



*Anyone Can Do Anything: Pilot Evaluation of the Changing Perspectives  
Disability Awareness Curriculum*

**Cynthia Char and Sam Drazin**  
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**Introduction:** Changing Perspectives is a not-for-profit organization based in Vermont that provides disability awareness programs in schools. Changing Perspectives was founded by Sam Drazin, an educator born with Treacher Collins Syndrome - a rare congenital disorder resulting in both facial anomaly and hearing loss. Sam underwent seven surgeries as a child while attending the local public school. Sam's experiences, both as a student with a disability and as a teacher working in an inclusive classroom, made him recognize the importance of improving awareness and understanding of disabilities. Changing Perspectives was created to provide schools with a framework for this much-needed curriculum while building on the natural curiosity of all children.

Changing Perspectives' mission is to engage students in open dialogue and real world experiences in an effort to promote disability awareness and foster inclusive communities. Schools across the country are dealing with issues of bullying and social isolation while at the same time being asked to meet the academic and emotional needs of an ever more diverse student body. Awareness is the foundation of empathy. For students to achieve a greater sense of empathy, they must first develop an awareness and appreciation of differences.

This research report presents findings from the 2015-16 classroom field test of the Changing Perspectives program in twelve schools in Vermont and New Hampshire, during the initial pilot year of program implementation.

**Description of Curriculum:** Changing Perspectives' Disability Awareness Curriculum is designed for use in grades K-8 over the course of a 6-, 8- or 10-week period. The curriculum is designed for teacher customization. Using an online platform, teachers can easily access a variety of materials (lesson plans, book lists, video clips, etc) and then select which materials are going to be most relevant and meaningful to their students. The program's focus is to engage students in hands-on learning to build greater awareness of differences and inspire empathy.

The curriculum consists of three parts:

1) LEARN– This section of the curriculum is divided into eight disability categories (autism, hearing, visual impairment, cognitive delays, physical, social/emotional, learning disability, speech impairment). Through literature, class discussions, videos and hands on activities students are exposed to a variety of visible and invisible disabilities.

2) EXPERIENCE – Changing Perspectives staff works with each school to design an awareness event to help students understand what it is truly like to live with a disability. Events usually consists of a combination of guest speakers and simulation activities.

3) REFLECT – Through writing prompts, role playing activities, art projects and class discussions students reflect on their experiences, make connections, and show evidence of their growth in understanding.

**Personalized Coaching:** Recognizing that the issues brought up as part of this curriculum can be sensitive ones, personalized coaching has been developed as an integral part of the program, and is provided to all schools using Changing Perspectives. The purpose of the coaching is to assist teachers and guidance counselors to navigate and implement the program in a way that will have the greatest impact on students.

### **Pilot Year of Programming**

During the 2015-16 school year, the Changing Perspectives curriculum was field tested for the first time in a set of schools in Vermont and New Hampshire, in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Over the course of the year, the program was used with roughly 1,500 students.

Changing Perspectives partnered with twelve schools throughout Vermont and New Hampshire who agreed to participate in the initial implementation of the curriculum. These schools were:

- Barnet School (Barnet, VT)
- Bradford Elementary School (Bradford, VT)
- Dothan Brook School (Wilder, VT)
- Edmunds Elementary School (Burlington, VT)
- Folsom School (South Hero, VT)
- Hartland Elementary School (Hartland, VT)
- Lyme Elementary School (Lyme, NH)
- Mt. Lebanon Elementary School (Lebanon, NH)
- Newbury Elementary School (Newbury, VT)
- Sharon Elementary School (Sharon, VT)
- Shelburne Community School (Shelburne, VT)
- Williston Central School (Williston, VT)

Four of the schools used Changing Perspectives during the first half of the school year (i.e., fall term), while 7 schools used it during the spring term. One school embarked on using it across the entire school year.

Since the curriculum takes a customized approach, the way in which the program was implemented in each school varied. (See Figure 1 below for the implementation models used by schools.) Some schools (5) implemented the curriculum school-wide, whereas others (7) chose to pilot the program in select grades. In some schools (6), the guidance

counselors did the direct instruction of the program while in other schools, classroom teachers (4) were responsible for program implementation, or co-led with the guidance counselor (2). Almost all the schools (12) opted for a 5- or 6-week implementation, while one chose 12 weeks.

**Figure 1: Implementation Models for Using Changing Perspectives**

<b>FALL</b>	
<b>Lyme</b>	2 grades over a 6-week period during guidance class.
<b>Newbury</b>	Whole school (K-6) over a 6-week period during guidance class.
<b>Sharon</b>	Whole school (K-6) over a 6-week period during guidance class.
<b>Folsom</b>	Whole school (K-8) over a 6-week period by classroom teachers.
<b>Dothan Brook</b>	5th grade over the course of the entire school year by classroom teacher.
<b>SPRING</b>	
<b>Shelburne</b>	2 grades over a 12-week period by classroom teachers and guidance counselors.
<b>Hartland</b>	Whole school (K-8) over a 6-week period by guidance counselors.
<b>Barnet</b>	4 grades over a 6-week period by guidance counselor and school nurse.
<b>Williston</b>	One mixed age school house over a 6-week period by classroom teachers.
<b>Bradford</b>	Whole school (K-6) over a 6-week period by classroom teachers.
<b>Edmunds</b>	1 classroom over a 5-week period by guidance counselor.
<b>Mt. Lebanon</b>	1 classroom over a 5-week period by guidance counselor.

### **Pilot Evaluation**

To inform the design and development of the program, Changing Perspectives decided to conduct a formal evaluation of the program during this initial 2015-16 program year. Dr. Cynthia Char of Char Associates, an independent evaluation firm based in Montpelier, Vermont, served as the external evaluator for the program, and collaborated with Drazin, Changing Perspectives Executive Director on the study.

The primary objectives of the pilot evaluation were two-fold: 1) to gather formative feedback on the program to inform and improve the curriculum’s design and utilization, and 2) to conduct an initial evaluation of the program’s educational benefits and impacts upon student learning and teachers’ classroom practice.

Given Changing Perspectives’ highly customizable approach to design and classroom utilization, each teacher’s instructional choices and teaching style shapes and influences student experiences and students’ subsequent feedback on the program.

**Methodology and Sample:** A variety of data collection methods were used to gather formative feedback and impact data on the *Changing Perspectives* curriculum from schools. These methods included: teacher classroom logs, student post-program surveys, and teacher post-program surveys.

Teachers from all grades filled out the teacher logs and surveys, while student surveys were administered to all students who participated in grades 3-8. Teachers handed out the student surveys to their students to complete shortly after their last day of using *Changing Perspectives* in their classrooms.

Student data was collected from 11 of the 12 schools participating in 2015-16, involving 838 students in grades 3-8.

**Figure 2: 2015-16 Field Test: Sample of Student Survey Respondents**

Schools	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
<b>Overall Total (11 schools; n = 838)</b>	123	188	230	127	95	74
<b>Fall (4 schools; n = 247)</b>	54	37	55	46	37	18
<b>Spring (7 schools; n = 591)</b>	69	151	175	81	58	56
<b>FALL</b>						
<b>Lyme (39)</b>			√		√	
<b>Newbury (68)</b>	√	√	√	√		
<b>Sharon (63)</b>	√	√	√	√		
<b>Folsom (77)</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>SPRING</b>						
<b>Shelburne (156)</b>		√	√			
<b>Hartland (194)</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>Barnet (55)</b>	√	√	√	√		
<b>Williston (83)</b>			√	√	√	√
<b>Bradford (73)</b>	√	√	√	√		
<b>Edmunds (14)</b>		√				
<b>Mt. Lebanon (15)</b>	√					

Data was collected from 37 teachers, representing ten schools participating in 2015-16. (Surveys administered to 51 teachers; 72% response rate.)

**Figure 3: 2015-16 Field Test: Sample of Teacher Survey Respondents**

School	School Counselor /Health	Classroom Teachers	Other specialists	Primary Instructors for Program
<b>Overall Total (n = 37)</b>	11	20	6	
<b>Fall Total (n = 15)</b>	6	7	2	
<b>Spring Total (n = 22)</b>	5	13	4	
<b>FALL</b>				
<b>Lyme (2)</b>	2			Guidance counselor
<b>Newbury (2)</b>	1	1		Guidance counselor and classroom teachers
<b>Sharon (2)</b>	2			Guidance counselor
<b>Folsom (9)</b>	1	6	2 (math/sci; PE)	Classroom teachers
<b>SPRING</b>				
<b>Shelburne (5)</b>	1	4		Classroom teachers and guidance counselors
<b>Hartland (2)</b>	2			Guidance counselors
<b>Barnet (2)</b>	1		1 (nurse)	Guidance counselor and school nurse
<b>Williston (3)</b>		2	1 (special ed)	Classroom teachers
<b>Bradford (9)</b>		7	2 (art; SLP)	Classroom teachers
<b>Edmunds (1)</b>	1			Guidance counselor

**Organization of Report:** Evaluation results are organized into two sections. The first section presents findings from students, collected through the student surveys. The second section presents findings from their teachers, collected through the teacher surveys. The report concludes with some brief summary remarks.

## STUDENT FINDINGS

**Summary:** Students regarded Changing Perspectives not only as interesting, but as very helpful in heightening their awareness and understanding of differences and disabilities. Students reported that Changing Perspectives enabled them to learn about disabilities, about how to be kind and inclusive, and to become more aware of their own personal challenges. They also strongly recommended that students in other schools should learn about kids with disabilities.

**High Student Interest:** Asked to rate how interesting they found *Changing Perspectives* (4-point scale: not at all; a little; some; a lot), students reported finding *Changing Perspectives* quite interesting.

8 out of 10 students (82%) expressed that they regarded *Changing Perspectives* interesting (A lot (44%) or Some (38%)).

*It is really fun and when you learn about [people with disabilities] you can help them. (3rd grade boy)*

*I liked seeing what it's like for them and to learn about disabilities and try to think of ways to help them. (6<sup>th</sup> grade boy)*

*I liked learning about people's differences and how they cope with them. (7<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*It is great to learn about what other people are going through, and developing empathy for their situations (8<sup>th</sup> grade boy)*

**Greater Awareness and Understanding of Disabilities:** Reflecting upon whether or not *Changing Perspectives* helped them learn about disabilities (4-point scale: not at all; a little; some; a lot), students reported strong growth in this area.

Roughly 9 out of 10 students (88%) indicated that *Changing Perspectives* had **helped them learn about disabilities** (55% A Lot, 33% Some).

*I got to learn about the many different disabilities and I got to hear real people that have disabilities talk about themselves and their lives. (5th grade girl)*

*I used to think that people with differences were not like me. Now I think that everyone, no matter what, are all the same. (6th grade girl)*

*That having a disability, like dyslexia, helps you think in more creative ways than people without it. Having a disability can have its advantages. (8<sup>th</sup> grade boy)*

*Anyone can do anything and nobody is disabled just differently abled. (6<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

8 out of 10 (79%) students indicated that *Changing Perspectives* had **made them more aware of people with disabilities** (45% A Lot, 34% Some).

*People with disabilities are strong and are overcoming their challenges. (5<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*I now know and think it's okay to have disabilities. (5<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*I now think that people with disabilities can do almost anything. Just sometimes they might need extra help. (8<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*It opens your mind and allows you to think in a more positive happy way towards other people. (8<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

**Increased Sense of Empathy:** 8 out of 10 students (81%) indicated that *Changing Perspectives* had helped them think about how to be kind/inclusive (50% A Lot, 31% Some).

*[I now think we should] respect and be kind to people who are different than us. (5<sup>th</sup> grader)*

*I now can put myself in their shoes and I am not uncomfortable anymore and try my best to help and understand people different from me. (7<sup>th</sup> grade boy).*

*I learned that we are all different and we all need to embrace our differences and respect others. (5<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*It caught a lot of people's attention and changed their perspective on my disability dramatically. (7<sup>th</sup> grade boy)*

**Increased Awareness of One's Own Personal Challenges:** Roughly 2 out of 3 students (63%) indicated that *Changing Perspectives* had **helped them reflect on their own challenges** (31% A Lot, 32% Some)

*A disability is just a difference. Disabilities don't have to be a bad thing. We all have differences so in a way, we all have disabilities. We are more alike than different. (5<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*Before Changing Perspectives, I used to think it was a bad thing to be disabled. I felt different. Now I think that it is ok to be different. It is ok to tell people about my disability. (6<sup>th</sup> grade boy)*

**Strong Student Endorsement of the Importance of Learning About Disabilities:**

When asked whether students in other schools should learn about kids with disabilities, a resounding 9 out of 10 students (90%) indicated "yes" they should. (9% Maybe; 1% No;)

*I want people to be aware of disabilities and [that] people with disabilities are good people. (4<sup>th</sup> grade boy)*

*I think everyone should be aware of how similar/alike people with disabilities are to us because they are as equally human as me. (5th grade girl)*

*It is important information for all kids to learn to be more kind to those with differences (5th grader)*

*People often make fun of or exclude people with differences because they are “weird”. I think if they knew more about how it feels to have a difference, the excluding and stuff would stop. (7<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*

*Other schools should learn about people with disabilities because it's an important thing in life to realize someone may be different, but to treat them in the same way you'd treat everyone else. (7th grade boy)*

*They should because society needs to change to people with disabilities so people with disabilities don't have to change for society. This is one step in that direction. (7<sup>th</sup> grade girl)*



## TEACHER FINDINGS

**Summary:** Teachers were highly favorable towards Changing Perspectives across a wide variety of areas concerning student and classroom impact and their own professional development. First and foremost, teachers regarded Changing Perspectives as strong in both its informational and socio-emotional value. They felt the curriculum was highly successful in promoting deeper understanding, respect, and acceptance of all people, and helping each child recognize his or her own uniqueness and challenges. Moreover, teachers viewed the curriculum as easy to use, as well as appealing to students.

Regarding their own professional development, teachers reported that they now felt better equipped to build classroom community within the inclusive classroom model. They indicated that they were more confident and comfortable discussing issues around differences with their students, and better able to encourage positive interactions between all students. All of the teachers gave an unequivocally positive assessment of the curriculum, stating they would use the program again in the future and would recommend its use to other teachers.

**Strong Educational Value:** Teachers regarded Changing Perspectives' educational value as strong across all four areas assessed: informational value, socio-emotional value, usability, and appeal to students. Rating the curriculum's value using a 4-point scale (Poor; Fair, Good and Very good), the vast majority of teachers gave the program high marks in all four areas.

All 37 teachers rated Changing Perspectives highly in its **informational value** (100%; 41% Good; 59% Very good), while all but 1 of the teachers (97%), reported positive ratings of its **socio-emotional value** (Good (21%) or Very Good (76%)).

*This program DID succeed in helping many of our students learn more about individuals with a variety of disabilities - and in so doing, helped to increase their empathy. (Guidance Counselor)*

*My students walked away with a greater appreciation for people with challenges. The empathy coming from them toward our presenters today was truly heartwarming and genuine. (3rd grade teacher)*

Nearly all of the teachers (97%) rated the program as high in its **usability** (23% Good; 74% Very good).

*It is an easy and painless way to get students talking about strengths and weaknesses and all of our learning differences. It empowers every child to focus on empathy and how they show it to all. (5th grade teacher)*

*The lesson plans were easy to access and well designed. Kids showed noticeable growth in their understanding of disabilities as a result of the program. (3rd grade teacher)*

Almost all (95%) of the teachers reported that the program was **appealing** to students (38% Good, 57% Very good). Similarly, using a more differentiated 5-point rating scale for students' enthusiasm (not at all; slightly; moderately, very, and extremely), over three-fourths of the teachers (78%) reported solid levels of student enthusiasm for Changing Perspectives (Very enthusiastic (53%) or Extremely enthusiastic (25%).

*This program really helped our students understand students with disabilities. They really enjoyed the experiences that had them simulating various disabilities. (Special Educator)*

*It was extremely empathy building, and the name "Changing Perspectives" is just perfect. Our students really embraced the idea of trying to understand and truly appreciate the experience of people with a wide variety of disabilities. (Guidance Counselor)*

### **Greater Student Awareness of Own Uniqueness and Understanding of Others:**

Teachers regarded Changing Perspectives as highly successful in achieving its main educational goals for students. Changing Perspective's primary goal is to help each child recognize his or her uniqueness and challenges, and in doing so promote a deeper understanding, respect, and acceptance of all people. Based on their use of Changing Perspectives with their classes, teachers rated how successful they regarded Changing Perspectives along these two dimensions (5-point scale: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very; Extremely).

Nearly 8 out of 10 teachers (78%) felt that Changing Perspectives had helped each child recognize his or her own uniqueness and challenges (64% Very; 14% Extremely).

9 out of 10 (91%) teachers felt that Changing Perspectives had very much helped promote deeper understanding, respect, and acceptance of all people (57% Very; 34% Extremely).

Thus, findings indicate that Changing Perspectives is quite successful along both dimensions. At the same time, findings suggest that these two outcome areas might be dual, complimentary goals, rather than one outcome area (i.e., recognition of one's own uniqueness and challenges) leading to the second (i.e., deeper understanding, respect, and acceptance of all people)

*This really helped my kids not only understand differences and challenges for people, it also gave them the opportunity to look within themselves and be ok with their own differences and challenges. (Kindergarten Teacher)*

*Changing Perspectives allowed students to be more aware of how we are all different and how we all have things that are challenging. (1st grade teacher)*

### **Successful in Promoting Positive Classroom Outcomes**

The Changing Perspectives curriculum consists of three major parts (Learn; Experience; Reflect), each designed to address particular educational objectives. Teachers were asked to assess the curriculum's program components and the success with which they felt each

component achieved its particular desired learning goals for students (5-point scale: Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, Extremely)

<b>Program Component</b>	<b>% of Teachers Rating Component as “Very” or “Extremely” Successful</b>
<i>Learn: Provided students with activities that expose them to a variety of disabilities</i>	94% (58% Very, 36% Extremely)
<i>Learn: Promoted open and honest dialogue that leads to greater understanding</i>	100% (56% Very; 44% Extremely)
<i>Experience: Engaged students to help them understand what it is like to live with a disability</i>	89% (40% Very; 49% Extremely)
<i>Experience: Provided students with a highly engaging real world experience</i>	74% (40% Very; 34% Extremely)
<i>Reflect: Allowed students to reflect on their experiences and make connections</i>	91% (68% Very, 23% Extremely)
<i>Reflect: Allowed students to show evidence of their growth in understanding</i>	79% (58% Very; 21% Extremely)

Ratings were very positive for four of the six components, particularly for the two Learn components, and one of the two Experience and Reflect components.

*I loved the focus and layout of this curriculum. As an inclusive school, we have students with a variety of disabilities. This program offered an outlet for our students to learn about, reflect on, and have a conversation about what having a disability means and what different types of disabilities there are. (Middle School Teacher)*

**Interest in Continued Use and Recommended Broader Use:** Moreover, teachers offered an unequivocally positive assessment of Changing Perspectives’ educational value for two additional indicators, regarding continued use, and use by others. All 37 teachers stated that they would use it again Changing Perspectives again the future (100%), and would recommend Changing Perspectives to another teacher (100%).

*There really is no other curriculum available like this one. The ease of implementation alone would be of interest to any educator wishing to include a unit on empathy for disabilities. (3rd grade teacher)*

*Children have lots of experience encountering people with disabilities, but we did little in the past to help them understand these differences in a mainstream manner. This program provided an avenue to address this. It fits in with our bullying and harassment prevention efforts in a way that students can easily relate to. (Guidance Counselor)*

**Increased Teacher Capacity in Building Inclusive Classroom Communities:**

Changing Perspective’s professional development goals were for teachers to gain confidence and skills in three major areas: discussing issues around differences/disabilities with students, building classroom community within the inclusive classroom model, and encouraging positive interactions between all students. Teachers rated how much they felt they had increased their confidence and skills in these three areas as a result of Changing Perspectives (5-point scale: Not at all; Slightly; Moderately; Very; Extremely).

All (100%) of the teachers reported that they now felt better equipped with relevant skills in building classroom community within the inclusive classroom model. 9 out of 10 reported feeling more confident and comfortable discussing issues around differences with their students (94%) and better able to encourage positive interactions between all students (89%).

<b>Professional Development Outcome</b>	<b>% of Teachers Rating Clear Increases in Confidence and Skills (“Very” or “Extremely”)</b>
<i>More confident and comfortable discussing issues around differences (disabilities) with your students</i>	94% (58% Very, 36% Extremely)
<i>Better equipped with relevant skills in building classroom community within the inclusive classroom model</i>	100% (56% Very; 44% Extremely)
<i>Better able to encourage positive interactions between ALL students</i>	89% (40% Very; 49% Extremely)

*Changing Perspectives has allowed my students to learn about differences individuals have and reflect on them in a meaningful way. It has helped create an environment where all individuals are valued and respected. (4th grade teacher)*

*Changing Perspectives opened the door for us to have conversations about challenges students wonder about but feel too awkward to ask. (7th grade teacher)*

*It really helped to open up the conversation... Some of the teachers are already extending the conversation in their classrooms. It also provided the opportunity/climate for students to evaluate and express some of their challenges so they could gain some support. (School Nurse)*

**Positive Assessment of Curriculum Design and Support:** The three-part Changing Perspectives curriculum is currently conceived as primarily being used as 6-week program: *Learn* (4 weeks); *Experience* (1 week); and *Reflect* (1 week). Teachers were asked to assess the curriculum’s three-part structure, as well as the time estimates projected for implementation (4-point scale (poor; fair, good and very good).

<b>Program Feature</b>	<b>% of Teachers Rating Feature as “Good” or “Very Good”</b>
<i>3-part structure</i>	100% (32% Good, 68% Very Good)
<i>The order of this 3-part structure</i>	100% (24% Good; 76% Very Good)
<i>The time estimate allocated to implement each part</i>	82% (36% Good; 46% Very Good)

All (100%) of the teachers rated the 3-part structure and its order as Good or Very Good. About 8 out of 10 (82%) reported the time estimate allocations as good or very good, with some citing that the program somewhat underestimated the time that should be devoted to the curriculum.

The Changing Perspectives curriculum was also accompanied by three major forms of teacher support. Teachers were asked to rate their satisfaction levels with these forms of support (5-point scale: Not at all; Slightly; Moderately; Very; Extremely).

9 out of 10 teachers rated very high levels of satisfaction with all three forms of support.

<b>Professional Development support</b>	<b>% of Teachers Rating Feature as “Good” or “Very Good”</b>
<i>Support to school prior to, during and after program implementation</i>	94% (25% Very, 69% Extremely)
<i>Work with teachers and school leaders to answer questions and provide guidance</i>	97% (34% Very, 63% Extremely)
<i>Preparation of the necessary materials needed for participating schools</i>	92% (42% Very, 50% Extremely)

As one teacher summed up her view of the program,

*It is fantastic to have the opportunity to bring up conversations about disabilities so kids can ask questions without feeling uncomfortable. Disabilities often seem to be something that aren't talked about so kids don't understand them. The lessons in Changing Perspectives are well written and easy to use. Teachers have a choice of various disabilities to learn about, making it easy to find lessons that fit well with the class' needs. The organizer/creator of the curriculum provides fantastic support and quick responses to questions. (3rd grade teacher)*

In conclusion, the initial pilot test of Changing Perspectives in twelve Vermont and New Hampshire schools revealed that teachers and students alike were highly favorable about their Changing Perspectives classroom experience. Both viewed the program as successful in developing students' awareness and appreciation of differences and disabilities and in fostering more inclusive communities. Moreover, as a strong testament to the quality of their program experience, they strongly recommended that Changing Perspectives be used more broadly by students and educators in other schools, and stressed the importance of students learning about others with disabilities.

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Cynthia A. Char, Ed.D.  
Sam Drazin

For further information on the study, contact:

Dr. Cynthia Char  
Char Associates  
147 Connor Road  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
[www.charassociates.com](http://www.charassociates.com)

Sam Drazin  
Changing Perspectives  
PO Box 710  
Montpelier, VT 05651  
[www.ChangingPerspectivesNow.org](http://www.ChangingPerspectivesNow.org)