

Cayley Ann Rush  
Teaching Tolerance/Social Justice Activity

**Name of the Article:** “What is a Disability?”

**Population:** Teaching young, able students what a disability is

**Objective:** students will increase their knowledge about disabilities and what they mean, along with learning ways to communicate to people with disabilities

**Age/Grade Level:** K-2, 3-5

**Procedure and Introduction:** The main procedure for this teaching tolerance is teaching young students what disabilities are and how to communicate with people with disabilities through asking questions and discussing. One of the first questions to discuss is identifying anyone that we know who is disabled, physically or mentally specifically one of the students’ friends or family members. To encourage the students, I will first describe my friend from elementary school, Dillan, who looked, acted, and learned different from me, but was still a very good friend by encouraging, helping, and sharing with me. After the students shared their personal experiences with people with disabilities, I will ask the students if they have any particular questions about disabilities and record them on a chart and try my best to answer them to the best of my abilities. Throughout this lesson, it is important to inform the students that people can look, act, and learn differently, however there are some things in common. All people want to be treated with respect and kindness, through waiting for someone to finish speaking before answering, look at people in the eye and acknowledge to the speaker that you are listening by nodding, smiling, and answering their questions. Another way to be kind to others is playing with a fellow student who is playing by themselves and reporting to me or another teacher or adult if they notice any student being bullied by others.

**Possible Adaptations:** I would adapt this procedure by emphasizing more on what it means to have a disability and to respect those who do have a disability. I believe that it is very important, especially for younger students, to learn, adapt to, and practice being respectful and kind to those who are different from them, physically or academically.

**Reflection:** Overall, I do enjoy this procedure and lesson. I think it asks the right questions for the students to process and note differences from others but celebrating their differences as well by teaching kindness and respect. This is a topic and discussion I believe needs to be had because younger students’ minds are more acceptable to change and are eager to learn new things. Once they have had this discussion, they will live out what they have learned as they become older and teach their peers the same thing.

**Reference:** <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/what-is-a-disability>