

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: REFRAMING LEARNING DISABILITIES



Grades 4-7

Thinking Outside the Box: Reframing Learning Disabilities English & Social Studies

Purpose of the Lesson:

Learning disabilities can impair individuals' abilities to do certain things, but can also unlock great potential for them in other areas. This lesson helps students see that people with learning disabilities can excel in ways they might not have previously been able to imagine. Through writing an investigative report on a famous/historical person with a learning disability, students will unpack their biases about learning disabilities and learn how to reframe these perspectives. The conclusion of this lesson explores how reframing can help us unlearn biases we might hold and reduce stigma.

Curriculum Competencies:

Social Studies

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions (Grade 8/9/10/11)
- Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments at particular times and places (Grade 8)
- Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their historical significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (Grade 9/10/11)

At grade 12, Social Studies splits off into different curriculum categories. This lesson can still be utilized with grade 12 students.

Visual Arts

- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts (Grade 8/9/10/11/12)
- Recognize how language constructs personal, social, and cultural identity (Grade 8/9/10/11/12)
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world (Grade 8/9/10/11/12)
- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways (Grade 8/9)
- Transform ideas and information to create original texts (Grade 8/9/10)
- Access information for diverse purposes and from a variety of sources to inform writing (Grade 10/11/12)

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First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Video

[See Dyslexia Differently](#) - **British Dyslexia Association**

Guiding Questions:

- Did you learn anything new about dyslexia through watching this video?
- What does the word "disability" mean to you?
- What do you think of when you hear the word "dyslexia"?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Queue up video/set up projector

1. Start off by discussing what learning disabilities are with your class. Ask your students what learning disabilities they're aware of and what they know about each one. Ensure that all of your students feel safe in this conversation, especially if you have students in your class who have a diagnosed learning disability. Remind your students about the importance of language when they're discussing these things.

2. Have the students watch the video "See Dyslexia Differently" This can be found [HERE](#).

3. Pause the video and use the Guiding Question to speak discussion. Continue writing things down on the board so your students have a reference point during the conversation. On one half of the board, write down the things they thought about dyslexia and learning disabilities in general before they watched the video. On the other half, write down what they have come to understand about dyslexia/learning disabilities through watching the video.

4. Discuss with your students how stigma around learning disabilities can occur. Explain to them that, when we don't understand something, it can be a lot easier to judge it. Learning about different people's lived experiences can help us overcome the stigma we might hold about certain people or groups. You can ask your students if they feel differently now about learning disabilities than they did before they watched the video/had this conversation.

5. Explore the concept of "reframing" with your students. Ask if they have heard this word before/if they know what it means. Discuss the definition with your students as being "changing our perspective on something to a more positive understanding on that thing". Ask them how the concept of "reframing" can be applied to our understandings of learning disabilities. Use our downloadable resource (can be found [HERE](#)) about changing our understanding of DISability to be DIVERSE-ability. Explain to your students that reframing our language in this way is a powerful tool to overcoming stigma around learning disabilities.

6. Explain the curriculum connections to your students. Either write down this list or pull it up on the projector. On this list are names of historical figures and celebrities who have learning disabilities.

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

- Charles Darwin - dyslexia
- Agatha Christie - dysgraphia
- Albert Einstein - dyscalculia/autism spectrum disorder
- George Washington - dyslexia
- Leonardo da Vinci - dyslexia/ADHD
- Keira Knightley - dyslexia
- Orlando Bloom - dyslexia
- Michael Phelps - ADHD
- Whoopi Goldberg - dyslexia
- Steven Spielberg - dyslexia
- Justin Timberlake - ADD and OCD
- Jamie Oliver - dyslexia
- Keanu Reeves - dyslexia
- Vince Vaughn - ADD and dyslexia
- Anderson Cooper - dyslexia
- Cher - dyslexia

Tell your students that they will be doing some research on these famous people who have learning disabilities and that they are going to share these presentations with the class.

7. Have your students do some research on the person they've selected. They should try to research as much as possible about the learning disability they have as well as their successes in their fields. Have the students create a presentation to deliver to the rest of the class about the person they chose, the learning disability they have and how they've been able to overcome the obstacles their learning disability presented to be successful at their craft.

Lesson Closure: After each of the students has presented, facilitate a whole-class discussion about the activity. Allow the students to reflect on their experience in doing this research and writing the presentations. Discuss with your students how stigma around learning disabilities and mental health can intersect and how understanding this can positively impact the mental well-being of individuals with learning disabilities. Explain to your students that when we see people for their strengths, not the things that can possibly limit them, we are empowering them and overcoming stigma.