



Kids Just Want to Have Fun! **A video that works...**

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Kids Just Want to Have Fun – is fun! It is a delightful seven-minute video that is basically a lot of great visuals of kids with disabilities – together with a lot of great comments from the kids themselves.

The video was produced by the Shriner's Hospital for Children in Portland, Oregon, USA. I learned about it through an advertisement I received as a member of an organization for teachers – of all types of children. The postcard came from *Teacher's Toolbox*, 22335 SW Mandan Drive, Tualatin, Oregon 97062, USA. It advertised that the video and accompanying Activity Guide would promote acceptance and inclusion of children who are disabled. It certainly fulfills the first objective.

The children are mostly about eight years old to early teens. They first talk about how kids are all alike – they like to play, love sports, videogames, television, basketball, swimming, etc. The cutest comment was from a young boy with cerebral palsy who said he “liked to swim – definitely – I am half fish!”

Then some of the same and some new children talk about how they are different. Some have crutches, were burned, have CP, or learn in a different way “than you guys.”

I especially like the part where the children talked about what they were good at. One boy with a physical disability of his arms and legs tells us that there are two things that he is especially good at. One is – he can do a belly dance – as we see him make his stomach make waves in it as he is sitting in a chair. Then he says, “I can cock my finger.” With the attitude of a famous film star, he looks at the camera and says, “You got a close up of that?” And then we see him cock his pinky finger (bends it in a VERY interesting way).

The children are bright, active and talented. We see them participating in all kinds of sports including working on parallel bars with extremely small hand and feet. Others go “bronco riding” on a real horse, practice karate and ski. But in addition to their actions, they are wise philosophers. One boy tells us, “you know, life isn't always perfect – or fair.” And one of the girls help end this adorable video by saying, “It's fun being me.”

Yes, I recommend it.

The Activity Guide

The Activity Guide is written by a speech and language pathologist, Dia V. Norris. It is distributed by *Teacher's Toolbox*. The guide lists numerous activities for both teachers and family involvement. All are designed to help non-disabled children get to know their pals with disabilities. PALS is an acronym used in helping teachers and students to prepare for the inclusion of children who are disabled. It stands for Preparation, Attitude, Learning and Success.

First, it is recommended to view the video. She asks the viewers to close their eyes and just listen to some of the comments – there are many places where you would not be able to tell that the child speaking has any kind of disability.

The teacher is recommended to prepare for the inclusion of the new child and she includes some suggestions regarding the information the teacher might need – basic information plus emergency numbers, important mobility, feeding, positioning, toileting and transportation protocol. She also suggests a schedule/template with the specific protocol as well as who (teacher and other special support persons) are required at specific times. One good suggestion to teachers is that she/he holds a meeting with the student, family members and others who can provide a holistic background on the child. The meeting should include a discussion and documentation of headings such as:

- Strengths and Preferences
- Hopes and Dreams
- Obstacles to Achieving Dreams
- Things to Do (an action plan)

There are suggestions with regard to appropriate and sensitive language. It is People-First Language – where the child is always mentioned prior to using a label or description of the disability.

Also included are a few activities to do with children of different age groups as a means of preparing them for their disabled peer to enter the class. These are the frequently used similar/dissimilar activities, a discussion of the video, making a photo collage of each child with a particular reason why each is special, the importance of compliments, “heroes” with disabilities, etc.

Reference is made to another video, “Inclusive Education: Rediscovering Our Right to Belong” by Norm Kunc (Axis Consultation and Training, Ltd., 1983). Phone: 1 250 754-9939, www.normemma.com. Apparently the couple has additional resources on inclusion.



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