

“Understanding Disabilities and the ADA”

Objective:

To teach students about disabilities, the rights of individuals with disabilities, and the role of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in ensuring equal access and opportunities for all.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Simple props or print out illustrations to demonstrate different types of disabilities (e.g., wheelchair, cane, large print or braille book, headphones)
- Print out "ADA Rights Cards" (cards with ADA-related rights for people with disabilities)
- Stickers or small prizes for participation (optional)

Activity Steps:

1. Introduction to Disabilities (5 minutes):

- Start by explaining what "disability" means in simple terms: a condition that affects the way someone moves, sees, hears, communicates, or thinks.
- Ask students if they can think of any examples of disabilities, such as people who use wheelchairs, people who are blind or deaf, people with diabetes, or people with learning disabilities. Write their ideas on the board or chart paper.
- Explain that disabilities can be visible (like using a wheelchair) or invisible (like a learning disability or chronic illness).

2. Introduction to the ADA (10 minutes):

- Introduce the concept of the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Tell students that the ADA is a law passed in 1990 that helps people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else. It ensures that people with disabilities can go to school, work, and participate in all areas of life.
- Kid-friendly language to help explain the main points of the ADA:
 - **Access to Buildings:** "The ADA makes sure that buildings are accessible, like having ramps for wheelchairs."

Information, materials, and/or technical assistance are intended solely as informal guidance, and are neither a determination of your legal rights or responsibilities under the ADA, nor binding on any agency with enforcement responsibility under the ADA.

The Northeast ADA Center is authorized by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) to provide information, materials, and technical assistance to individuals and entities that are covered by the ADA. The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from NIDILRR, grant number 90DPAD0003. NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

- **Education:** "Kids with disabilities have the right to go to school and have a chance to learn just like everyone else."
- **Equal Opportunity (Fair Treatment):** "The ADA helps make sure that people with disabilities are treated fairly and not left out."
- Play video cartoon segment about the ADA
- You can show pictures or simple illustrations that demonstrate how the ADA improves life for people with disabilities (e.g., ramps, accessible bathrooms, sign language interpreters).

3. Activity: "ADA Rights Scavenger Hunt" (10 minutes):

- Divide the class into small groups (3-4 students per group).
- Give each group a set of **"ADA Rights Cards"**. Each card should list a different right or protection provided by the ADA (e.g., "Access to public transportation," "Right to accommodations at school," "Accessible playgrounds"). ADA Rights Cards can be found below for printing.
- Hide these cards around the classroom or play area.
- Set a timer for 5 minutes and have the students search for the cards. Each time a group finds a card, they must read it aloud to the class and explain what it means.
- After the hunt, discuss each card briefly with the class to ensure everyone understands the different protections and rights provided by the ADA.

4. Discussion and Reflection (5 minutes):

- Gather the students and ask the following questions:
 - "What did you learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act?"
 - "Why is it important that people with disabilities have equal access to buildings, schools, and opportunities?"
 - "Can you think of a time when someone might need the help of the ADA to be treated fairly?"
 - Can you think of things in the school itself that might make the building easier for students with disabilities to navigate?
- Encourage students to share their thoughts and experiences. Reinforce that the ADA helps everyone by ensuring that all people, regardless of their abilities, have equal chances to succeed and participate in society. For example, curb cuts don't just help people who used wheelchairs or walkers, they also help people who have baby strollers.

5. Optional Extension: "Inclusion in Action" (5 minutes):

- Ask students to brainstorm ways they can make their school or community more inclusive for people with disabilities. Write their ideas on the board.
- Some ideas might include:
 - Using kind language to include everyone.
 - Making sure there are accessible places to play and learn.
 - Helping friends who might need extra support or accommodations.
- Encourage students to work together to put some of these ideas into action in their own classrooms or community.

Wrap-Up (5 minutes):

- Close the activity by reminding students that the ADA is a law that helps make sure everyone is treated fairly, no matter their ability.
- Reinforce that we all have a role in making the world a more inclusive place for people with disabilities, whether through small acts of kindness or advocating for fairness and access.

Extensions:

Field Trip: If possible, visit a public space (like a library or community center) to observe ADA accommodations like ramps, accessible bathrooms, braille signage, or elevators. Note that this could also be done in school facilities as well.

Materials below:

- ADA Fact Cards (first set)
- Illustrations of Disability-related devices (last page)



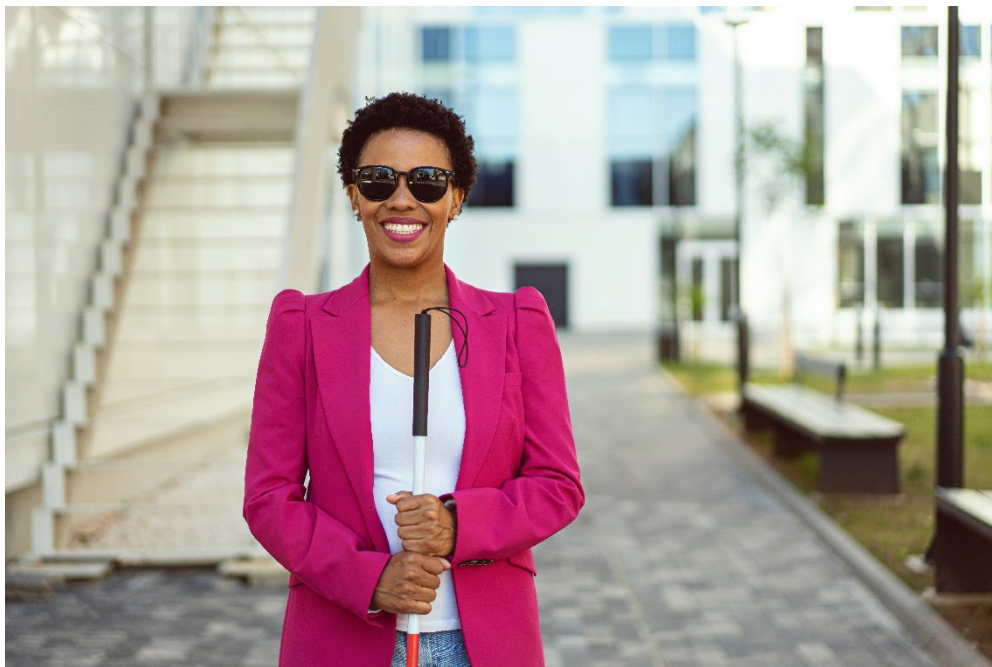
**Access to public transportation like
buses, trains and subways**



**Rights to accommodations at school like
extra time for tests or using braille books**



Access to Stores, Restaurants and Parks



Right to have an equal chance to work



Right to be treated like others



Right to bring a service animal into public places



White Cane



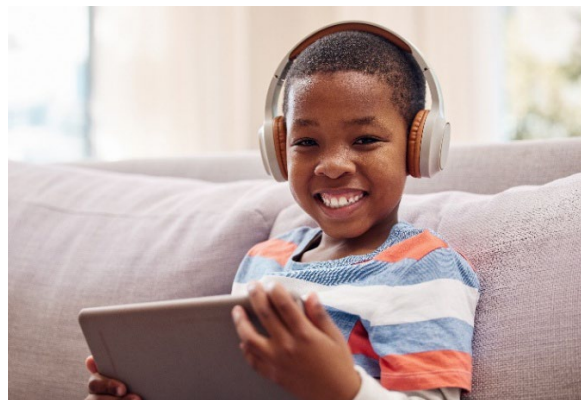
Hearing Aid



Braille



Wheelchair



Headphones and Tablet
(Augmentative and Communication (AAC) Device)