

Different Gifts, Same Spirit

Creating a Learning Community Where Everyone Belongs

DIRECTOR'S GUIDE

This series of lesson plans, developed by Pathways.org in partnership with the Archdiocese of Chicago, is provided to help your house of faith or religious school teach families and students in grade four through high school about the gifts received when people of all abilities belong in our schools, religious education programs and parishes.

INTRODUCTION

The Director of Religious Education at a large suburban parish tells of a lesson she learned about belonging one Sunday afternoon. Her parish had a food drive at Thanksgiving time. On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, signs were posted and announcements were made inviting anyone who wanted to help pack food to meet in the parish hall at 2 p.m. Shortly after 2 p.m., as the DRE was helping to organize a small group of volunteers, in walked three young men who happened to have disabilities. They all lived near the church and attended Mass there every weekend. Wrongly assuming the men were food recipients only, the DRE rushed up to tell them to go home and wait for the food to be delivered.

Puzzled, they pointed to the sign that read, "Everyone welcome to help pack food boxes," and one man asked, "It says 'everyone.' Didn't you mean us? Can we help?"



When she told this story at a recent DRE meeting, she remarked, "This experience has made me look at giving and receiving very differently! Sometimes the people we perceive to be the neediest can be the most gifted of all!"

BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE THESE MATERIALS

Look over all the lesson plans and student pages and decide how your parish and school will use these materials. Some parishes may choose to present the material in conjunction with That Every Ability May Belong Month.

Notice that a Family Guide is included with these lesson plans. Decide how to best distribute the Family Guide to families in your school or parish program.

If at all possible, have a meeting with your catechists/teachers to introduce or review the concept of belonging several weeks before you plan to use these materials.

MEETING PLAN

1. Play the That Every Ability May Belong Video Training as an introduction to creating a school and worship community where every ability belongs. Allow people to express their concerns, share their experiences and ask questions.
2. Read aloud Ten Ways to Create Belonging on page four.
3. Read aloud 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

FAITH SHARING: REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- Lead the group in a reflection and discussion session on what you have read aloud.
- Begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit.
- Use the following questions for a discussion of belonging:
 - a) How do we feel when we are excluded?
 - b) How do we feel when we belong?
 - c) How can we promote belonging for all abilities in our classrooms and parishes?
- Use the following questions for a discussion of the giftedness of all people:
 - d) What gifts do I see and appreciate in the people around me in this parish and school?



- e) Why has this passage been chosen for a lesson on belonging for all abilities in school and parish life?
 - f) What experiences have I had with people who have disabilities? How have I made them feel they belong? How have I recognized their gifts?
4. Distribute copies of the lesson plans for intermediate, junior high and high school students to catechists/ teachers. Provide copies of the family lesson plan to all the catechists/ teachers. Give catechists/ teachers time to read the teacher guide and look over the student pages for their grade level.
 5. Explain how you would like the teachers to use the plans or have them help you decide how to use the plans. Many parishes and schools are using the plans during their observance of That Every Ability May Belong Month (see p. 3 for ideas).

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- **That Every Ability May Belong Video Training** free at www.TEAMBelong.org.
- **Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors** video featuring Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and Fr. Henri Nouwen, free at www.TEAMBelong.org.
- **The Vulnerable Journey**, video featuring Father Henri Nouwen speaking about the importance of belonging for people of all abilities in church life, free at www.TEAMBelong.org.
- **National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities (NCPD)**, www.ncpd.org
- **Loyola Press Adaptive Finding God**, www.loyolapress.com
- **The 5 Stages of Disability Attitudes**. Vinnie Adams, Jan. 23, 2019, Disability Concerns, www.youtube.com
- **Incomplete Without You: The Church and People with Disabilities**, Eric W. Carter, Feb. 6 2019, www.youtube.com

RESOURCES FOR THAT EVERY ABILITY MAY BELONG MONTH

Your school and parish are invited to celebrate an annual That Every Ability May Belong Month to reflect on how well we create belonging for parishioners and students with disabilities and their families. Your school and parish can join this effort with these and other resources at www.TEAMBelong.org.

- **TEAM Belong Month Workbook**
- **Prayer Cards**
- **TEAM Belong Month Checklist**
- **Blessing for an Accessible Feature**
- **TEAM Belong Month Family Guide**
- **Bulletin Items**

Produced and distributed by
Pathways .org TEAM Belong: That Every Ability May Belong
1-800-364-1337 www.TEAMBelong.org

Contributing writers: Peg Bowman, Lois De Felice, Marilyn Krawczyk and Sue Weilgus
With Ecclesiastical Approbation – Archdiocese of Chicago – September 8, 1999

TEN WAYS TO CREATE BELONGING

So often we think we have done our job if individuals with disabilities are present. But that is only the first step. So much more work follows to ensure that individuals of all abilities experience true belonging. Below are some good ideas to welcome all abilities in the area of belonging.

The Stages of Belonging	
People of all abilities and their families are:	When we:
1. PRESENT	Provide an accessible campus.
2. INVITED	Extend personal invitations as a first step in getting to know someone and the accommodations they may need.
3. WELCOMED	Know and use disability etiquette to offer hospitality to all.
4. KNOWN	Spend time talking about interests, family and passions.
5. ACCEPTED	Plan personal interactions over time to get to know each other better.
6. SUPPORTED	Ask, "What can we do for you?"
7. CARED FOR	Show kindness and genuine concern.
8. BEFRIENDED	Extend invitations to join other groups to facilitate more friendships.
9. NEEDED	Provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to minister to others.
10. LOVED	Express gratitude for the contributions of individuals with disabilities.

*Adapted with permission from Reflecting on Belonging
by Erik Carter, Vanderbilt University, www.erikwcarter.com.*

KNOW YOUR DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Use the tips below so that you know how to comfortably interact with classmates and parishioners of all abilities.

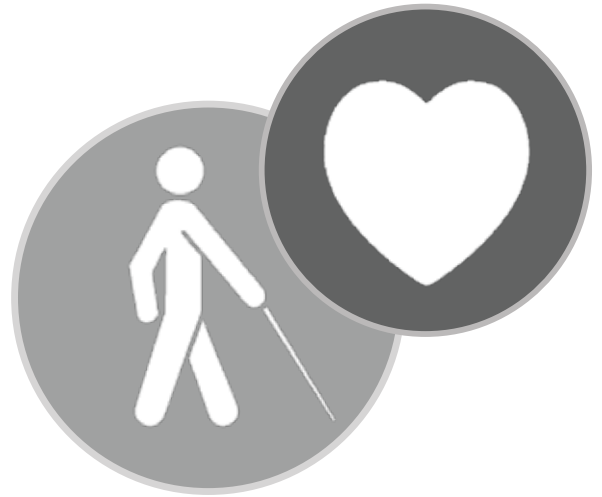
GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What do you say when you meet a person with a disability? How about, “Hello?”
2. A warm smile and friendly conversation are very welcoming.
3. Speak directly to the person with a disability, not only to the family member, companion, interpreter or canine companion.
4. Use people-first language such as “people with disabilities” NOT “the disabled” and “a parishioner who is blind” NOT “a blind parishioner.”
5. Ask the person with the disability HOW you can help. Respect any refusal.
6. Offer accessible seating, large-print bulletins, missalettes, or assistive listening devices. Know where accessible washrooms are.
7. Recognize that each person has gifts and abilities. Ask parishioners with disabilities if they would like to usher, bring up the gifts, proclaim the word, etc. and provide any accommodations needed.
8. Be sensitive to where a person wishes to receive communion – at their seat or at the altar – and make sure they are accommodated.
9. Feel comfortable using words like see, walk, and listen with persons with disabilities.
10. Use accessibility logos in print materials and on signage.



WELCOMING PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE VISION LOSS

1. Identify yourself when you greet the person. Tell the person when you are about to leave.
2. Talk normally, using your customary voice and typical expressions like “See you later.”
3. Offer your arm when assisting, the same way an usher does at a wedding.
4. Give verbal cues such as “We are going through a doorway.” Explain the traffic pattern with clear, calm instructions such as “Go up the center aisle.”



WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY DIFFERENCES

1. Speak directly to the person.
2. Offer assistance, but accept a “No, thank you.”
3. Sit down so that you are at eye-level if the conversation will last more than a few minutes.
4. Shake hands or lightly touch a shoulder in the same way you would with others.
5. Keep a person’s wheelchair or walker near the person.

WELCOMING PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

1. Face the person. He/she will appreciate seeing your facial expression and may read your lips. Your face, gestures, and body movements help in understanding.
2. Move closer rather than shout.
3. Speak clearly and slowly. Writing may be necessary. →

WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH SPEECH DIFFERENCES

1. Be patient. Let a person talk at his/her own pace.
2. Remember a person may have communication means other than speech, such as writing.
3. Ask questions that require short answers or a shake of the head. If you cannot understand, rephrase the question.
4. Repeat or paraphrase what was said in order to confirm that you understand.



WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES

1. Greet the person and interact normally.
2. Keep things simple and uncomplicated.
3. Treat people equally regardless of participation level; give prayer books or hymnals to all; allow everyone a chance to speak.