

UNDERSTANDING LEARNING DISABILITIES STIGMA



Grades 4-7 Understanding Learning Disabilities Stigma Health Education & Visual Art

Purpose of the Lesson:

Learning disabilities are not visible disabilities, but just because we can't see them, it doesn't mean they aren't there and don't impact students immensely. For students who don't have a learning disability, it can be hard to understand what they actually are and this lack of understanding can lead to stigmatization. This lesson is intended to inform students about what learning disabilities are and how we can reframe our understandings of DIS-ability to become DIVERSE-ability. Through a visual art activity, students will apply this reframing concept by transforming one object into another. The closure of this lesson highlights the importance of understanding the things that make us different.

Curriculum Competencies:

Health Education

- Describe and assess strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Describe and apply strategies that promote a safe and caring environment (Grade 4/5)
- Explore strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community (Grade 6/7)
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being (Grade 4)
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (Grade 5/6/7)
- Describe factors that positively influence mental well-being and self-identity (Grade 4)
- Explore and describe how personal identities adapt and change in different settings and situations (Grade 5/6)
- Explore the impact of transition and change on identities (Grade 7)

Visual Arts

- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to other experiences (Grade 4)

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Visual Arts

- Reflect on creative processes as an individual and as a group, and make connections to other experiences (Grade 5/6)
- Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world (Grade 5/6)
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism to express meaning through the arts (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Describe and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent (Grade 4/5/6)
- Reflect on works of art and creative processes to understand artists' intentions (Grade 7)
- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences (Grade 7)
- Describe, interpret and respond to works of art (Grade 7)

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

[Is Dyslexia a Learning Disability or a Learning Ability?](#) - **Gabi Renola**

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 "Is Dyslexia a Learning Disability or a Learning Ability?" This can be found [HERE](#).

3. Pause the video and use the Guiding Questions to spark 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.

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

6. Explain the curriculum connections to your students. Show them some examples of this artist's portrayals of one object becoming another one.

Here are links to two websites showing the work of artists who create pieces similar to the ones the students will be creating

https://www.boredpanda.com/this-artist-transforms-everyday-objects-into-art/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

(Artist: [Tatiana Khlopkova](#))

https://www.boredpanda.com/everyday-object-art-faces-victor-nunes/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

(Artist: [Victor Nunes](#))

7. Facilitate a whole-class discussion about the activity. Allow the students to reflect on their experience in creating these art pieces and share their art pieces with the whole class, if they want to. Ask the students how they can use these values to better inform their social media usage.

Accommodation/modification:

- Students who are visually impaired may choose to verbally explain to you how they would represent the concept of reframing - you can write down what they explain to you

Follow-up Activity: Invite the students to share their art pieces with partners, in small groups, or with the class. Suggest that students pose engaging questions to their peers about their art pieces.

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Some questions to pose could include:

- How do you feel your image represents reframing?
- Do you think this activity changed your perspective on the way we see things?
- How did this activity change your understanding of learning disabilities?

Lesson Closure: Facilitate a whole-class discussion about the activity. Allow the students to reflect on their experience in creating these art pieces. 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. Invite your students to share their responses to some of the questions they discussed with their peers.