

More Alike Than Different

Overview

Two creative activities to help students understand inclusion and acceptance of individuals with disabilities.

1. Stand up. Sit Down.
2. Different on the outside. Same on the inside.

Logistics

- Adult presenters: educator or volunteers
- Grade levels: early learners or elementary school students
- Audience: school-wide assembly or within classrooms

Goal

Creatively engage youth through interactive, thoughtful activity and reflection that people with disabilities are much more like other students than they are different from them.

Activity One: **Stand up. Sit Down.**

Instructions for students

- A series of statements will be read out loud.
- After each statement, quickly stand up if the statement applies to you.
 - *Note: Another option instead of standing is to present the game as, “Hands up. Hands down,” adapting it by asking students to “raise their hands” instead of standing.*
- Look around the room at who is standing and sitting.
- Those standing should sit again between each statement.
- This is a silent activity.
- Notice your reactions.
- There will be time to talk about the activity at the end.

Statements

- Listed below are several illustrative examples. These can be tailored and adapted to fit your audience.
- It's important that several of the statements apply to the students with disabilities in the classroom, so that all students can visually see the similarities between one and other.
- Stand up if you:
 - have a pet cat
 - watch TV

-
- know some sign language
 - love to color
 - have a favorite candy of M&M's
 - were born in a foreign country
 - go to karate
 - have ridden in a limousine
 - love to watch football
 - play board games
 - have gym as your favorite class
 - have brown eyes
 - drank milk for breakfast
 - ever had a cast
 - speak more than one language
 - have ever ridden a horse

Ask students to share their thoughts

- What did they notice during the game?
- Were you surprised by anything?

Activity Two: Different on the outside. Same on the inside.

Materials

- Two jars of M&M's candy:
 - One of all the same color
 - Second with M&M's of many colors
- **Optional:** Bag of mini M&M's for each student

Agenda

1. Presenter Question: *“What is the best part of the M&M?”*

Presenter or audience answers: *“THE CHOCOLATE!”*

Presenter Statement: *“The color of the M&M does not really matter, does it?”*

2. Presenter asks for or selects a volunteer.

Volunteer is then instructed to close their eyes and taste an M&M.

Presenter asks volunteer to *“try to guess what color it is.”*

When volunteer guesses, the presenter says, *“You couldn't tell, right?”*

Invite all students to look around, share that people are like M&Ms.

It doesn't matter what we look like on the outside, it's what's on the inside that counts.

3. Presenter then holds up the jar of the one color of M&M's, say, “We all look a little different on the outside, we are different heights, have different colors of eyes and hair. But like the M&M's, even though we look different on the outside, we are the same on the inside. So why would anyone be treated differently for how they look?”

4. One way people are different is that they have a disability.

Presenter Question: “What is a disability?”

Presenter or audience answers: “They have body parts that work differently.”

5. **OPTION:** At this point in the presentation, a parent could share information about their child with a disability. For example, a parent of a child with down syndrome might share facts about their child, such as they love ice cream, but don't like broccoli. **Another option** is for the student to be a self-advocate and share information about what they like and don't like, done with the goal to show universal similarities.

6. **Presenter:** “Sometimes students with disabilities are left out of games or activities or even made fun of because of their differences.”

What are ways to be a good friend?

- ✓ Don't stare, instead make eye contact and smile
- ✓ Say “hi” or “hello”
- ✓ Tell them your name and what grade you are in
- ✓ Ask them their name, remember it
- ✓ Include them, such as invite them to play or sit by you at lunch or an activity
- ✓ Don't make fun of them or call them names
- ✓ If they are being bullied, help them move away from the situation
- ✓ Learn some sign language
- ✓ Give high fives or fist pumps
- ✓ Be patient if it takes someone longer to do something

Presenter Question for audience: ask if they have other ideas on how to be a good friend?

7. **OPTION:** Provide each student with a bag (regular size or mini) bag of M&M's.

Special thank you to Paula Burckhard, of Minot, N.D., parent to four children born with Down syndrome — Grace, Bella, Nolé, and Simas — for creating these activities and generously giving permission to share so that all students can benefit and learn about differences in a creative and engaging way.