

Americans with Disabilities

Companion Text: The Jakry Kids: Curiosity Shop, by Lin Jakary & illustrated by Ryan Olson

Subject Area & Grade Level: Social Studies, 2nd Grade

Materials: Butcher paper, paints or markers

Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify ways that public spaces support people with disabilities
- Explain why people with disabilities have a right to be accommodated
- Raise their awareness of the presence of people with disabilities in their local community

Introduction

Read the story once through without stopping. Then, return to page 15, and ask students why they think Marlita rode on a scooter instead of just walking home with the Jakry Kids. (She is elderly, and may be somewhat physically limited.)

Procedure

Point out that elderly people are not the only people in our society who may be physically limited. There are people who have physical disabilities of all sorts, and we have all sorts of aids in our society to help people who are disabled to meet their basic needs. Ask students to work with a partner to come up with a list of as many aids they can think of; then, return to class discussion and ask for students to share their ideas. It is likely that you will find that most students list only personal durable medical equipment, i.e. wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, canes, etc., and not public accommodations, i.e. Braille writing, accessible bathrooms, ramps to buildings.

Discussion

Explain that as a society, we need to work to ensure that people who have physical limitations are still able to participate fully in the life of our community. Broaden the students' focus on the personal aids by describing Section III of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. This section basically says that people with disabilities should be able to have access to and enjoyment of all public buildings, just like people without disabilities. The act states that buildings built before 1990 also had to renovate to meet the new law, including adding ramps, elevators, handicapped-accessible bathrooms, etc. Have each student think of a unique place in your local community (including public transit if applicable), and design a picture of a person with a disability in that space. Then, as a class, construct a mural showing people with disabilities present throughout the community. While it may seem simple, many students likely have never drawn a person in a wheelchair or otherwise evidently disabled, and the act of doing so can help them to develop the kind of empathy present in high-functioning democracies.

