



**Hillside Understanding our Different Abilities (UDA)
4th grade**

It is the mission of UDA to promote understanding, empathy, acceptance, and respect for all people regardless of differing abilities. Through the use of multisensory activities, speakers, and discussion, elementary students at each grade level, are introduced to a broad range of abilities, both visible and invisible, to reinforce that we are all different. Understanding and accepting those differences creates a stronger community.

In 1st grade, we addressed blindness and visual impairments and in 2nd grade, deafness and hearing impairments. Last year, we focused on physical challenges.

Today in your child's class a group of parent volunteers presented a program which introduced concepts related to learning differences. To find out more about your child's experience today, you may want to ask him or her these questions:

What might it feel like to read a chapter book if you had Dyslexia?

What was it like trying to draw looking into the mirror? What strategies did you use?

How easy or difficult was it for you to recall the items in the memory game? What type of learner do you think you are? (i.e. visual, auditory, tactile etc.)

What surprised you about Nathan's story?

We encouraged the children to consider the following factors:

1. Learning Differences are harder to see. There may be nothing distinctive about the way a person with a Learning Difference looks or acts. (Because they are hidden, they may be misinterpreted as laziness, immaturity, or oppositional behavior).
2. Learning Differences don't make children different from their peers. Everyone has strengths and challenges. Everyone has a personal learning style. We all adopt strategies every day to take advantage of our personal areas of strength to complete tasks.
3. Having a Learning Difference does not mean someone isn't smart.
4. It's helpful if people with Learning Differences can identify areas of difficulty to enable them to receive help to do the same task in a different way.
5. Specially trained doctors, teachers, and counselors with special tests perform evaluations to determine whether a Learning Difference is present.

Recommended reading: Fish in a Tree, by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

For more information about the UDA program and the activities in your child's classroom, contact Vanessa Jones (vanessajones694@hotmail.co.uk) or Erin Travia (erinkellytravia@gmail.com).