

LESSON 1.2h – Reporting in Respectful Language

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

Materials:

- chalk board or flip chart and writing instruments
- computers with access to the Internet (as an in-class activity or homework assignment)

Time:

One or two class sessions with additional homework

Setting:

Large group, individual computer-based research, independent writing

Directions:

Lesson Preparation

Refer to the activity options below and determine implementation modifications as needed. Prepare materials and reserve use of the computer lab as needed.

Lesson Implementation

The purpose of this activity is to encourage the use of appropriate and respectful language when writing or talking to and about people with disabilities. Students will practice the use of respectful language in a journalism writing activity.

Part 1 –

Introduce the topic of using respectful disability language through a large group listing activity. Students will identify all the words and phrases they have heard used to describe people with disabilities. Write the terms on the board or use a flip chart. Explain that part of the purpose of this activity is to identify both the positive and negative uses of language so it is okay to include terms the students consider to be derogatory.

When the list is complete, review each term and place a check next to the items students think are respectful and appropriate to use when communicating to or about people with disabilities. When the list editing is complete, determine how the list will be used as a future resource (posted in the classroom and/or transferred to notebook size paper and distributed as an information sheet). Students will use their list and the “Guidelines” document (part two) as resources for part three of this lesson.

Review the plans for implementing part two of this lesson. Let students know how part two will be implemented – in class or as a homework assignment.

Part 2 –

Either as an in-class exercise or as a homework assignment, have students utilize the internet to access the following resources:

- “Guidelines for Reporting and Writing about People with Disabilities” – A resource tool developed by the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas.
<http://www.lsi.ku.edu/lsi/internal/guidelines.html>.
- The American Press Institute’s Disability / Accessibility Resources Page – This site contains information about disability related topics and guidance on how to cover disability related news stories.
<http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/content/3738.cfm>
- The Center for an Accessible Society – The purpose of this site is to provide journalists with credible information and quotable sources on national disability policy and independent living issues.
<http://www.accessiblesociety.org/>

Part 3 –

Have students utilize the API or Center for Accessible Society’s sites to select a writing topic. Students will write an article suitable for publication in the school or local newspaper. The writing assignment should follow the language guidelines identified by the class and contained in the “Guidelines” document. In addition,

give students guidance on other writing requirements including but not limited to the following:

- page length or word count
- format (single or double spaced, hard or electronic copy, etc.)
- minimum number of primary sources

Working with Younger and Older Students –

When using this activity across grade levels, modify the lesson as needed to include grade-level appropriate technical requirements on the writing activity. For example, a 12th grade group's work would be expected to demonstrate more advanced writing skills than a 9th grade group's work. The assignment can also be modified to fit a variety of class content areas. When implemented in an English class, the choice of topics may be predetermined, or the assignment may change from an informative article to an editorial article. When implemented in a government or history class, the choice of topics may be limited to public policy issues.

Lesson Wrap-up / Follow-up

Review the concepts of respectful and harmful language and how they relate to communicating with or about people with disabilities. Explain when the next lesson will be scheduled. In preparation for the next lesson, encourage students to talk with their family members to begin identifying people they know who have disabilities (family members, friends, and characters from television, books, or movies).

Notes: