

Hillside UDA (Understanding our Different Abilities)
1st Grade Program
BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

I. Central Themes to Keep in Mind

1. We are all “people first,” defined by who we are: multi-dimensional individuals. We learn about different types of disabilities so that we can understand why and how someone might be differently-abled: able to do certain things, such as seeing or getting around, in a different way. It is important to remember we do not define or judge people by a particular disability. We are all similar in many ways and different in many ways.
2. Most people who are blind/visually impaired are able to do many of the things that a sighted person can do by relying on other senses and/or with the use of adaptive aids.
3. People who are blind/visually impaired make individual choices regarding mobility; whether he or she will utilize a sighted guide, a cane, or a dog guide.
4. Visual Impairments affect the lives of many people to varying degrees.
5. It is very natural to feel curious about the experiences of someone who has a different experience than we do. At the conclusion of our unit, Pam Fernandes will be our guest speaker. She is visually impaired and will visit the students on a scheduled date with her guide dog. If you have questions, you should have your parent presenters write them down or ask your teacher to write them down so that your questions can be answered by Ms. Fernandes.

II. Discussion (BIG GROUP/ 1 Parent Presenter can lead)

A. Introduction.

Today we are going to talk about vision, how people see. Some people may be totally blind and not be able to see at all, or partially blind and be able to see shadows or see some images. Some people may have a visual impairment. Visual impairment is a term experts use to describe any kind of vision loss, whether it's someone who cannot see at all or someone who has partial vision loss.

Let's start out by talking about our eyes. Using just your eyes, and keeping your head still, please take a minute to look up... now look down... now look to one side... now look to the other side... Now do that again really quickly... What's going on? You've just given your eye muscles a great workout, just as you give your legs a workout when you go running, do gymnastics, or play basketball!

Let's think about our eyes: Turn to your friend and look at his or her eye. Your eyes are in a bony socket that protects them from getting hit; eyebrows help keep light from getting into your eyes; eyelids close to keep things from getting in your eyes; eyelashes grow along the outside of your eyelids, they also keep things from getting into your eyes; tears help keep the eyes moisten and help to wash away things that can irritate your eyes.

It is very important to take care to protect your eyes. Parent Ask: What are some ways we can take care of our eyes? **Prompts:** Wear protective eye gear when you play some sports, when you do projects like wood or metal, don't run with scissors, be careful with pencils and pens; be careful of chemicals such as cleaning solution, etc.. , also, Wear sunglasses to protect against the sun's UV rays (like sunscreen for your eyes).

B. Talking about Different Types of Vision

Do you think everyone sees the same? No. Do you think that many people can have differences in what and how they see?

Does anyone here wear glasses? Why? What happens when you don't wear your glasses? [Parent can offer own experience].

Some people someone could have blurry vision. Someone may be partially blind someone may be totally blind, which means they can't see at all. How do you become blind? Is it contagious?

- Blindness is not contagious.
- Some people are born blind or are born not being able to see very well.
- Some people lose their vision as they get older. Some people can become blind because of certain diseases.
- some people can become blind or lose some vision as a result of an accident.

D. Do You Think Someone Who Is Blind Can Do Most Of The Same Things As You Can?

1. A person who is blind or visually impaired can do most things that you and I can do, they might just need to do them in a different (or maybe not different) way. Does anyone know of any famous people who are blind: Helen Keller, Louis Braille, Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles.

III . Groups

Today we are going to break up into four groups to learn more about how our eyes work, what it might be like to be blind or have another type of visual impairment, and how we could adapt if we had to rely on our vision in a different way than we do now.

V. Conclusion -- at the end of the program, regroup back on rug or while kids are seated to pass out ASK ME ABOUT and do quick recap:

Let's talk quickly about a few things that you learned today. Who wants to tell me something that you learned? Ask for three or four things that kids learned.

We hope that you had fun today, and that you learned something about blindness and visual impairments. We learn about different types of disabilities so that we can understand why and how someone might be able to do certain things, such as seeing or getting around, in a different way. We're all individuals, and each person is similar and different in many ways.



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Small Group Activity Suggestion: If someone has a visual impairment or is blind how can a friend be helpful?

We are going to watch a short video clip from the TV show Arthur. It is called “Prunella Sees the Light.” In this video, Prunella has a friend named Marina. Both girls are very excited about going to see an upcoming movie. Marina invites Prunella to sleep at her house and go to the movies the next day. Marina is blind. As you watch the clip, ask yourself: Is there anything that Marina can’t do because she is blind?, Does Marina want to be treated differently because she is blind? What are some ways Marina does things differently because she is blind? What do you think Prunella learns from this experience?

SHOW VIDEO CLIP. If you would like to preview it, see:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWQ84h1G8Gs> and cue to 2:20.
Get the video set up onto a computer or the smart board.



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Small Group Activity Suggestion: Understanding How Someone Who is Blind or Visually Impaired Might Undertake Everyday Activities

In this activity one or two children will be "blindfolded" and the rest of the children from the group can work together to help the child navigate his or her way to the "restaurant" and to sit down and order at the "restaurant."

QUESTION TO KIDS: How difficult/easy do you think it would be if you were blind to shop for groceries, eat at a restaurant? What are some of the challenges you think you would face?

A. The Restaurant Experience

Props:

Braille Menus (found in POD Grade 1 Box)

Plastic Plate, fork Knife, Napkin, Cup, Fake Food, Salt & Pepper, etc...

Table – use a table - ideally one in the hallway


Adaptive Material- guide cane ((found in POD Grade 1 Box)

Activity:

Set table with plate and plastic food.

Divide the students into pairs. Have a child from group volunteer to be blindfolded switch the pair up after a short time.

After Child has been blindfolded, start in the hall outside the classroom and with the assistance of the guide cane. Have the children stop and feel the food. Can they guess the color? What are some other clues? Use Braille cards as Grocery signs that one would find in a store in Braille. Walk to the table and be seated at the restaurant table. The student guide should arrange the food and discuss with the blindfolded student where things are placed (use a clock-like system).



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Small Group Activity Suggestion: What is it like when you eliminate your sense of vision, and use your sense of hearing, touch, and smell to learn about the world around you?

In this activity, the children can have an opportunity to imagine what it would be like to not be able to rely on vision and need to use other senses. Discuss the 5 senses. They will have a chance to rely on hearing, touch and smell.

QUESTION TO KIDS: What are your 5 senses? Sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell. If you could not see, how do you think you would navigate differently using your other 4 senses? Ideas?

A. Hearing

Props: there is a small white noise machine that has 5 sounds.

Activity: Have the children close their eyes and try to guess what the sound is.

-People who are blind must pay special attention to sounds/noises around them. What are some important sounds for a person who can not see to rely on? Crossing bells at cross walk, elevator bells, people's voices: always introduce yourself to a person who is blind or visually impaired, speak directly to someone, announce when you leave or enter a room.

B. Touch

Props: "feely bags" paper bags with objects inside (such as feathers, rubber bands, pasta, coins, shells,).

Activity: Let the children take turns. Ask a child to close his or her eyes and try to guess what is in the bag by feeling inside.

Discussion: Was it easy? Difficult? What do we learn from touch (size, shape, safe, dangerous—something will feel hot, like a stove top as we get closer to it.


Many people who are blind rely on a white cane to guide them. By using touch a person can know when a sidewalk ends, where a wall bends, etc..

C. Smell

Props: use small black film containers or small plastic containers filled with things like coffee, pepper, cinnamon, soap, vanilla, citrus, etc..)

Activity: Let the children take turns. Ask a child to close his or her eyes and try to guess what the substance is by smelling.

Discussion: Ask children what are some of their favorite smells? Cookies baking, dinner cooking, leaves in fall. Smell can be very pleasant and also let us know when we are having something yummy for dessert or when it is time to sit down and eat. Smell can also give us important information- if we smell smoke there could be fire, can let someone know that something that is liquid is orange juice instead of a cleaning product.



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Small Group Activity Suggestion The ability to navigate the world without vision can be challenging—try reading and building without vision.

In this activity, the children will have a chance to explore the Braille alphabet as a means of communication for people who are blind.

Props:

Egg Carton w/ ping pong balls

Laminated Braille alphabet, Arthur Handout, Braille Books, A Pencil for each child

Activity:

Do you think that just because someone is blind that they are unable to read books ? Of course they can read books. They rely on touch to read, using a system of raised dots called Braille.

A very long time ago in France, a 3 year old boy named Louis Braille became blind by accident. When his family realized that he couldn't learn everything just from listening at his old school, he went to a school for blind children in Paris. But even at this special school, there were only a few books with huggled raised letters for the children to read. Louis wanted his own books to read and invented a special type of alphabet called Braille, which is a system of raised dots on a piece of paper that is read by touching the dots! Braille is now used all over the world and it allows blind people to communicate independently, without needing print.

Braille is a system of making raised dots on paper to form letters and words that are read by blind people with their fingertips. The basic Braille “cell” consists of two columns of three dots. The dots are numbered 1-2-3 from top to bottom on the left side of the cell and 4-5-6 from top to bottom on the right side of the cell. Each Braille letter, word, punctuation mark, number, or musical note can be made using different combinations of these dots. Braille can be written with a Braille writing machine. It can also be written by using a pointed stylus to punch dots through paper using a Braille slate with rows of small “cells” in it as a guide.

Show the children the Braille alphabet on the laminated sheet. Explain using the egg carton that Braille is comprised of 6 cells and the dots are raised in a symbol that represents a letter. A person needs to learn the Braille alphabet, but once they can, they are able to read with their fingers. Have the children close their eyes and try to “read” the Braille books. It is hard to do!

Hand out the Arthur sheet and let the children create their names on the card. If you have more time, use the sheet with the message and have the children see if they can figure it out together.



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Today in your child's class a group of parent volunteers presented a program which introduced concepts related to blindness and visual impairment to the 1st graders. To find more about your child's experience today, you may want to ask him or her about:

ASK ME ABOUT.....

- ways in which we have the same and different experiences as someone who is blind?
- what it was like to read a Braille menu or a Braille book?
- what was it like to sit at a table with a plate of food on it that you could not see?
- how I felt walking and finding my way with a guide cane?
- what are some other aids a person who has different kind of visual abilities may use? A Dog guide? Large Print? Special Glasses?
- how I might offer help to a person who is blind?