A Mix-and-Match Mini-Lesson Collection · The CMT Library

Everyone Belongs!

A collection of mini-lessons you can **combine, mix, and match** to spark conversations about **disability inclusion**. Pair them with inclusive books and stories about disability, difference, and belonging.

Grades K–5 | Read-aloud lesson + 5 mini-lessons | Mix & match in any order



Hayden shares *Bernadette Goes to School* with her kindergarten class.



Bernadette and Robin, who both live with CMT, read *Bernadette Goes to School* to an elementary class.



Charity Harris, who lives with CMT, reads her book *What If We Were All the Same!* at a local library.

Inclusive stories come alive when the people who live them share them.

Four big ideas

Every lesson in this collection connects back to one of these. Post them on the board as you teach.

1. Be a Good Friend

Friends are kind, patient, and ask before they help. Friendship is about having fun together, not doing things for someone.

"What makes someone a good friend to you?"

2. Show Empathy

Empathy means imagining how someone else feels and caring about it. We listen to understand, not to fix.

"How do you think they felt? How would you feel?"

3. Include Others

Inclusion means making room so everyone can play, learn, and take part, sometimes by changing *how* we do things.

"How could we change the game so everyone can play?"

4. Celebrate Differences

Disability is a natural part of being human. Our differences make our classroom stronger and more interesting.

"What is one thing that makes you, you?"

How this collection works



These mini-lessons are building blocks. **Each one stands on its own**, so you can combine, mix, and match them in any order to fit your class, your schedule, and the inclusive books and stories you are sharing. Use one for a quick conversation, or put them all together for a week of belonging.

1 Pick a book or story
Any inclusive book or story about disability, difference, or belonging. See the book list on page 3.

2 Pick your lessons
Choose one or more from the menu below. Start anywhere!

3 Read, talk & do
Read before, after, or between lessons. Keep the conversation going.

The lesson menu

Read-Aloud Lesson
45–60 min · p. 5

Read with "Big Idea Eyes," talk, and create.

📚 Pairs well with: *Any inclusive book*

1 · Understanding Disability
15–20 min · pp. 6–8

What disability is, tools we all use, seen and unseen.

📚 Pairs well with: *A character who explains their disability*

2 · Empathy: Imagine It
15–20 min · p. 9

How would it feel to be left out, or included?

📚 Pairs well with: *A character who feels left out*

3 · Be an Upstander
15–20 min · pp. 10, 15

Stop bullying and turn hurtful words into helpful ones.

📚 Pairs well with: *Stories with teasing or unkindness*

4 · Ask, Help & Include
15–20 min · p. 11

Asking before helping, and including on the playground and in class.

📚 Pairs well with: *Friendship and playground stories*

5 · Meet an Expert
30–40 min · pp. 12–14

A guest reader or student shares their lived experience.

📚 Pairs well with: *A book chosen by your guest*

Extras you can add to any lesson: scenario cards (p. 15), choice stations (p. 16), student pages for K–2 and 3–5 (pp. 18–19), and a family letter (p. 20).

Mix-and-match ideas

Quick chat 15–20 min
Read any book, then teach **one** mini-lesson.

One afternoon 60–75 min
Read-Aloud Lesson + **Empathy** (2).

Kindness focus 3 short sessions
Empathy (2) + **Upstander** (3) + scenario cards.

Recess ready 2 short sessions
Understanding (1) + **Ask, Help & Include** (4).

Guest day 30–40 min
Meet an Expert (5), then thank-you notes.

Full week 5–6 days
All of it, one per day. See the sample plan on page 4.

Books to share from The CMT Library



Pair any lesson in this collection with one of these children's books, written by or with members of the disability and CMT community. **Point your phone camera at a code** to find the book.

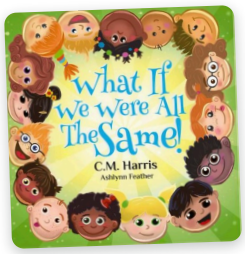


Bernadette Goes to School

Featuring Bernadette Scarduzio

A school story that introduces CMT through disability, friendship, and belonging.

Scan to buy the book



What If We Were All the Same!

By Charity Harris (C.M. Harris)

A rhyming celebration of the differences that make each of us unique.

Scan to buy the book

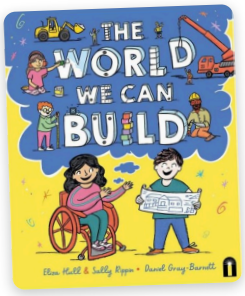


Come Over to My House

By Eliza Hull & Sally Rippin, illustrated by Daniel Gray-Barnett

Visit the homes of Deaf and disabled families and see how they make spaces work.

Scan to buy the book



The World We Can Build

By Eliza Hull & Sally Rippin, illustrated by Daniel Gray-Barnett

A story about accessibility and creating spaces where everyone belongs.

Scan to buy the book



CMT & Me

By Brooke Shapiro

A gentle way to start conversations about CMT with families and educators.

Scan to buy the book

Explore the full CMT Library

More books for kids, families, and classrooms, plus free classroom lesson plans.

curecmt.org/living-with-cmt/library



Before you begin

Here is one way to bring the whole collection together across a week. Swap days, skip lessons, or repeat favorites. Most mini-lessons take 15–20 minutes; the guest visit takes 30–40.

Sample plan: a week of belonging

Day 1
Mini-lesson 1
What is disability? Tools we all use, and disabilities seen and unseen
pp. 6–8

Day 2
Read-aloud lesson
Read-aloud with "Big Idea Eyes," discussion, and student pages
p. 5

Day 3
Mini-lesson 2
Empathy: Imagine it. How would it feel to be left out or included?
p. 9

Day 4
Mini-lesson 3
Be an Upstander, plus role-play with the scenario cards
pp. 10, 15

Day 5
Mini-lesson 4
Ask, help, and include. Kindness circle and family letter home
pp. 11, 20

Bonus day
Mini-lesson 5
Meet an expert: a guest reader or student speaker
pp. 12–14

Students will be able to...

- Describe what it means to be a good friend
- Name feelings a character might have and explain why
- Suggest one way to include a classmate
- Share something that makes them unique and celebrate it in others

Materials

- Any disability inclusion picture book (see page 3)
- Chart paper and markers
- Student pages (K–2 and 3–5 versions included)
- Crayons, colored pencils, optional sticky notes
- Scenario cards (page 15), cut apart
- "I'm the Expert!" planner and thank-you notes (pages 13–14)
- Family take-home letter (last page)

In our class, we...

🤝 include everyone

💜 care how others feel

🙋 ask before we help

📣 speak up when it's unkind

🌈 celebrate differences

Copy these onto chart paper as your class agreements, and have students sign their names around the edges.

Our goal: every child leaves knowing that **everyone is different, everyone needs help sometimes, and everyone belongs.**

The read-aloud lesson



10 min

Warm-up: Same and Different

Ask students to stand (or raise a hand, wave, or hold up a card, so everyone can join in) when a statement is true for them: *"I have a pet." "I like to draw." "I have a brother or sister." "I wear glasses." "I like quiet places."*

Then ask: **What did you notice?** Guide students to see that we are all alike in some ways and different in others, and that both are good.

Vocabulary to introduce: **disability**, **empathy**, **include**, **different**, **accessible** (Mini-lesson 1, pages 6–8, goes deeper).

15 min

Read Aloud: Read with "Big Idea Eyes"

Before reading, show the cover and ask: *"What do you think this story will be about? Who do you think we will meet?"* Pause 3–4 times while reading. Use these prompts with any book:

Big idea	Pause and ask
Friend	Who is being a good friend right now? What are they doing or saying?
Empathy	How is the character feeling? Look at their face and body. Have you ever felt that way?
Include	Is anyone being left out? What could someone do so they can join in?
Celebrate	What is special about this character? What do they do in their own way?

10 min

Talk About It: Discussion

Use turn-and-talk first, then share as a group. Choose questions for your grade:

Grades K–2

- What did the character like to do?
- How did the friends help each other?
- Show me a face for how they felt.
- How could you be a friend like that?

Grades 3–5

- What was hard for the character, and was it the disability or how others acted?
- Where did you see empathy? Where was it missing?
- What changes made a place or game more accessible?
- What would you do differently after reading this?

15–20 min

Create: Student Activity

K–2: "I Can Be a Good Friend" page (page 18). Students draw and finish sentences about friendship and what makes them special.

3–5: "Empathy & Inclusion" page (page 19). Students complete an empathy map for a character and write a class inclusion pledge.

Optional choice stations and extensions are on page 16.

5 min

Close: Kindness Circle

Each student shares one way they will include someone this week (by speaking, signing, pointing to a picture, or passing). Add ideas to a class **"Everyone Belongs"** poster to keep on the wall.

Mini-lesson 1 of 5 **Understanding Disability** 15–20 min · Teach before the read-aloud

What is disability?

Say it simply

Every body and every brain is a little different. A **disability** is when a person's body or brain works in a different way than most people's. It might change how someone **moves, sees, hears, learns, talks,** or **feels the world around them**.

Disability is a normal part of life. Kids, grown-ups, teachers, athletes, artists, and maybe even someone in your family have a disability. **Some disabilities you can see. Many you can't see from the outside.**

Having a disability doesn't mean someone is sad, sick, or can't have fun. It means they might do some things in their own way, or use tools to help, just like you!



We all use tools to help us

- **Glasses** help eyes see clearly
- **A step stool** helps you reach high shelves
- **Training wheels** help you learn to ride
- **Headphones** make loud places quieter
- **A wheelchair** helps someone get where they want to go
- **Hearing aids** help ears hear
- **A prosthetic leg** helps someone walk, run, and play
- **An audiobook** helps someone enjoy a story

Tools don't make anyone "less." They help each of us do the things we love.

Activity: Same Goal, Different Way

Ask: *"How many ways can you say hello?"* (talk, wave, sign, smile, write, fist bump). *"How many ways can you get across the room?"* (walk, roll, hop, with a friend).

Big idea: There is more than one right way to do almost everything.

Activity: Strengths & Stretches

Everyone shares one thing that is **easy** for them and one thing that is **hard**. Teacher goes first!

Big idea: Everybody has different abilities. Nobody is good at everything, and that's okay.

Teacher tip: different, not sad. Skip words like "suffers from," "poor thing," or "special needs." Many disabled people say their disability is simply part of who they are. The goal is understanding and respect, not feeling sorry for anyone.



Disabilities you can't always see

Some disabilities are on the inside. You might not know a friend has one unless they tell you. **Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it isn't real.**

♾ Autism

An autistic kid's brain notices the world in its own way. Loud sounds, bright lights, or scratchy clothes might feel extra big. Some love to talk about favorite topics; some talk in other ways.

Helpful tools: headphones, quiet spaces, picture schedules, knowing what comes next.

Be a friend: Invite them to play their way. Give space when it's loud. It's okay if they don't look you in the eye.

📖 Dyslexia

The brain works differently with letters and words, so reading and spelling take more time. It has nothing to do with how smart someone is!

Helpful tools: audiobooks, extra time, easy-to-read fonts, reading with a buddy.

Be a friend: Never laugh when someone reads slowly. Be patient and cheer them on.

🎨 Color blindness

Eyes see some colors differently. Red and green might look almost the same. About 1 in 12 boys is color blind!

Helpful tools: labels on markers, shapes and patterns instead of just colors, color-blind settings in games.

Be a friend: Tell them a color if they ask. Never say "you picked the wrong color."

⚡ ADHD

The brain is busy and fast. Sitting still, waiting, or focusing for a long time can be hard. Kids with ADHD often have lots of energy and great ideas.

Helpful tools: movement breaks, fidget tools, checklists, timers.

Be a friend: Be patient and remind kindly. They are not "bad" or "annoying."

👂 Deaf or hard of hearing

Some people hear a little and some don't hear at all. Many use their eyes to "listen."

Helpful tools: hearing aids, cochlear implants, sign language, captions, lip reading.

Be a friend: Face them when you talk and don't cover your mouth. Learn a few signs together!

🦶 Tired muscles & nerves, like CMT

With Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT), nerves don't send messages to muscles as well. Hands and feet can get tired, weak, or wobbly, even when you can't tell by looking.

Helpful tools: rest breaks, pencil grips, braces, sitting down when needed.

Be a friend: Never call someone lazy or slow. Try: "Want to take a break together?"



Disabilities you can see

Some differences are on the outside. They are one part of a person, not the whole person. Every one of these kids still loves to play, laugh, learn, and have friends.

Wheelchair users

Some people use a wheelchair because their legs work differently or get tired. A wheelchair isn't sad. It means freedom to go places!

Helpful tools: ramps, elevators, wide doors, smooth paths on the playground.

Be a friend: Don't touch or push the chair without asking. It's part of their personal space.

Leg braces

Braces (sometimes called AFOs) help feet and ankles stay steady so walking and running are easier. Kids with CMT, cerebral palsy, or spina bifida might wear them.

Helpful tools: braces, special shoes, handrails, extra time on stairs.

Be a friend: Walk at their pace. Never make fun of their shoes or the way they walk.

Limb differences

Some kids are born without part of an arm, hand, or leg, or lose one later. Some use a prosthetic and some don't. They find clever ways to do things!

Helpful tools: prosthetics, adapted tools, their own creativity.

Be a friend: Curious? Ask kindly or ask a grown-up. Don't stare, point, or grab.

Looking different

Some people look different because of how they were born, a birthmark, a scar, a skin condition, or being smaller than most. On the inside, they're kids just like you.

What helps most: being treated like everyone else.

Be a friend: Say hi instead of staring. Get to know them!

Blind or low vision

Some people see a little and some don't see at all. They use their hands, ears, and memory in amazing ways.

Helpful tools: a white cane, a guide dog, braille, large print, audio books.

Be a friend: Say your name when you say hi. Ask before guiding. Don't pet a guide dog; it's working!

Walkers & crutches

Some kids use a walker or crutches to help with balance, like many kids with cerebral palsy. They might move a little slower or take a different path.

Helpful tools: walkers, crutches, clear hallways, extra time.

Be a friend: Keep walkways clear. Hold the door and wait. Save them a spot in line.

Curious? That's okay!

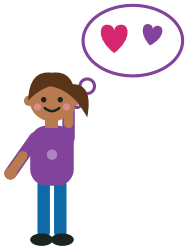
It's natural to notice differences. Instead of staring or pointing, smile and say hi. If you have a question, ask a grown-up, or kindly ask, *"Can I ask about your braces?"* If they say no, that's okay too.

Mini-lesson 2 of 5 **Empathy: Imagine It** 15–20 min · Before or after reading

Step into someone else's shoes

Say it simply

Empathy means using your imagination to understand how someone else feels, and then caring about it. Let's close our eyes and imagine. Remember: having a disability isn't bad or sad. It's just one more way to be a person. Let's think about what it might really be like.



Imagine if...

1. ...your legs got tired really fast, and everyone was racing to the slide.
2. ...the letters wiggled when you read, and it was your turn to read out loud.
3. ...the noise in the cafeteria felt as loud as a fire truck.
4. ...you used a wheelchair, and your friends wanted to play on the woodchips.

After each one, ask: How might you feel? · What would you *still* love to do? · What would you want your friends to know? · What would help?

Usually the hardest part isn't the disability. It's being left out or treated unkindly. **And that part, we can change!**

How would it feel?

To be left out

Nobody picks you for a team. A group says, "You can't play, you're too slow."

lonely · sad · invisible · left behind

To be made fun of

Kids laugh at how you walk, read, talk, or look, or copy you to be funny.

embarrassed · hurt · angry · scared

To be included

A friend says, "Come play with us! Let's pick a game we can all do."

happy · proud · safe · I belong

Ask: Have you ever felt left out? What did someone do (or what *could* they have done) to help you feel better?

Why imagine instead of pretend? Activities like blindfolds or spending a day in a wheelchair can make disability seem scary or sad, and they don't show the creative ways disabled people live full lives. Imagining keeps the focus on feelings and on what friends can do.

Mini-lesson 3 of 5 **Stop Bullying: Be an Upstander** 15–20 min · Pair with scenario cards

Kindness out loud

What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone is mean **on purpose**, **again and again**, to hurt someone. It can look like:

- Making fun of how someone walks, talks, reads, or looks
- Copying or acting out someone's disability to get laughs
- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Name-calling, staring and whispering, or being mean online



Making fun of someone's difference is never "just a joke."

Joke check: Is everyone laughing, including the person? Would you want someone to say it about you? If not, it's not a joke.

Don't just stand by. Be an UPSTANDER!

A **bystander** sees something mean and does nothing. An **upstander** does something to help.

1 Speak up
"Stop. That's not okay."
"That's not funny."

2 Stand with
Go stand next to them.
"Come play with us!"

3 Tell a grown-up
Telling to keep someone safe is **not** tattling.

4 Check in later
"Are you okay?
I'm glad you're my friend."

Turn hurtful words into helpful words

Hurtful	Helpful
"You walk funny."	"Want to walk together?"
"You can't play. You're too slow."	"Let's pick a game we can all play."
"Ew, what happened to your hand?"	"Hi, I'm Sam! Want to sit with me?"
"Why do you read like a baby?"	"Take your time. You've got this."
"Why are you covering your ears? Weird."	"Is it too loud? Want to go somewhere quieter?"

Teacher tip: Listen for disability words used as insults (like the R-word, "lame," "spaz," or "crazy"). Calmly name it, explain that it hurts real people, and offer another word. Practice the four upstander steps by role-playing the scenario cards.

Mini-lesson 4 of 5 **Good Friends Ask, Help & Include** 15–20 min · After reading

Everybody needs help sometimes

Say it simply

Teachers need help. Parents need help. Even superheroes have sidekicks! Needing help is **normal**, and asking for help is **brave**. A good friend doesn't take over. A good friend **asks first**, then listens.

Ask: When did someone help *you*?
Tying shoes, opening a snack, solving a hard problem, carrying something heavy... Everyone in this room has needed help, and everyone can be a helper.



How to help: Ask, Listen, Help their way

1. Ask
"Do you want some help?"

→

2. Listen
Yes? "How can I help?"
No? "Okay!" and that's fine.

→

3. Help their way
Do it the way they ask, not the way you think.

Please don't: grab someone's wheelchair, walker, crutches, or things · finish someone's words for them · do it for them just because it's faster

Make everyone feel included

⚽ On the playground

- Look for someone alone and ask, "Want to play?"
- Change the rules so everyone can play: walking tag, seated catch, "freeze" with a wave
- Play where everyone can get to, like the blacktop instead of woodchips
- Take turns choosing the game
- Pick teams so no one is always last

✏️ In the classroom

- Choose a new partner, not just your best friend
- Be patient when someone reads, talks, or works slowly
- Keep aisles clear for wheelchairs and walkers
- Face a friend who reads lips
- Describe pictures for a friend who can't see them
- Give space when things feel too loud

🍎 At lunch & in the hall

- Save a seat and wave someone over
- Walk at a friend's pace
- Hold the door and wait
- Ask about their favorite things
- Say hi to someone new every day

Fair doesn't mean everyone gets the same thing. **Fair means everyone gets what they need.** Glasses for one friend, extra time for another, a ramp for another.

Mini-lesson 5 of 5 **Meet an Expert: Guest Reader or Student Speaker** 30–40 min

An expert on their own life



Say it simply

Today we have a special visitor! Our guest is an **expert on their own life**. They will read a story and teach us what life is like for them. Experts get our **best listening** and our **kindest questions**.

📅 Before the visit

- **Invite** a disabled adult (a parent, community member, or someone from the CMT community), or a student who *wants* to share.
- **Let the guest lead.** They choose the book, what to share, and what's off-limits.
- **Collect questions** ahead of time and send them to the guest.
- **Practice kind questions** with the class (page 14).
- **Check access:** seating, a mic, breaks.
- **Say thank you for real:** offer adult guests a gift card or honorarium when you can.

🎤 During the visit

1. **Welcome!** A class cheer or a "hello" in sign language.
2. **Read-aloud (10 min).** The guest reads a book they picked and adds their own stories.
3. **Same as Me! (5 min).** The guest shares favorites (food, pets, sports). Kids wave if it's true for them too.
4. **Show & Tell (8 min).** The guest explains their disability in their own words and shows a tool that helps.
5. **Ask the Expert (10 min).** Use hands up or a question jar. The guest can always say "pass."
6. **Wrap-up:** one word about what you learned.

💌 After the visit

- Write and draw **thank-you notes** (page 14).
- Make a class chart: **"Things Our Expert Taught Us."**
- Ask: *What will we do differently now to include everyone?*
- Invite your guest back for a class celebration!

⭐ When the speaker is a student: make it empowering

- **Their story, their choice.** Only if the student wants to. Talk with the student and family first, and let them say no or change their mind.
- **Name them "Expert of the Day."** They wear the badge, pick the book, and call on classmates for questions.
- **Plan together** with the "I'm the Expert!" page (page 13).
- **Their way to share:** talking, a poster, slides, a video, or presenting with a buddy, teacher, or parent.
- **Practice first,** and agree on a "pass" signal and a "let's stop" signal.
- **Show the whole kid:** hobbies, friends, and talents, not only their disability. Check in privately afterward: *How did it feel?*

Not inspiration, just real life. Thank guests for *teaching* us. Skip "you're so brave" for everyday things like going to school. Guests are experts, not people to feel sorry for.



I'm the Expert!

Name _____

You know your life best! Use this page to plan what you want to share. You only share what **you** want to.

🌟 All about me

I love... _____

I'm really good at... _____

My favorite thing to do is... _____

💬 In my own words

Something about my body or brain I want my class to know:

🧰 Tools that help me

Draw or write about them!

🤝 How to be a good friend to me

🙋 Ask me about...

🎤 I want to share by...

- ☐ talking
- ☐ slides
- ☐ with a buddy
- ☐ a poster
- ☐ a video
- ☐ with a grown-up

🔒 Just for me & my teacher

Things I **don't** want to talk about (that's okay!):

Remember: you can always say "pass." Your story belongs to you!

Ask the Expert



Great questions help us learn about the **whole person**. Practice these before your guest arrives.

Kind question starters

"What do you like to do for fun?"

"What helps you at school?"

"Can you show us how your ____ works?"

"What do you wish kids knew?"

"How can we be a good friend to you?"

"What was your favorite part of the book?"

Before you ask, check:

✅ Is it kind? ✅ Is it about the whole person, not only their body?

✅ Would I be okay if someone asked me? ✅ If they say "pass," I say "okay!"

✂ cut here

💌 Thank you, Expert!

Dear _____ ,

I learned _____

_____

My favorite part was _____

Draw a picture!

From _____

💌 Thank you, Expert!

Dear _____ ,

I learned _____

_____

My favorite part was _____

Draw a picture!

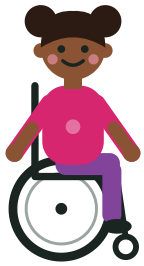
From _____

What would you do?

Cut apart and use for role-play or small-group talk. For each card ask: **How might they feel? What could you do or say? How could you be an upstander?**

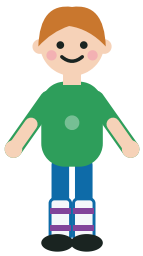
⚽ Playground

Maya uses a wheelchair. At recess, everyone runs to play on the woodchips, where her wheels get stuck. She sits by herself near the door.



⚽ Playground

Leo wears leg braces and runs slower than some kids. During tag, someone yells, "Leo's always it. He's too slow!"



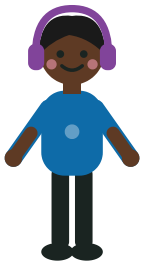
⚽ Playground

Ava was born without her left hand. When she climbs the monkey bars her own way, a group of kids stares, points, and whispers.



⚽ Playground

Jordan is autistic. He plays the same game by himself every recess. A classmate says, "He's weird. Don't play with him."



✏️ Classroom

Sam has dyslexia. When it's his turn to read out loud, he reads slowly and a few kids start to giggle.



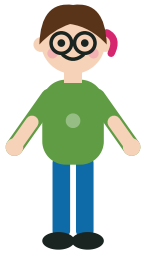
✏️ Classroom

Priya is color blind. In art, she colors the grass brown. Her tablemate laughs and says, "That's the wrong color, silly!"



✏️ Classroom

Eli is hard of hearing. During group work, everyone talks at once and turns away from him. He doesn't know what the plan is.



✏️ Classroom

Zoe has ADHD and keeps getting up during quiet work time. A classmate rolls her eyes and says, "You're so annoying."



Choice stations & extensions



Use one as a whole-class activity, or set up all four as rotating stations over a week.

Friendship Recipe (Good Friend)
As a class, write a "recipe" for a good friend: *2 cups of listening, 1 spoonful of patience, a sprinkle of asking "Do you want help?"* Older students write their own and illustrate.

Feelings Detective (Empathy)
Revisit 3 pictures from the book. Students name the feeling, find the clue (face, body, words), and share a time they felt the same. K–2 can use feeling-face cards.

Redesign the Game (Include Others)
Pick a recess game like tag. In small groups, students change the rules so classmates who use a wheelchair, walk slowly, get tired, or can't hear well can all play. Groups share and try one out.

Our Different Hands (Celebrate Differences)
Students trace their hand and write or draw something unique about themselves on each finger. Combine into a class "We Are All Different" wreath or banner.

Extend the learning

- **Accessibility walk (3–5):** Tour the school. What is easy or hard to reach, open, hear, or see? Write a kind suggestion letter to the principal.
- **Book buddies:** Older students read the book to a K–2 class and lead the "Big Idea Eyes" pauses.
- **Invite a guest:** Welcome a disabled reader, speaker, or student expert. See Mini-lesson 5 (pages 12–14).
- **Kindness tracker:** Each time a student notices inclusion, add a sticker to the "Everyone Belongs" poster.

Check for understanding

Students show they are meeting the goals when they can:

- [ ] Describe one thing a good friend does
- [ ] Name a character's feeling and tell why
- [ ] Suggest a way to include someone
- [ ] Share something unique about themselves
- [ ] Use respectful words about disability

Make this lesson accessible for every learner

Many ways to answer
Students can speak, sign, point, draw, type, or use AAC. Thumbs up, a wave, or holding up a card all count as "joining in."

Many ways to move
Offer seated options for warm-ups and stations. Avoid activities that ask kids to "pretend" to have a disability; focus on real stories instead.

Many ways to see & hear
Read slowly, show pictures up close, use large-print pages, and give extra time. Let students choose a quiet spot if needed.

Talking about disability with kids



Kid-friendly vocabulary

Disability	When a person's body or brain works in a different way. It is a normal part of life, and it is okay to say the word.
Empathy	Imagining how someone else feels and caring about them.
Include	Making sure everyone gets to be part of the group.
Different	Not the same. Everyone is different in some way!
Accessible	Easy for everyone to get to, use, or join, like a ramp, captions, or big print.

Words that help

Instead of "What's wrong with her?"
Try "Her body works in a different way."

Instead of "He can't do that."
Try "He does it in his own way."

Instead of "Let me do it for you."
Try "Would you like help?"

Instead of "Confined to a wheelchair"
Try "Uses a wheelchair."

Some people say "person with a disability," others say "disabled person." Both are okay. When in doubt, ask people what they prefer.

When kids ask questions

Curiosity is healthy. Don't shush it; guide it.

- Answer simply and honestly: *"Some people's legs get tired fast, so braces help them walk."*
- Remind students that a person's body is their own story to share. It is kind to ask, "Do you want to talk about it?" and okay if the answer is no.
- Focus on what people *can* do and how we can make spaces work for everyone.
- If a disabled student is in your class, check in privately first about what they would like to share, if anything.

Book ideas from The CMT Library

This plan works with any inclusion book. Find covers and QR codes on page 3. These titles are written by or with members of the disability and Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT) community.

Bernadette Goes to School
A school story about disability, friendship, and belonging.

What If We Were All the Same! by C.M. Harris
A rhyming celebration of what makes each of us unique.

CMT & Me by Brooke Shapiro
A gentle conversation starter about living with CMT.

Come Over to My House and **The World We Can Build** by Eliza Hull & Sally Rippin
Disabled families, accessible spaces, and building a world where everyone belongs.



I Can Be a Good Friend!

Name _____

Our book was called: _____

1 Draw a time you were a good friend.

2 Circle how they felt.

happy sad mad scared

3 I can include others by...

- ☐ asking "Do you want to play?"
- ☐ changing the game
- ☐ sitting together

4 Something that makes me special is...

_____

_____



Empathy & Inclusion

Name _____

Book: _____ Character: _____

Part 1: Empathy Map

Step into the character's shoes. Use clues from the words and pictures.

They SAID...

They FELT...

They NEEDED from others...

I felt like that when...

Part 2: Make It Accessible

Think of a place or activity at school (recess, lunch, the library, a class game). What is one change that would help *everyone* join in?

My Inclusion Pledge

To help everyone belong in our class, I will...

One difference I celebrate in myself or a friend is...

Take-home letter

Today we learned that everyone belongs!



Dear Families,

Today our class read a story about disability and inclusion and talked about it together. We learned what disability is (including disabilities you can't see, like dyslexia or autism), how it feels to be left out, how to stand up to bullying, how to ask before helping, and why our differences are something to celebrate.

Disability is a natural part of life. About 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. lives with a disability, so chances are your child knows, loves, or *is* someone with a disability. Talking openly helps kids grow up kind, curious, and confident.

Keep the conversation going at home

Ask
"What book did you read? What is one way you can be an upstander?"

Wonder
"How do you think they felt? Have you ever felt that way?"

Notice
On your next outing, look for ramps, captions, or big buttons. "Who does this help?"

Celebrate
Share something that makes each person in your family unique.

About CureCMT

CureCMT, from the Hereditary Neuropathy Foundation, supports people living with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT), one of the most common inherited nerve conditions, and works to speed research toward treatments and a cure. CMT can affect the muscles in the feet, legs, and hands, and many kids with CMT go to school just like their friends.

Find more books for kids, families, and classrooms in **The CMT Library**:
curecmt.org/living-with-cmt/library