

Example Lesson Plan

University of Wisconsin-Madison: Social Justice Lab

Leader: Molly Mattaini

Time: 75 minutes

Target age group: College and up

Number of participants: Approx. 10

Goal: Students will understand systemic discrimination against people with disabilities and contemplate ways of upending the power structures which keep segregation as the norm

Objectives:

- Shift perspective to focus on the social injustices of segregation, rather than the medical handicaps of disability
- Gain information on how many disability services are structured
- Reflect on how able-bodied and neurotypical people can contribute to a more just society

Warm-Ups

Stretch and Share – 5 Minutes

Objective: Introduce (or re-introduce) participants to one another. Gather information about the group and validate experiences

Instructions: Gather in a standing circle. Follow the basic stretches led by the facilitator. As you stretch, check in with your own body and only do what feels comfortable for you. As we stretch, we will go around the circle and share names as well as a one-sentence summary of your experience with the disability community. If your experience is extensive, do your best to pick out a few important highlights.

Starter

Slow Motion Race – 5 minutes

Objective: Get participants used to moving their bodies in silent, expressive ways. This activity will also connect thematically with the story in our next activity.

Instructions: Move from one side of the room to another in a slow-motion race. The objective of this activity is to be the last person to cross the room. You must take wide steps as if you were running but exaggerate the movement at a slow speed.

Transition: Please move to a sitting circle in the middle of the room.

Activities

Hierarchies Game – 20 minutes

1. Give all students the same section of text (The Tortoise and the Hare) and writing utensils.
2. Instruction one: First, please write your name at the top of your paper. Before you read the text, circle all of the T's you can find, once you have all the T's circled, raise your hand and I will collect your paper.
3. As the facilitator collects papers, place them in piles. The fastest 2/3 of the group will be sorted into group A, the slowest 1/3 will be sorted into group B.
4. Instruction two: Many of you are ready to move on to reading the story, but a few of you still need to work on identifying letters. I would like these people (read names of fast circlers) to move on to reading the story to themselves. I would like these people (read names of slow circles) to keep working on circling letters. Group A, read the story to yourself, group B, I would like you to circle all the Hs you see in the text.
5. Group A will continue to progress: identify the themes of the story, identify the characters. Stage the story. The fastest circler is the director of the piece (gets to make choices about staging and casting).
6. Group B will keep getting instructions to circle different letters: A, B, C, D....
7. Once group A has their story ready to perform, ask group B to stop their task to cheer them on

Reflection 1: Team B, how did you feel being segregated? Team A, did you notice that team B was not being included? What real-life circumstance do you think was a metaphor for?

Instruction: Pre- Means Never¹

While there has been significant progress in the academic world of special education and some places are implementing more inclusive and creative models of curriculum access, many special education programs still rely on segregated environments and outdated

¹ Paraphrased from Brown, L. Branston, M. B., Hamre-Nietupski, S., Pumpian, I., Certo, N. & Gruenewald, L. (1979). A strategy for developing chronological age appropriate and functional curricular content for severely handicapped adolescents and young adults. *Journal of Special Education*, 13, 81-90.

“stage” theories of human development. These theories see human development as inflexible, linear stages of motor, social, and cognitive skills. Because most typically-developing infants pass through these stages in a linear way, it is assumed that people with disabilities who have not yet mastered certain basic skills *must* be taught to master those skills before moving on to more complex learning. This thinking leads to students being stuck doing the same, repetitive tasks for years, denying them the opportunity to learn age-appropriate content and to develop relationships with their same-age peers.

Reflection 2: What would have been a fairer way to run that activity? How could we apply that to special education?

Popcorn Reading – 15 minutes

Place papers with excerpts from texts on segregated environments in the circle. Ask participants to pick up one paper at a time, read it silently put it back, and pick up a new paper. If you pick up the same paper a few times, that is ok, just read it again.

Topics:

- **Education**
- **Housing**
- **Employment**
- **General Perceptions**

Example Popcorn Quote: Education²

Perhaps the most glaring example of an educational practice that forces students to earn the right to belong is the maintenance of segregated special classrooms and programs. The practice of making segregated classrooms an intermediary and prerequisite step toward inclusion within regular classrooms explicitly validates the perception that belonging is something that must be earned, rather than an essential human need and a basic human right. Although the intent of segregation is to help students with disabilities learn skills and appropriate behavior, the very act of removing students with disabilities from the other students necessarily teaches them that “they are not good enough to belong as they are” and that the privilege of belonging will be granted back to them once they have acquired an undefined number of skills.

² Kunc, Nathan. “The Need to Belong: Rediscovering Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.” *Broadreach Training and Resources*. Originally published in: Villa, R., Thousand, J., Stainback, W. & Stainback, S. *Restructuring for Caring & Effective Education*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes, 1992.

Example Popcorn Quote: Perceptions³

How many times have we all heard it: “He has the mind of a two-year-old.” This is plain wrong. Children with disabilities do not remain children their whole lives. Even if a person’s intellectual capacity is limited, he or she still grows into an adult with adult needs. Reading at a two-year-old’s level, or having incontinence, for example, do not equate with being two years old. Even emotionally immature adults legally deemed incompetent still must be viewed and treated as adults. This does not mean they should be treated exactly the same as everyone else, but as adults with the same needs and desires as everyone else.

Have a poster board or blackboard ready, ask everyone to stand at the board and write three words that they found most important from the things they read.

Boal Image Theatre Transformation – 15 minutes

Split participants into 3 groups and assign them one of these locations.

- Special education
- Sheltered workshops
- Group homes

³ DiLeo, Dale. Raymond's Room: Ending the Segregation of People with Disabilities (Kindle Locations 2569-2574). Training Resource Network, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

Using the contextual information they gained from the reading activity, ask students to create a scene from these locations, with a focus on who has the power in those situations

1. Create a tableau with the members of your group of what that location looks like now.
2. Create a tableau that represents the ideal that your group would like to see which accomplishes the same goal as the current location

Spotlight to share the tableaux with the other groups. Ask the outside groups to reflect on what they see in the tableaux.

3. Now create an in-between image, which represents how you would like to see the change happen from the current image into the ideal image.

Have groups share the 3 tableaux sequence in order. Ask for outside reflection.

Disappearing Circles – 10 minutes

Have a picture of concentric circles on a poster board or blackboard for reference. Distribute the paper and pencils to participants

1. In the inner most circle, write the names of the people you know most intimately. The people you see most frequently, rely on the most, and love the most.
2. In the second most inner circle, write the names of the people who are in your close circle of friends, but not your most intimate circle. People you see or talk to frequently, who you trust.
3. In the third circle, write the names of the people who are in your orbit of friends but who you are not particularly close with. These might be people you see in group settings but would never see one-on-one. This might also include people you know primarily because of a shared interest, like a fellow student you frequently work with or someone who is on a team with you.
4. In the fourth circle, write anyone who is paid to be around you. This might include professors, bus drivers, baristas. Anyone who you might have a warm interaction with but who you would be unlikely to see if their job did not require them to see you.
5. Once everyone is done, ask them **to erase circles 2 and 3**. Explain that this is the normal social construct for people with disabilities – they have family members and staff who are paid to work with them, but they do not have the vast network of people who are casual friends. In addition, if anyone in your intimate circle is someone you met as an adult – a close friend from later school or a romantic partner, ask yourself where you met that person. How likely would you be to know that person if you had not been allowed the education and employment opportunities you were allowed?

Final Reflection – 5 minutes

1. Did you gain any insights from what you did today?
2. Did you see any images in the final activity, of the ideal image or the transformational image, which inspired you?
3. Are there any actions you can take now or in the future to make society more just for people with disabilities?