



Changing Perspectives
Promoting Awareness & Inspiring Empathy

K-2 Disability Awareness Newsletter

Spotlight on Autism Spectrum Disorder

Disability Is Diversity

Your child is participating in a curriculum that focuses on understanding disabilities to support empathy development. Through a variety of activities in this unit, students will learn how a person with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may experience the world. This newsletter offers information to help you continue your child's learning about this topic at home.

Speaking of Autism

ASD exists on a continuum and affects each person who has it differently. Like anyone, someone with autism has challenges and strengths. Autism may cause struggles with language, social skills, emotional regulation, or understanding others' perspectives. Sensory sensitivities may make a person with autism feel uncomfortable, overwhelmed, or distracted by what they are sensing; they may repeat behaviors, such as rocking or humming, to self soothe. Because of their different way of looking at the world, some people with autism may have an exceptional memory for details, develop deep expertise in a subject, or find unique solutions to problems. With support, many people with autism develop skills and strategies to help them manage their challenges and their gifts.

Reinforce your child's understanding of autism by asking them to name the five senses and give an example of each. Then ask if they have ever encountered a light that felt too bright, an overly strong smell, or an excessively loud sound and how that experience felt. What did they do to feel better?

In the Know

Did you know that in 2015, Sesame Street introduced a new puppet, Julia, who has autism? You can look on Sesame Street's YouTube channel to find episodes featuring Julia. **Invite your child to watch an episode or two with you and then follow up with further discussion about autism.**

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

The Girl Who Thought in Pictures by Julia Mosca is a biography of scientist Dr. Temple Grandin, who identifies as a visual thinker. Growing up with autism, Temple often felt she didn't fit in, but she learned how to use her perspective and make a change in the world. **Read the book with your child and talk about their passions.**

Change Begins With You

April is Autism Awareness Month, but you can learn more about ASD at any time. Search online or check with your library, school, arts organizations, or community groups to find local opportunities to participate in or support sensory sensitive activities.

Changing Perspectives is a national, educational, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that works with schools to promote social-emotional learning to cultivate inclusive and equitable communities for all students.

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