

Building Bridges of Friendship

Objective:

To teach children the importance of kindness, respect, and understanding when interacting with people who have disabilities. This activity will also help students develop empathy and learn how to make friends with individuals who may have different abilities.

Materials Needed:

- Large sheets of paper (butcher paper or poster board)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- A "Friendship Bridge" template (can be drawn by the teacher or printed out)
- Small pieces of paper or index cards
- A timer or stopwatch
- "Disability Scenarios" cards (descriptions of different disabilities)

Activity Steps:

1. Introduction (5 minutes):

- Start with a brief discussion about disabilities, emphasizing that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and that disabilities don't define a person.
- Explain that there are many ways to interact with people with disabilities, and being respectful, understanding, and kind are the most important things.

2. Video or Story (10 minutes):

- Show one of the curriculum videos or read a story about someone with a disability who has made friends or achieved something significant. The goal is to familiarize the idea of disability and highlight the importance of inclusion.
- After the video or story, have a short discussion: "How did the people in the video or story treat people with disabilities? How did the people with disabilities wish to be treated? What can we do to be like them?"

3. Activity: "Building Bridges" (20 minutes):

- Divide the class into small groups (3-4 students).
- Give each group a large sheet of paper and markers. Explain that their goal is to draw a "Friendship Bridge" on the paper.

- On one side of the bridge, they will write or draw things they can do to show respect and kindness to a friend with a disability (e.g., "Help them when they ask," "Be patient," "Invite them to play").
- On the other side, they will draw or write things that might make a person feel left out (e.g., "Ignoring them," "Making fun of them," "Not offering help when they have asked for it").
- Once the "bridge" is completed, they will share their ideas with the class.

4. Scenario Practice (15 minutes):

- Give each group a "Disability Scenario" card. These cards should describe a situation in which a child with a disability might be involved (e.g., a child who is using a wheelchair, a child who is blind, a child with a hearing impairment, a child with a reading disability).
- Ask each group to read their scenario and come up with ways they could respond in a respectful and friendly manner.
- After 10 minutes, have each group present their scenario and solution to the class. Discuss how their ideas help build understanding and friendship.

5. Reflection and Discussion (5 minutes):

- After the presentations, ask the class to reflect on the activity:
 - "What is one thing you learned about making friends with someone with a disability?"
 - "Why is it important to be kind and respectful to everyone, no matter what their abilities are?"
 - "How can you apply what you learned to your own friendships?"
- End with a reminder that everyone deserves kindness and respect, and friendships can be built by understanding and appreciating each other's differences.

Extension:

- **Guest Speaker:** If possible, invite someone from the community with a disability to talk to the students about their experiences and answer questions. Your local [center for independent living](#) may be able to offer a speaker.