eyesight started to fail and become blurry. So, where he would see clarity and crispness in his subjects, he began to see blurriness. This change in his eyesight became evident in his art. As cataracts began to form on his eyes, his color scheme changed from vibrant blues and purples to more red, browns, and yellows because that is how he perceived the world. Well, my students will have the opportunity to show their artistic ability with limited vision (due to a handkerchief). My students will be able to create art and show how they see or don't see their surroundings. It will be great-hands on activity for the students to see the way someone like Henri Harpignies perceived the world in a different way.

I created this unit to be integrated across the curriculum. I want to reach the students in multiple ways. I believe by teaching this unit throughout the curriculum, I am showing the students how children with disabilities succeed and work in the classroom. Through Literature, I am giving the students a visual of students facing a disability or adversity. Through Science and Social Studies, they are learning by hands on activities. In writing, the students are able to use their creativity and their real life experiences to empathize

and understand what some people go through on a daily basis. I believe it is important to show how teaching adversity and disability to children needs to go across the curriculum.

My unit involves all of my students. I want my child with Autism to walk through this unit doing these same activities and exhibit how he sees the world. I look forward to see how he sees these disabilities and how he integrates himself in my lessons. I also have two students, who are “developmentally delayed,” and I am excited to see how they take this unit and walk with us through the unit. I also want my students to see the excitement of walking with people who have a disability in their world and how they see it.

Throughout my unit, I will use both Non-Fiction and Fiction forms of literature. The literature I will be using will help further illustrate how we all learn and will even give insight into some famous people who worked and were successful and perhaps had a specific disability. The literature I have chosen is engaging and will help the students see how people with a disability see the world and enjoy the world.

Lesson One: How are we all different?

Before beginning my unit on how we are all different and how we learn differently, I want to make sure I address how we treat each other and how we treat people, who might face a physical or mental difference. My students are young and they can see differences but their first instinct is either to fear that person or to treat them like a baby. They can fear what they don't understand or they can be nurturing and go overboard in the treatment of someone, who faces adversity.

As I introduce this unit, I will read the book, Friends at School by Rochelle Bunnett. This is a great book that shows a classroom full of young children, about the age of my Kindergartners, but the class is diverse and it shows children with various disabilities. However, it shows all of the students working together, playing together, and learning together. Not one child is on the sideline observing the others, not one child is being “mommied” by others. These children are simply doing what children do in a classroom. I want my students to see that all of these children are actively engaged and learning.

However, what I do want to address is that we are all different but we can all learn and there can be some common misconceptions about students, who may look or act different. How can we work together? How can we help each other? If you see someone, who may look or act different, do you stare at them? Do you ignore them? If someone is blind, talk to them but introduce yourself and acknowledge them. They need to know that both in their education time and in life, they are going to meet people who might look or act different than them, but they must learn to work with every individual. I don't want them to look at them with pity or with the idea that they can't learn or behave appropriately.

What I want my students to see is that we are all different but can learn. Their first

lessons to recognize their differences just with each other are to create a self-portrait. Their self portraits will be created various shapes and free form. Their self portrait will represent how they see themselves. I want the students to be expressive and creative. So, to help further their creative juices, I am going to show them Joan Miro's **Woman with Three Hairs Surrounded by Birds in the Night**.

When first glancing at the painting, you are not quite sure what it is. As a class, we will discuss the painting, and I would think most of the students would guess it is a woman.

After discussing the painting, I am going to demonstrate how to create a self portrait using free form, shapes, and cutouts. I will outline my picture in a sharpie to highlight the body. The portraits are going to look abstract and much like a collage, which will help lead into our discussion on Matisse later in the unit. The portraits will show how the students see themselves, and I also want them to add their "signature" to their portrait (like a star or a mark of some sort). The image below is an example and has a star to show the signature of the artist.



Lesson Two: Use your Senses!!

Day One

How do you get around without your eyesight? We will read the book Kevin's Big Book of the Five Senses. What do you do if you don't have one of your senses? What do you use to help you get around? What is your world like? This lesson will be broken into three days with three different lessons to help the students understand what it's like to not have eyesight. The students will have to rely on their other senses to do these activities. So, here we go, get your senses ready.

We have read the book about the five senses. As a class we discuss how we use our senses to help us in life. We will discuss what our senses do for us on a daily basis, why we need them, and how would we do through our daily life without one of our major senses. We will also discuss if we were to lose a sense, which one, and why.

For the lesson, the children will partner up. One partner will wear a blind fold, while the other partner has a brown paper bag with items that require the students to use their senses to guess what the item is. For this activity, I will use an orange slice for smell, an m&m for taste, a rock for feeling, and a scrunched up piece of paper for sound. The student with the blindfold will have to use his/her senses to guess what each item is. The partner without the blindfold can give hints and will verify if the blindfolded student is right or not. After the items have been guessed, they will switch roles. However, I will change up the bags with different items. The next partner will have to use his/her senses to guess the objects in that bag.

After we finish the activity, we will discuss which sense was the hardest to use and which was the easiest. What sense did you have to rely on the most? How was it to not be able to see what you were holding, smelling, tasting, or hearing? Did you use your partner to help or did you try to figure each item on your own? These questions will help promote classroom discussion and help each child as he/she develops more awareness of the senses.

This activity will lead to the next few days as we talk about the senses and how we depend on those senses. These activities will also show how people without one of their senses experience the world.

Day 2

Yesterday, we did some fun activities where we had to rely on all of our senses but sight. Today, we are going to talk about loss of eyesight and how someone without that major sense learns in a classroom. What tools do they need? How can the school be accessible to them?

First, I will read a book about a famous Seeing Eye dog, Buddy, the Seeing Eye Dog. The book is a great tool to help the students get a better understanding of how people without sight might get around a school or a community. It is also a book that the student might be able to relate to if they have dogs and their dogs serve as friends or companions.

After reading the book, we will talk about if anyone has seen a Seeing Eye dog. Where? When? What kind of dogs are Seeing Eye dogs? If you have a dog, could he/she be a Seeing Eye companion? If you could have a dog do something special and unique for you, what would it be?

The last question will lead into a writing activity. If the students could create a dog with a special power or talent to help people in need, what would it be? The students would draw a picture of this dog and then write about how the dog could help others. Depending on where your students are in the writing process, they may work independently and some might need some conferencing with the teacher. The writing could be complete in this one day or it may take another day or two to complete this activity. The student's dog would not have to be limited to a loss of a sense but to any kind of struggle for a person. The dog could simply be used as a friend. It is up to the student.

After the completion of these papers, we will share them in group time and discuss each other's dogs and their special gift they have to help others in need. This could lead into discussion about how dogs help people. How they help the Police and Fire Fighters. Dogs are companions are for people sick or in the hospital. We will discuss how dogs can bring healing.

Day 3

Our last activity with the senses would still deal with loss of sight but would require some partnership and some trusting. First, I would want to pose these questions to my students: What are ways you can learn? How do you look at art? Can a person with blindness "see" art? If you were with a person, who was blind, how would you describe a piece of art? Well, that is exactly what we are going to do today!

I am going to show the students 4 pieces of work that are on display at the Bechtler Museum in Charlotte, NC. The pieces of work I am using are the Tridem K by Victor Vasarely, Line Drawing by Sol LeWitt and the two sculptures The Firebird and the Vardanega sculpture. The works I show will be colorful and full of vibrancy. In essence, I will make it "Kindergarten friendly." I will introduce the works as they are written in the museum; however, I will label the works "Piece A," "Piece B," "Piece C," and "Piece D." I am labeling the works with letters so that it will be easier for the students to recognize the works. The names might be too complicated for the students to pronounce so it would be easier for them to recall letters as opposed to names of the works. Also, it

helps with letter recognition. As a class, we will discuss the paintings, what they see, how they would describe the art.

After viewing the works and discussing the works, I will divide the students into partners. One partner will be blindfolded, while the other partner can see. I will show one of the four paintings on the smart board. The partner without the blindfold will have to describe the piece of art in detail to the other partner. The partner with the blindfold will have to think back to the works and guess which piece of work his/her partner is describing. The blindfolded student will call out the letter of the painting he/she thinks it is. The student without the blindfold is going to have to be as descriptive as possible. He/she must talk about the colors; reflect back on the class discussion of what some of the students saw when observing the piece of art. Once the partners have finished round one, they will switch roles. I will now show a new piece of art and they will do the same thing again but roles will be switched. After both partners have gone, the students now have to trick me. I will have my assistant put a painting on the smart board, and I will put on a blindfold. The students will have to take turns describing the painting to me. I might ask for more detail to get them to really enhance what they see and how they can bring it to life to me.

After I guess the painting, we will return to the carpet to discuss what it was like with a blindfold on. Was it easy? Was it frustrating to depend on someone else to bring the experience of viewing art alive to you? You got to see the art prior to putting on the blindfold, so imagine what it would be like if you never got to “see” the art. How would that feel? Did you still get a good idea of what the art looked like after your partner described it to you? What clues or words did you remember to help you recall the painting?

This lesson will not only give the students an idea of what it’s like to not see art but how you can describe art to another person. They might want to go home and describe the piece of work to their parents or to a brother or sister. This is very similar to recalling a story read to them at school and being able to recall specific characters and events in the story.

Lesson Three

We talked about what it’s like to not see art as an art observer. What do you think it’s like to paint art and you cannot see very well? The students believe that true blindness is the only disability. Now it is time to introduce blindness again, misconceptions of blindness, and how a person might struggle with sight without being labeled blind.

Monet had bilateral cataracts. He had blurred vision. Edgar Degas had a chronic and progressive retinal disease. Pissarro had recurrent inflammation and infection of the lachrymal system. Yet, these artists produced art. However, their art changed as their eyes changed. I will show the students some of their work on the smart board. The

paintings will show how their work changed when their eyes were good and a diagnosis had not been given and work that occurred after their diagnosis and their sight had been compromised. Though these artists battled with eye issues, they were still able to create art. However, the art changed as their eyes changed. Their once vibrant and precise paintings turned dull and without the precision of detail yet it was still beautiful to the viewer's eye.

Not all people are completely blind. They might have an issue with their eye to prevent them from seeing art or creating art the way we do or they way they use to prior to their diagnosis. What would it be like to see only certain colors? What if objects appeared blurry or fuzzy to the eye?

The students will get to experience what it's like to partially see and create art. They will each have a blindfold but will only put it partially over their eyes. They will use paints, crayons, and other mediums to create a piece of art. They will have created art with limited use of their eyes. Prior to doing the art activity, we will discuss what to paint. Monet did beautiful flowers and landscapes. Due to the fact that this unit is in the spring, the students will create a spring scene with the blindfold partially covering their eyes. Can they see their colors really well? Can they tell the difference between their colors? Is it hard or frustrating to create art without the full use of eyesight? After we finish our art, we will do a gallery walk with the paintings. Do we notice anything about each other's art? Is the art precise or is it blurry and perhaps lacking in vibrancy and color? Can the students tell what each other painted?

So, blindness has misconceptions. You don't have to be completely blind, to have issues with your eyes to prevent you from seeing the world has someone with 20/20 vision would. Also, it is common in many well known and not so well known artists. It is also common in people in our lives. As the students are creating their art work, I will create my own too; however, I will not be partially blindfolded. Instead, I will wear my glasses that day and as I create my art, I will remove my glasses. During our gallery walk, I will tell the students that I am legally blind. I cannot see without my glasses or contacts, everything is very blurry, and I cannot be precise in what I see or what I create. However, I am lucky enough to have help with my eye "accessories", my glasses and contacts.

Lesson Four

Along with our senses lessons, we will discuss deafness. What does it mean to be deaf? How does it happen? What would a person, who is deaf, need to communicate? How do we communicate with a person, who is deaf?

As a group, I will read I am Deaf by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos. This book helps to give a better understanding of deafness and it will help the students realize that hearing-impaired children can do the same things as other boys and girls. I have a great tool, a

mat that has all of the letters in sign language. For a few weeks, everyday, I will teach the students the alphabet in sign language. Every day, we will practice the letters, which will also help letter recognition. Practicing the sign language alphabet with Kindergartners will span on over several weeks. This is a concept I will start teaching earlier in the year and then get a bit more advanced as I introduce the unit. It can be done during my calendar time, where I routinely recite the alphabet with my students. Instead of singing just the standard alphabet song, I can add in the sign language as well using the alphabet. This will help build a routine with the students as they learn.

As we continue our routine of the sign language alphabet, I will begin spelling simple words to them, such as dog, cat, bed, and the students will have to try to “read” the word I am spelling. Again, this can be routinely built into our calendar time or as a filler. It is great way to only emphasize the sign language but also spelling as well. As we continue through the simple words, I will move to more complex words such as sled, nest, and wagon. My students will only learn short vowel sounds so these words can be phonetically spelled and read. We will continue to build on this lesson by going into simple sentences such as “I have a cat” or “The dog is sad.” I will spell these sentences out and the students will have to read them. Again, this helps review spelling and reading as well but adds a new twist and challenge. It will be challenging for me too, because I too will have to learn sign language.

As the students and I become more comfortable with signing, I will break them into partners. Now, they must spell a word for their partner and their partner will have to read it. I will have the hand signs posted on the Smart board so they can use it for a reference. To help further challenge the students, in the big group, I will allow a student to try to sign a sentence or two words put together. I will only ask a student, who feels comfortable enough to do it in front of the class. This activity will take place over several weeks and depending on where my students are in the spring, it could take place over a month or two.

As we conclude this lesson, we will gather together to discuss the frustrations of signing, the challenge of signing, and also how a person, who can’t speak or hear, learn in a classroom setting. I will remind the students that sign language might be new to most of them and it takes time to learn. If you are not raised learning a certain language, it takes time to learn a new one. This would be a great time to introduce Helen Keller. Her story might be too complicated for my students; however, I can emphasize the fact that she learned and she lead a life that was full and she too was educated.

Lesson Five

A lot of my lessons are geared toward more physical disabilities simply because it is visual for my students and they understand it. However, this lesson is more abstract. I will read Robert Kraus’ Leo the Late Bloomer. This is a wonderful children’s book that

takes place in the African Jungle. Leo is a bit of a late bloomer. He isn't up to par with his peers and his father notices it. It worries his father and he wants to have a label on Leo. What is wrong with Leo? Why isn't he like his friends? They are doing all of these great things and Leo isn't, why? Leo's mother simply says he will bloom when he is ready. Leo was finally ready. At the end of the book, he said "I did it." Leo didn't care how long it took him, he just knew he had arrived and was ok.

The story doesn't give Leo a title or a label; however, it is suggested he might be autistic. The book tells us that we all "bloom" when we are ready. We don't need a label; sometimes we just aren't ready to tackle everything else like our peers.

It is a story that everyone can identify with. My students are all different and chances are they have accomplished or mastered something later than some of their peers. I want them to write a story about a time when it took them a while to master a skill, a sport, or even something as simple as how long it took them to walk or talk as a baby. They must write about the time and how they felt when it took so long to learn how to do something. I will model the story first and tell them about the time it took me so long to learn how to do a cartwheel. All of my friends were doing cartwheels. My gym teacher tried to get me to do a cartwheel, even my father tried to help me master a cartwheel, but I just couldn't get it. Finally, it clicked. I learned to do a cartwheel. The students will write about a time it took them awhile to accomplish something and illustrate the story. After, they finish their story, we will gather together to share. They might find that we all struggle sometimes; it sometimes takes us along time to learn to do something, or to "bloom" into a skill.

Leo the Late Bloomer is a great book to illustrate adversity but not put a label on it. The students, as they go through school, will either struggle with personal accomplishment or they will see someone struggling with accomplishment. I want the students to realize that we all might have various paces at which we learn things. I also want them to see how each of us learns. It is insightful for the students to get an opportunity to see how each of them learns and possesses various learning styles. Everyone can learn!

Lesson Six

The next two lesson deal with physical disability and also increases advocacy in the students. What is it like to be in a wheel chair or on crutches? What if you were missing a leg or needed aids to help you be mobile? What if you are in a school, what does that school need to make it more accessible for a student with a wheelchair or walking device?

We are going to go on a scavenger hunt in our building. The class will divide into two groups, one group will go with me and the other group will go with my assistant. Prior to the scavenger hunt, the students and I will devise a list of ways to make our school more

accessible (i.e. wheelchair ramps, brail, extra support, etc.....). They must decide if our school has enough wheelchair friendly ramps. How can a student get from the car to the building? Does our school have the tools in place for a student, who might use crutches or braces? Do we have enough staff to help a student maneuver around the building? Also, are elevators easily accessible? Also, do we have brail? Where would brail be useful? The students might want to ask the principle about the policy on a Seeing Eye dog. If these dogs are allowed, are their guidelines? These questions and this scavenger hunt will lead into our next project. The students will need to hunt for ways in which our school is easily accessible and how it might be more accessible to those with a disability. After the hunt, we will have a class discussion on what the two groups discovered. Is our school accessible? What do we need to make it more accessible?

To help illustrate this topic even further, we will talk about Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was a wheelchair user during his presidency but went on to make major and positive changes in America. How exciting it will be for the students to learn about a President with a disability, who changed the face of America during a very hard struggle for Americans.

As we finish this activity, I want to discuss our school and it's accessibility to students facing a physical adversity or need. Is it accessible enough? What does it lack? Having been in a situation, where I had to wear a boot on my leg, I give my perspective to the students and how I felt accessing our building, the challenges, and the things that helped.

To end this lesson and to further their knowledge about FDR, the students will do a writing activity based on a prompt. Their prompt would be, "If they were President, how would they make the community more accessible for people with disabilities." They may talk about their neighborhood community or school community. They will write about what people need in order to learn or to get around. The students have talk about the loss of a sense and now we have talked about loss of a physical use of their body. They have had a firsthand knowledge of the difficulties some people may face and what they need in order to access the obstacles in their community or in their school. After the students finish their writing activities, they will share with a partner how they would make our school and community more accessible to students with a disability.

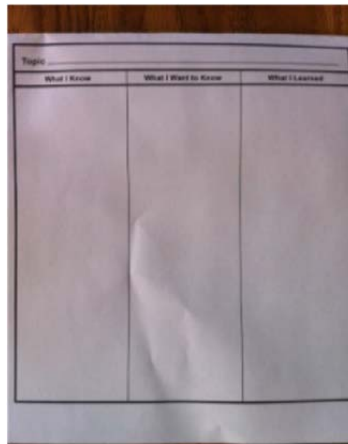
Lesson Seven

This is our final lesson and will take place over several days. This lesson will culminate all that the students have learned through this unit. The lesson will incorporate collaborative groups as well as independent work.

The students will create a collage of our school but in the collage they must show areas where they can include accessibility for students/peoples with disabilities." After doing a scavenger hunt to make sure our school is accessible, they must decide on places in our

school where a wheelchair ramp is necessary. They will decide how those with physical disabilities can get around the building. During this lesson, we will read about Matisse, who made collages, had issues with his eyes, and was a wheelchair user. I will show Matisse's art work and as a class, we will discover different mediums to create a collage. We will also collaborate with our art teacher on this project.

Prior to beginning our project, we will do a KWL chart.



Topic		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

I want the students to tell me what they know a school needs for people to have better access around the building, what they hope to learn makes a school adequately accessible for people with physical disabilities, and what they hope to discover. The KWL chart will help the students brainstorm as they prepare to create their collages. We will discuss whole group what is needed to make our school better accessible for all people. We will read about Matisse and how collages were an easier and effective means to show his art. We will also walk our building so the students can get a better idea of how difficult it might be for people to find access around the building. What do we need to make it more accessible? Do we have brail or some way for students, who might struggle with their sight to get through the building?

After we spend about a day or two learning about Matisse, coordinating a plan to create a collage, I will break the students in small groups. The students will use magazine, dacoits cut outs to create their school. They will also add color by using markers, crayons, and color pencils. The students will work with each other to create a school that shows accessibility to all peoples.

After the collage is complete, the students will write about our "new" school and what makes it so welcoming and wonderful for all people. I will also encourage them to talk about how they can make our community more accessible for all peoples. We will also work together as a class to comprise a letter to our state government officials on the need

for more accessibility in the classroom. My goal is to create advocacy beyond our own school. We want to make sure all schools have the tools needed to help students with disabilities.

I will coordinate this activity to go along with our spring art show at the end of the year, where the Kindergartners will be performing songs. We will also have an Art Crawl for the whole school. We will put our collage on display along with the student's writing. This will be a great way for the students to show their work but to show advocacy for all people. I will also select a few students to share their writing samples to the audience and discuss what this unit has taught them and why it is so important.

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Implementing Common Core Standards

K.C.1. Understand how individuals are similar and different.

1. In the literature read during the unit.
2. They will learn similarities and differences in the self-portraits.
3. Through class discussion.

K.C.1.1 Explain similarities in self and others.

1. In the writing samples compiled in the unit.
2. Through their self-portraits.
3. Relating text to self.

RED.SE2 Understand the relationship between self and others in the broader world.

1. Creating the school collage and promoting advocacy for disability in the classroom and in the community.
2. Through the literature being read in the unit.
3. In class discussions.

RED.SE.2.2 Understand how to support positive relationship building.

1. Creating advocacy for students with disabilities in the collage, in the writing samples, and through the literature.