

LESSON 1.2m – Language 101

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:

- Language Info Sheet
- Story Outline Worksheet
- Art supplies (see supplemental activity information)

Time:

Two class sessions (extended time required for optional art project)

Setting:

Small group listing and writing activities

Directions:

Lesson Preparation

Prepare copies of the materials listed above. Refer to the suggested implementation for younger and older students and determine implementation modifications as needed. If illustration of the short stories is included in this activity (supplemental activity), determine which art materials will be needed and schedule additional class sessions 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 writing activities.

Introduce the topic of using respectful disability-language through a small group listing activity. Working in groups of three to four students, each group will identify all the words and phrases they have heard used to describe people with disabilities. 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. Allow groups ten minutes to complete their lists. When the lists are complete, have each group edit their list using a highlighter pen to identify the words or phrases they think are respectful and appropriate to use when communicating to or about people with disabilities. When the editing is complete, distribute the Language Info Sheet as a resource tool for the next part of the lesson. Groups will use their lists, and the Info Sheet as a reference when completing the writing assignment below.

Working in the same small groups, students will write a short story including one or more characters with disabilities. Explain to students that the stories will be compiled into a book to be a resource for younger students in the school. The overall goal of their writing activity is to create stories reflecting positive attitudes about people with disabilities while using appropriate and respectful language to tell the story. Distribute the Story Outline Worksheet and have groups complete the worksheet in the time remaining in the first class session.

During the second class session, student groups will use their notes from the Story Outline Worksheet to create a short story. When complete, groups turn in their stories for grading. As needed, groups will edit their work before submitting a final copy to be included in the short story book.

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, an eighth grade group's work would be expected to demonstrate more advanced skill in the use of dialogue than a fifth grade group's work.

When using this activity with students who have already participated in this curriculum, additional variations may be implemented by changing any of the following aspects of the writing activity:

- selecting a different grade-level audience for the stories,
- selecting a different type of disability or different setting to be included in the story development, or
- selecting a different situation or conflict to be included in the story development.

Lesson Wrap-up / Follow-up

Review the concepts of harmful and respectful 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).

Supplementary Activities:

As an additional component of this activity, have students produce illustrations to accompany their story. Depending on the resources available, students may produce their stories and illustrations in a variety of formats such as traditional hard copy with two-dimensional illustrations, or electronic copy using computer animated illustrations or static clip art illustrations.

Challenge the groups to develop their projects with alternate format/accessibility issues in mind. How can the students make both the text and illustrations accessible to students with vision impairments? One solution could be to produce three dimensional pictures by using string or glue to outline the people in the illustrations. If creating an electronic version, an audio description of the illustrations and text could accompany the text and illustrations.

Notes: