

CHANGING THE PERCEPTION OF DISABILITY

**AN ACTIVITY BOOK FOR CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE AGES 7-15**

Created by Girl Scout Stella Kaval

WELCOME

Hi! My name is Stella Kaval and I have been a Girl Scout since kindergarten. For my Girl Scout Gold Award project, I will aid in changing the perception of disability. Just because someone is physically disabled doesn't mean they aren't just like you and me. Together, we can change the conversation around disability, break down barriers, and promote inclusion.

This program will take you and your group on an inspiring and empowering journey. Through hands-on activities and discussions, you will uncover the problems that stem from disability unawareness, discover the importance of inclusion, and realize the impact you can make in your community.

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ACTIVITY 1

BE A DICTIONARY!

15–20 min

ABOUT

Brainstorm definitions for important terms

MATERIALS

- 3 large sheets of paper
- tape
- sticky notes (3 colors)
- markers

STEPS

On each of the 3 large sheets of paper, write one of the following words in large letters:

- disability
- cerebral palsy
- handicap
- wheelchair
- ability
- accessibility
- assistive technology
- inclusion
- empathy



Depending on the age of participants, choose words they will be likely to understand. Also, look up the words online so you, the leader, can guide the group.

Assign a color of sticky note to each word (e.g., the word ability is green sticky notes). Then, hand out three sticky notes, one of each color, per person.

Give participants 5 minutes to write about the word on each their 3 sticky notes. Tell them they can write a sentence, draw a picture, or do bullet points. Here are examples:

word: ability

One of my abilities is dancing.

word: wheelchair

My friend Sally uses a wheelchair.

rights
wheelchair ability
classmate school
impaired support
team
disability
everyone creative talented
cognitive
equality
walker learning

Example:



Tell the group to put their sticky notes on their corresponding large sheets of paper taped on a wall.

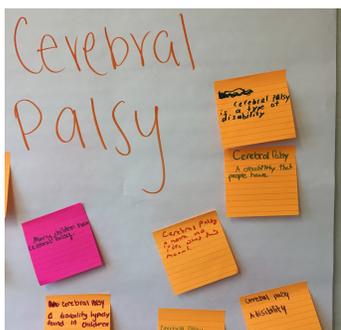
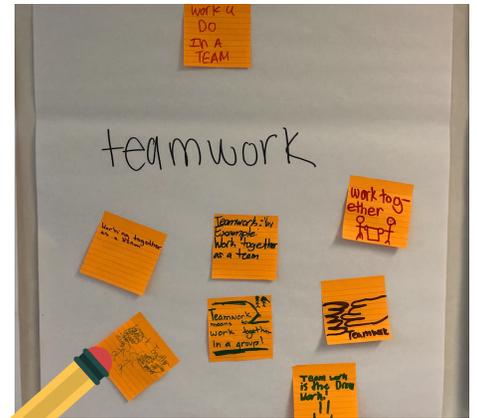
Once participants have read what other group members wrote, generate a discussion about disability using these guiding questions:

What are the similarities and differences between these sticky notes?

Why do you think these words are important to understand?

What questions do you have about these words?

ACTIVITY IN ACTION



ACTIVITY 2

A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

30-35 min

ABOUT

Through exploring, learn about the importance of inclusion in a physical space

MATERIALS

- sheets of paper
- clipboards
- pencils/pens
- a safe space to explore
- piece of poster paper
- tape

STEPS

Tell the participants to split up into groups of 3-5.



If you are with younger children, make sure each group has an adult to supervise. If there are not enough adults, tell the participants to stay close

Hand out a sheet of paper, a writing utensil and a clip board to each group. Explain to all the participants the meaning of accessibility. Tell them to make two columns on the paper. Title one "Accessible Places" and the other "Non-accessible Places."

Accessible Places	Non-accessible Places
• make	• make
• a	• a
• list	• list
• of	• of
• accessible	• non-accessible
• places	• places

Tell the participants that they have 15 minutes to walk around and fill out their papers.



Ensure that each group has a timer or watch so they know when to return. If each group doesn't have this, tell them they cannot walk out of your sight.



Poster Example:

Accessible Places

- The entrance outside the school has a ramp
- There are doors with buttons to open them
- The sidewalks in this area are smooth
- Big hallways make it easier for wheelchairs to move

Non-accessible Places

- There is no ramp by some stairs
- The elevator is far from the classrooms
- Some doors don't have handles
- Bumpy sidewalk

Once the groups return to the meeting space, ask them about what they found. Tape a large poster onto the wall and write down the group's findings.



If there's time: consider writing letters to school administrators, architects, etc. about non-accessible places in your area.

Letter Example:

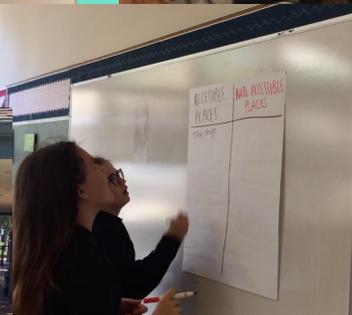
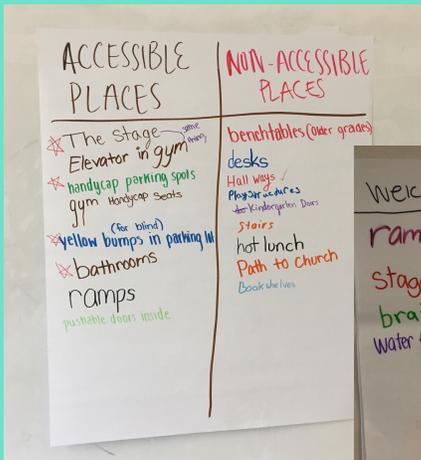


Dear Principal Johnston,

My name is Adam Smith and I am a 5th grader. With my class, I did an activity where I looked for accessible and non-accessible places at our school. I found that the stairs by the west entrance of the school do not have a ramp. I was wondering why that is. Could we put a ramp there? I want to include everyone at our school, no matter their ability. Maybe we could schedule a meeting to talk about it. Thank you.

From,
Adam Smith

ACTIVITY IN ACTION



ACTIVITY 3

ALL ABOUT ME

25-30 min

ABOUT

Write about what makes you, you to help recognize that a disability does not define who a person is and what they can achieve.

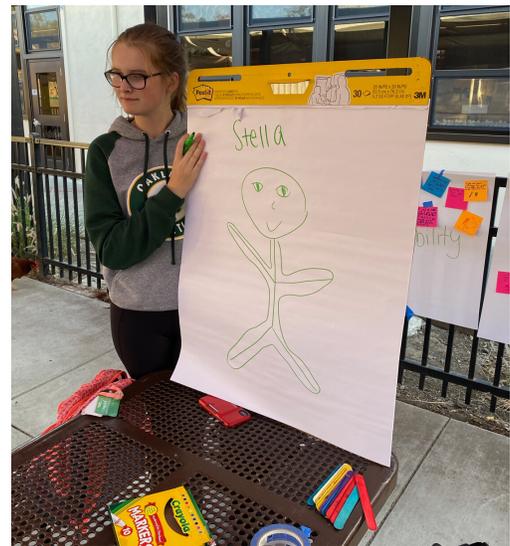
MATERIALS

- Butcher paper
- Tape
- Markers

STEPS

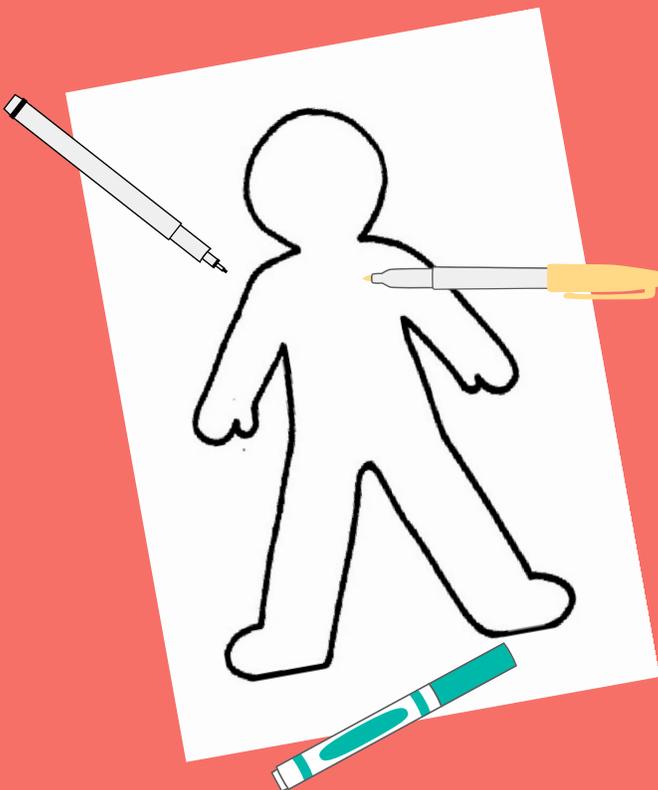
Give each participant a large sheet of butcher paper. Tell them to find a partner and spread out.

Next, tell them to trace draw a simple body, like this:

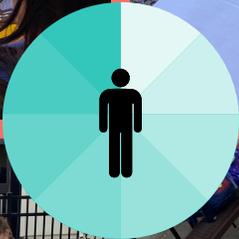
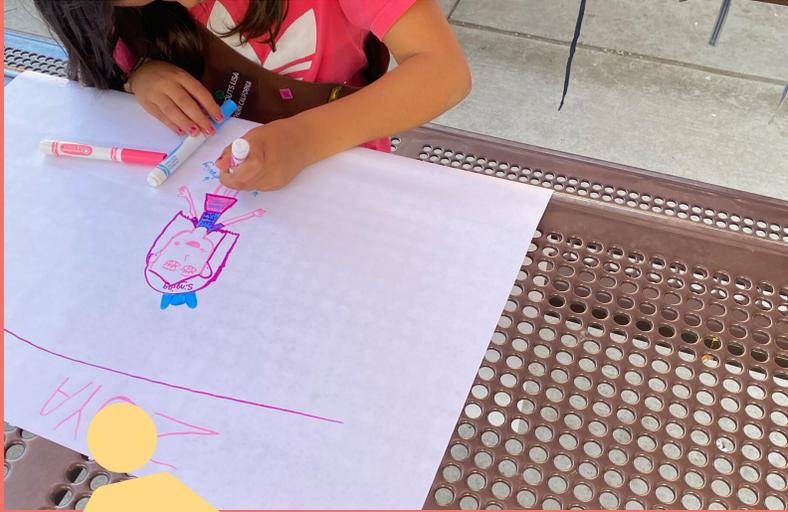


Tell the group to write one of their abilities for each item they add to their body. This includes clothes, hair accessories, jewelry, and etc.

Examples: snowboarder, reader, writer, painter



ACTIVITY IN ACTION



Once the group has finished working on their posters, give each participant 5-10 stickers. Tell the group to walk around for 5 minutes and look at other people's posters. If they see a trait they admire in another person, tell them to put a sticker on it, like so:



Afterwards, tell the group to sit in a circle. Have a discussion about the way people perceive others. Use the following discussion questions.

What traits did you put on your poster?

What traits did you put a sticker on?

Why is it important to see people as all their traits, not just one?

Oftentimes, people with disabilities are not thought about beyond having a disability. How would you feel if somebody characterized you by only one of your many abilities?



Encourage more participants to speak using the "let's answer this question in a circle" method

ACTIVITY 4

WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECH?

30-35 min

ABOUT

Learn about the technology surrounding disability to discover the importance of accessibility

MATERIALS

- Poster paper
- Markers
- Access to internet on devices

STEPS

Tell the participants to split up into groups of 3-5.

Assign one example of assistive technology to each group. Here are examples:

- adaptive keyboards
- adaptive eating utensils
- text-to-speech
- screen readers
- braille
- adaptive cars
- crutches
- wheelchairs
- walkers

Tell the participants that they have 15 minutes to create a mini poster about their assigned piece of technology. The poster should include a picture, a description of the technology, and examples of its use. Tell participants that they should use the internet to learn about their assigned technology.

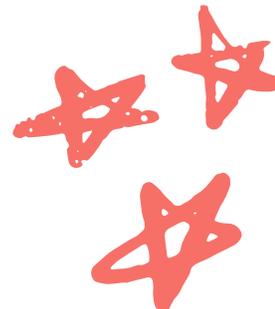


After the posters are complete, give each group 3 minutes to present in front of everyone. Encourage the participants to ask questions.

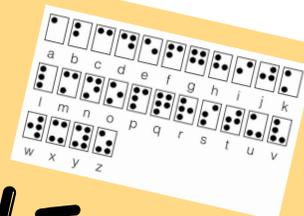
EXAMPLES OF POSTERS:

ADAPTIVE KEYBOARDS

- may have bigger buttons
- different numbers/letters depending on abilities
- reduce wrist movement



invented by
Louis Braille!



BRaille

Braille is a system of touch reading and writing for blind persons in which raised dots represent the letters of the alphabet.

Example: a spoon that moves while a person is eating so it doesn't shake too much

ADAPTIVE EATING UTENCILS

Adaptive Eating Utensils are designed to assist individuals who experience difficulty feeding themselves



ACTIVITY 5

TRADING CARDS

15-20 min

ABOUT

Learn about influential people with disabilities around the world

MATERIALS

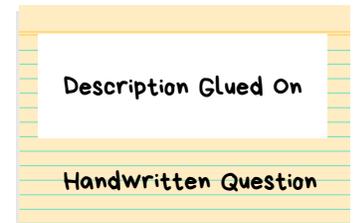
- Flash cards
- Printout of "Amazing Abilities"
- Scissors
- Glue-sticks
- Markers

The front of the flash card will have the person's picture and name. The back will have the description of their profession. Additionally, participants should write a question on the back for the person. Here is a guide:

Front



Back



STEPS

Print out "Amazing Abilities" in color (page 13) and cut along the black lines.



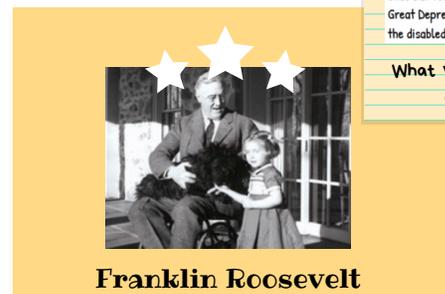
If you are working with a larger group, you may need to print out multiple copies

Hand out scissors, writing utensils, and glue-sticks to each group. Explain to the participants that they will be making trading cards for famous people with different abilities. Now, give each participant one flash card and one square from the "Amazing Abilities" printout.

Tell the participants that they have 10-15 minutes to work on their cards.

Afterwards, encourage participants to share their card's information with others.

Example:



In 1921, Franklin Roosevelt was a successful politician when he got polio which left him with paralyzed legs. At a time when disabled people were often sent to asylums, Roosevelt won the hearts of the voters, who elected him president not once but four times! Roosevelt led the country through the Great Depression and World War II, and always advocated for the disabled.

What was it like being president of the United States?

AMAZING ABILITIES



Franklin Roosevelt

In 1921, Franklin Roosevelt was a successful politician when he got polio which left him with paralyzed legs. At a time when disabled people were often sent to asylums, Roosevelt won the hearts of the voters, who elected him president not once but four times! Roosevelt led the country through the Great Depression and World War II, and always advocated for the disabled.



Stephen Hawking

At the age of 21, Stephen Hawking was diagnosed with ALS. He was told he wouldn't live to see 25. However, for 30 years, he was a professor of mathematics at Cambridge University. He's best known, however, for his popular books on science. He's also well known for his important work in black holes and relativity.



Tanni Grey-Thompson

Born with spina bifida, Tanni Grey-Thompson is one of the United Kingdom's most successful disabled athletes. She's won more than 20 medals in the Paralympic Games as a wheelchair racer. Following her racing career, she's sat on boards of several foundations that promote sports and the disabled. Now, she is a member of Parliament!



Helen Keller

Helen Keller was an American author, political activist and campaigner for deaf and blind charities. She became the first deaf-blind person to attain a bachelor's degree and became an influential campaigner for social, political and disability issues. She won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964.

ACTIVITY 6

PEN PALS!

15-20 min

ABOUT

Write letters to develop empathy and meet new friends

MATERIALS

- Sheets of paper
- Envelopes
- Writing utensils
- Stickers/decorations (optional)

Walk through these instructions to aid the group in letter writing:

- Write at the top of your paper: Dear New Pen Pal,
- Next, write a welcoming sentence with your name and grade.
- Now, write about your hobbies and interests. Maybe your pen pal will have the same ones!
- You can now ask questions to your pen pal about what they like to do or what they are working on because we are all working on something no-matter our abilities.
- Finally, ask a question about meeting them in person at school during a break period or about continuing writing letters.

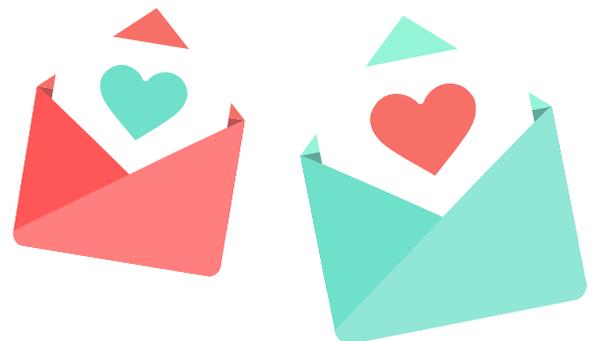
STEPS

Tell the group that they will be writing letters to other kids their age who have different abilities than they do. Let them know that some of these students have special educational needs, but they are also a lot like you and me.



These notes will be delivered to the special ed class at the participants' school. If there is no special ed program at their school, research other schools in your area that do.

Hand out a sheet of paper, a writing utensil and an envelope to each person.



ACTIVITY 7

FIELD TRIP

ABOUT

Go out and get active in your community to learn more about disability and inclusion

MATERIALS

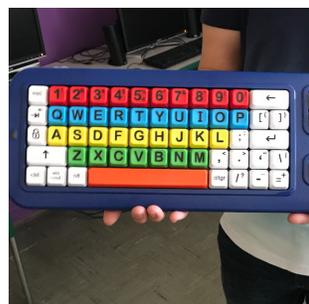
- Transportation
- Location of choice

ACTIVITY IN ACTION

VISITING ABILITY NOW BAY AREA

Ability Now Bay Area is licensed by the State of California and provides services to adults with developmental disabilities. (for more information visit

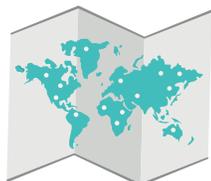
abilitynowbayarea.org)



STEPS

Research centers in your area online that provide resources for people with disabilities. Contact ones that offer tours or need volunteers.

Go with your group and meet people with disabilities to learn more!



If you are struggling finding a location near you, try using Google Maps and typing in "disability resources near me"

ACTIVITY 8

READING CORNER

25-35 min

ABOUT

Read a chapter from "Tell Me the Number before Infinity" and have a group discussion

MATERIALS

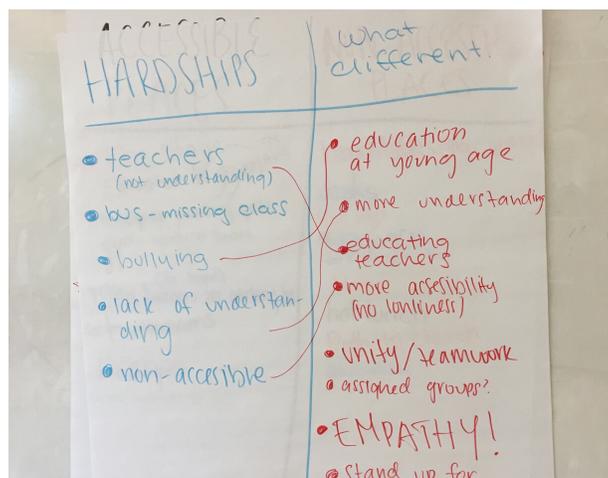
- Printouts of "Pushing Me On"

STEPS

Hand out the printouts of "Pushing Me On." Tell the group the chapter or let participants take turns reading.

After reading, create a list of the hardships Becky faced and possible solutions.

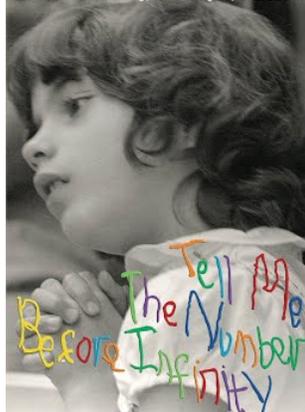
ACTIVITY IN ACTION



ABOUT

Tell Me the Number Before Infinity

The story of a girl with a quirky mind, an eccentric family, and oh yes, a disability



Becky Taylor and Dena Taylor

Tell Me the Number Before Infinity describes life of having a disability in 60 short chapters. Although several books on disabilities already exist, this book offers perspectives from a mother (Dena Taylor) and her daughter (Becky Taylor). The title is Becky's answer to her father's question to her as to whether infinity is an odd or an even number. She was four years old at the time, the same age as she was in the cover photo.

for more information visit tellymethenumberbeforeinfinity.com

PUSHING ME ON - BECKY TAYLOR

At the school meeting before ninth grade, my math teacher announces he can't give me extra time for in-class tests. He refuses to change the way he teaches. My mother tells him that it is the law, and he has to make reasonable accommodations. He doesn't care. He's not going to change. I groan in silence, knowing that he is the only one who teaches advanced honors algebra. All the other teachers at the meeting say they are okay about having me in their classes.

I am the only one who comes here on a school bus, a special bus for disabled students. When we stop at a red light, the driver leans on her horn until the light changes. When a certain commercial comes on the radio, she'll sing along. Sometimes, the bus is late getting me to school. This becomes a point of contention between me and my first-period teachers. When my mother and I tell the bus driver that I need to be at school on time, she complains about our streets being too narrow.

I try to start a club for students with disabilities. I have an idea for a disability awareness day. Some of my teachers think it's a good idea too. I put out a call on the daily announcements for interested students to meet in a certain classroom. While the announcement is being read, I hear sneers from the students around me, like, "Who would want to go to that?" I keep my mouth closed. I am the only person who shows up at the meeting. This is the one wheelchair-accessible high school in the county. I know I'm not the only student with a disability. If I were, I wouldn't have even tried to start a club.

My problems with the other students intensify this year. When I drive my scooter through the halls, I hear "Missed" from someone who has thrown something in my direction. One day as I sit on the grass to eat lunch, there are students on the roof of the building throwing gummy bears at me. I get up and leave.

One such lunch time, I go into my academic counselor's office. She gets me all excited about a biology class that focuses on ecology. Three biology teachers will co-teach it. I come home feeling something good is coming out of my loneliness, and I share this excitement with my mother.

Many things go wrong with the biology class. One teacher has a habit of asking math questions (e.g., what is the name for one followed by a hundred zeros?). I am often the only student who knows the answer or at least the only one who raises her hand. Because I raise my hand so frequently, the teachers ask the principal to tell me not to ask questions in class. My speech is too slow and takes up class time. If I have something to say, I should wait until lunch time. (This sets many things in motion, including the addition of speech therapy to horseback riding as another weekly extra-curricular activity for me.) The principal tells this to the aide who works with me, and the aide tells me. I am furious about this because I don't get a lunch break anyway. When the teachers "lose" two of my weekly assignments and give me an "F" for the first half of the semester, that is the final straw.

I switch to a different biology class taught by the only other biology teacher at the school. After I change classes, the two papers are found. The new class works out just fine. When the teacher announces that she's not going to teach biology next year, I am stuck. In order to graduate, I would need to take another biology class next year. What am I going to do? I don't feel like taking one of the other teachers' classes, but they are the only ones who will be teaching it.

While all this biology stuff is going on, I am having problems with other teachers as well. My Spanish teacher wants us to work in groups. One day, she hands out a worksheet and tells us to get into groups of two or three. I start out by asking the people who are sitting by themselves. They say they want to do the assignment alone. Then, I ask people already in groups and they say no. When I tell the teacher this, she announces to the class: Becky doesn't have a partner—does anyone want her in his or her group? The whole class goes completely silent. This incident prompts the Resource Specialist to go into all of my classes and give talks about disability awareness.

My first-period class is California history. We discuss Mexican history and the Native Americans as well as the early explorers. I like the slant in this class. One day, the bus makes me late and the teacher comes to the door and literally pushes me out of the classroom saying that he is giving a surprise quiz, and I can't come in because I am late. I like to think that he and the other teachers pushed me all the way to Cabrillo Community College. I left high school after the tenth grade.

ACTIVITY 9

CAPE FOR KINDNESS

1-3 hr

ABOUT

Make decorative capes for the walkers of children with Cerebral Palsy

MATERIALS

- WAWOS Wear Kit
- fabric
- velcro
- thread
- sewing machine

WAWOS WEAR

a *wawos* program



WAWOS Wear is a truly unique way for a child who uses assistive devices, to express their spirit and individuality. This program allows people to create beautiful capes for children's walkers.

WAWOS partners with pediatric rehab hospitals, clinics and other programs to provide free walker capes to children who use assistive devices.

WHAT IS *wawos*

WAWOS is a nonprofit founded by Jacquie Robison, who's daughter Sofia has Cerebral Palsy. WAWOS stands for **w**e're **a**ll **w**orking **o**n something.

"Cerebral Palsy is something my daughter has, not who she is," Jacquie Robison says. "She is bright, curious, smart and kind."

"WAWOS is committed to supporting and celebrating children with Cerebral Palsy and related neuromuscular delays through the application of design and technology." (from wawos.org)



for more information visit wawos.org

STEPS

Getting kits from WAWOS

Inside a WAWOS Wear sewing kit:
a pattern, clothing labels, and hang tags for 5 capes

Represents a cost of approximately \$100

Request kits from sew@wawos.org and let them know if you need a tax receipt and the number of capes you wish to sew.

Making Capes

In addition to the WAWOS kit, you will need to supply:

the fabric, the velcro, the thread and the talent

Each cape needs:

1. velcro (5/8" or 1")
2. fun fabrics that kids would find appealing (1.5 yards of fabric yields one cape)

The kit from WAWOS will provide the instructions for sewing



I recommend finding a local craft/sewing store that will provide machines and sewing assistance to your group

ACTIVITY IN ACTION



Design Considerations

- No small embellishments, such as buttons, as they could pose a choking hazard.
- No trailing pieces of material, as they could get caught in wheels and pose a tripping hazard.
- No rayon or cellulose fabrics, as these are highly flammable.
- Remember, these are kiddos. Keep the messages positive, inclusive, and politics-free.
- Practice kindness.

Cape Distribution

WAWOS is partnered with a number of pediatric and rehab facilities to distribute the walker capes. Once you are finished sewing, let them know at sew@wawos.org and they will arrange a presentation to an organization in your area.