

# How to Use the Curriculum

## 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
- C. Understanding differences among individuals and the ways in which attitudes, fears, and stereotypes are formed
- D. Identifying what inclusion means in a family, school, and community
- E. Establishing a culture of respect within the classroom and school

### **Unit 2: Disability Community Identity**

- A. Exploring the historic and changing attitudes related to the Disability Community
- B. Exploring the role of media in how society perceives people with disabilities
- C. Exploring the influence of an emerging Disability Culture
- D. Exploring previously unknown Disability Community connections throughout history

### **Unit 3: Rights and Responsibilities**

- A. Understanding the history of disability discrimination and institutionalization
- B. Learning about disability civil rights laws
- C. Exploring current issues in disability civil rights
- D. Identifying ways to improve accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in home, school and community settings

#### **Unit 4: Accommodations and Adaptive Technology**

- A. Evaluating the accessibility of specific locations, programs and services
- B. Exploring existing accommodations and adaptive technology
- C. Inventing and creating new access ideas and solutions

### Lesson Plans and Resource Materials

The curriculum is divided into four units to address the learning objectives described above. In order to address a wide array of implementation options, the first unit is designed to serve as a “required” set of sequential lessons. The remaining units are “optional” and contain stand-alone lessons.

Unit One is comprised of lessons providing an introduction and awareness building activities relating to the concept of disability as a civil rights movement and cultural identity. As the foundation of the curriculum, lessons in Unit One are designed to be implemented in the order they are presented. After completing Unit One, additional lesson implementation may be designed to fit the academic content and student learning style considerations of individual classes. Units Two, Three and Four are comprised of stand-alone lessons.

Each lesson includes the following sections: learning objectives, materials, suggested implementation time, setting, and directions. Some lesson plans include suggestions for expanding the lesson in a section titled supplementary activities. Student worksheets and other handouts are located at the end of each lesson plan.

The Instructor Guide includes a Glossary of Terms to be used as a reference for students and instructors. In addition, the Instructor Guide includes audio visual materials, magazines, books, and community resources that may be useful when preparing for curriculum implementation.

While using the curriculum, it is recommended that students develop a learning portfolio. Provide each student with a folder or binder. All worksheets and other handouts will become part of the portfolio. In addition, a copy of the Glossary of Terms and specific resources, such as a book resource list, may be added to the portfolio as appropriate. The portfolios become a valuable resource to students and instructors during future study projects regarding minority groups, history, or civics topics.

## Making Connections with Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities

The PRIDE curriculum was designed to efficiently provide educators with the tools necessary to address Vermont's learning standards. Through successful completion of any given lesson, students will address one or more learning standard. As a reference tool for instructors who are selecting lessons to fit the academic content of their class, the Instructor Guide contains reference tables showing the standards addressed in each lesson for the Elementary, Middle School, and High School modules.

## Implementing the Curriculum: Tips for use within one classroom or an entire school

The curriculum is designed for use with students in kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Materials are separated into the following grade level groups: kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Lesson plans offer recommendations for use with older and younger students within the grade levels.

When the curriculum is being implemented in more than one classroom, or on a school-wide basis, instructors should work together to coordinate the implementation schedule across class content areas and/or grade levels. Some sample implementation plans are described below.

### **Individual Classroom Implementation –**

Implement Unit One lessons at the beginning of the school year over a time span of one week to one month. Then implement lesson plans from remaining units throughout the school year by infusing specific lessons into content areas such as history, math, science, and social studies.

### **School-wide Implementation –**

At the elementary school level, select one grade level for initial implementation of Unit One, such as 1<sup>st</sup> grade (following the “younger student” implementation recommendations). Unit One may also be repeated for the benefit of new and returning students at a later grade level, such as 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (following the “older student” implementation recommendations). Lessons from the remaining units could then be individually infused into content areas across the elementary grades, or a different unit could be assigned for implementation in each grade.

At the middle school or high school level, select one class content area for initial implementation of Unit One, such as in a homeroom or social studies class

setting. Individual lessons or entire units may then be implemented by teachers in other content area classes. For example, the Famous People Lesson (2.1) may be implemented in a history class, and the Adaptive Technology Lesson (4.2) may be implemented in a science or industrial arts class.

## The Inclusive Classroom

This curriculum is designed for implementation within general education classrooms where students with and without disabilities are equal participants. When preparing lessons, instructors are encouraged to modify activities as needed in order to provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Consider modifying worksheets and other visual-based learning tools to alternate delivery methods. For example, if a lesson plan includes drawing a two-dimensional picture or map, the activity may be modified to include the use of three-dimensional art mediums. When appropriate, including students with and without disabilities in the process of creating lesson plan modifications is a valuable learning experience.

## Parent and Community Involvement

Many lesson plans include recommendations for including parents and other community partners as guest speakers. Utilize the Letter to Parents to inform parents about the curriculum and to recruit potential guest speakers or classroom volunteers. Presenters may also be recruited by contacting disability-related organizations in your community. Refer to the organization lists for ideas on locating presenters. When working with community partners, utilize the Letter to Presenters as a template. Keep in mind that presenters may need guidance on preparing information in alternate formats, and may also need disability accommodations.

## Alternatives to Disability Simulation Activities

As educational materials focusing on disability awareness have evolved over time, the use of disability simulation activities has become a common feature. Advocates of simulation exercises insist that hands on activities are powerful learning tools. However, for a variety of reasons, members of the Disability Community frequently oppose the use of disability simulation activities.

One argument against the use of simulation activities is that “wearing” a disability for a brief period of time trivializes the barriers people with disabilities experience in daily life. If this is the only type of activity offered, participants have no

opportunity to learn about the positive aspects of the Disability Community from a cultural, social, and political group perspective.

In addition, most disability simulation activities focus on visible disabilities which are often already more easily acknowledged and understood than hidden disabilities. The lack of attention to many types of hidden disabilities only serves to perpetuate the myths and stereotypes surrounding what a child or adult already has difficulty understanding. For example, how many people would try to tell a person who uses a wheelchair to “just get over it,” but that is an all too common response encountered by individuals with behavioral/mental health disabilities.

Finally, compared to other multicultural or diversity educational materials, it would be unimaginable to expect a student to “wear” a different race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation for a day. Likewise, how would a student “wear” epilepsy, diabetes, bipolar disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder for the day as they often are asked to “wear” a mobility, hearing, or vision impairment?

This curriculum challenges educators to move beyond the traditional disability awareness activities and explore new alternatives. Where this curriculum does include activities asking students to use, observe and evaluate potential access barriers, the students’ learning experiences may be enhanced through a variety of methods.

First, when selecting the instructional method to best meet the needs and interests of a particular class, consider the following factors:

- Student Grade Level – Younger students may benefit from more tangible and hands-on activities.
- Type of Activity – Determine whether the activity would best be implemented by offering students the opportunity to experiment with their proposed access solutions. Keep in mind that experimentation can be achieved by inviting a person with a disability to test the proposed solution rather than having a non-disabled student attempt to simulate the disability in order to evaluate the solution’s effectiveness.

Second, when planning an activity offering students a first person point of view learning experience, experiment with the following implementation options:

- Guest Speaker(s) – Invite a community member with a disability to talk to students about the various types of access solutions they use at home, school, and work, and in the community.

- Student Leaders – Invite a student with a disability to describe the various types of access solutions he/she uses at home and school, and in the community.
- Media Resources – Show a film or read a book about a person(s) with a specific type of disability who would be a potential user of a student-designed access solution.
- Class Discussion Sessions – Instead of “trying on the disability,” discuss the potential simulation activity to provide students with a reference as to the type of access barriers an individual with a specific type of disability may encounter.
- Focused Simulations – When appropriate, conduct a simulation activity. For example, when implementing the elementary level adaptive technology lesson (4.2e), it would be appropriate to have students experiment playing the board game while using one of the recommended methods of simulating a visual impairment. Having students simulate the visual impairment for all or part of the school day would not be appropriate as that would not help students focus their problem solving skills on the identified task.

Recognizing that instructors may not have an in-depth knowledge of all types of disabilities, this curriculum challenges instructors to learn along with their students. The following information is offered only as a general reference to assist instructors in facilitating discussions about the appropriate accommodations that individuals with various types of disabilities may use in their home, school, work, and community. This information is intended to spark creative exploration and dialogue between students and teachers; it is not intended to be a recipe for simulation exercises and it is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of disabilities. With each type of disability, help students identify both the stereotypes (positive and negative attitudes) they would encounter and the appropriate accommodations they would utilize in daily life if they were living with the specific disability.

### **Behavior/Mental Health Disabilities –**

People with behavioral/mental health disabilities may experience a wide array of impact on their daily lives depending on their specific type of disability. It is difficult to describe racing thoughts, visual/auditory hallucinations, or other sensations experienced by people with behavioral/mental health disabilities. It is also difficult to describe the intended impact and unwanted side-effects of medications used by some people with behavior/mental health disabilities. However, instructors may be able to engage students in discussions concerning the negative stereotypes and stigma people with behavior/mental health

disabilities encounter. Students should be encouraged to explore their role in perpetuating or eliminating these attitudinal barriers.

### **Cognitive Disabilities –**

Cognitive disabilities may impact a person's life in a wide variety of ways depending on his/her specific type of disability. Discussing the following ideas with students may help them understand what it is like to live with a cognitive disability: One way to understand how some individuals with information processing disabilities experience the world is to imagine listening to a recording of a familiar poem or short story in which words have been omitted or the background noise makes it difficult for the listener to concentrate. Imagining how it would feel to read a story where certain letters are blurred, printed backwards, or changed to other letters may give students another example of how individuals with some disabilities experience the world. Engage students in a conversation about the types of accommodations individuals with cognitive disabilities may use in their home, school or work environments

### **Hidden Disabilities –**

The topic of hidden disabilities includes epilepsy, fibromyalgia, diabetes, asthma, allergies, environmental illness/multiple chemical sensitivity, and many other health impairments. Individuals with behavior/mental health disabilities and cognitive disabilities may also consider themselves to have a hidden disability. Each person with a hidden disability may experience different impact on his/her daily life and may utilize various types of appropriate accommodations.

### **Blindness and Low Vision –**

Discussing the following ideas may help students understand what it is like to live with a vision impairment. Include discussion about the types of accommodations that may be utilized in various settings. Ask students to imagine going through their morning routine wearing a blindfold. How would the students modify their routine or change the way they do certain tasks? Ask students to imagine doing their school work while wearing sunglasses, or goggles that were coated with petroleum jelly. How would the students create accommodations to complete their assignments? Ask students to imagine participating in a sports event while wearing glasses with the lenses covered except for a small, hole-punch size hole opening in the center of each lens. How would the students create new ways to play the sport while experiencing a limited field of vision?

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing –**

People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing may experience hearing loss of volume and/or sound frequency. Discussing the following ideas may help students understand what it is like to live with a hearing loss. Ask students to

imagine wearing ear plugs during a class. Ask students to imagine having a conversation with a friend while sitting at opposite ends of a table in a noisy school cafeteria. Discuss the ways students might “capture” both the academic information and the social network/peer group information that might be presented in each setting.

### **Hand Mobility Impairment –**

Discussing the following ideas with students may help them understand the types of accommodations and adaptive equipment used by people with decreased hand mobility and/or sensation. Ask students to think about wearing a pair of mittens. Then ask them to imagine how they would complete a variety of tasks such as brushing their teeth, feeding and/or grooming their pet, or loading a dishwasher if they had a hand mobility impairment. How would the students make adaptations to the way they completed the tasks, or create new tools to make the tasks easier?

### **Mobility Impairment –**

People with mobility impairments may have a variety of types of disabilities. They may walk with or without assistive devices. They may use a wheelchair during all or part of the day. Ask students to imagine walking with coins or pea gravel in their shoes, or wearing a heavy ankle weight on one or both legs. What choices and changes would they make in their daily routine? Would they choose to use different assistive devices or accommodations in various settings? What locations in their daily life would or would not be accessible to them if they had a mobility impairment?