Media Assignment Compilation of All Examples – Spring 2009

Since We're Friends, An Autism Picture Book by Lisa Jo Randy (Book)

This is a picture book created for children ages 8 and younger, which describes the friendship of a typical boy and a boy with Autism. This book is written from the typical boy's perspective and gives scenarios in which the autistic friend has a difficult time and how the typical friend assists with his problems. The book offers colorful pictures and gives good examples of how all children should be understanding of the needs of others. This book is useful in an elementary classroom because it encourages acceptance and promotes friendship between people with and without disabilities.

"Tommy" by The Who (Rock Opera & Movie)

The rock opera "Tommy" by The Who is the story of a boy who loses the senses of sight, hearing, and speaking after witnessing an act of violence in his family. Although he receives mistreatment from family members and other children, he becomes a savant at playing pinball and named "The Pinball Wizard." The physical world he withdraws from superficially pities him, abuses him mentally and physically, and exploits him commercially. Despite his senses being impaired, Tommy's brain remains active and receptive; he lives in a sanctuary in which he experiences spiritual and cognitive development. The story of the album shows both the isolation that a disabled person might experience, but also that he/she is unique and special with his/her own talent...and needs to be treated as such. In that way, disabled persons are just like us.

My Left Foot: The Story of Christy Brown (1989) (Movie)

This is the true story of Christy Brown told through flashbacks. Christy Brown was born with crippling cerebral palsy into a poor, working-class Irish family. Able only to control movement in his left foot and to speak in guttural sounds, he is mistakenly believed to be retarded for the first ten years of his life. Later, through the help of his strong-willed mother, a dedicated teacher, and his own courage and determination, Christy not only learns to grapple with life's simple physical tasks and complex psychological pains, but he also develops into a brilliant painter, poet and author. I believe this movie is an excellent example of what determination and inclusion can do for a person with disabilities.

Andy and His Yellow Frisbee by Mary Thompson (Book)

This Book takes a look at autism through the eyes of a child. Within a general education background, this piece of literature could help children better understand a classmate with autism, and their need for empathy and patience. The story describes a young child Sarah, the new girl in school, and her fascination with Andy, who constantly spins his yellow Frisbee by himself on the school playground. Rosie, Andy's sister, watches protectively from a distance as she explains the different degrees of autism to the readers. Because this story is from a child's point of view, students can quickly relate to the characters in the story and understand their own feelings regarding classmates with autism. This book can be found at most libraries and book stores.

Crow Boy by Taro Yashima, Viking 1955 (Book)

Crow Boy is a picture book which is suitable for everybody from K students to even adults. First impression of students for this book should be unfavorable because of its strong and peculiar cover illustration, however once students start reading it, they would be captured by both the story and illustrations. This book tells the story of Chibi who had been ignored by peers and even teachers for many years at school until he met a new teacher for his 6th grade classroom. The teacher discovered Chibi's talent for imitating the sounds of crow and had his students realize Chibi with respects. Chibi is an autistic-like boy though there is no mention about autism or disabilities in the story, so our students may approach Chibi neutrally and understand the importance of peer acceptance, diversity, respect for others, hard working and so on through finding similarities of their real lives. These understandings that will be brought to readers by this book are essential factors for students without disabilities to become more accepting of those who are different from them, therefore, this book is helpful to promote them to accept disabilities and people with disabilities.

Jason McElwain (News Story)

This high school autistic student at Athena High School in Rochester, NY had a love for basketball and had been assisting the school's basketball coach with whatever the team needed. In what transpired as an inspiring story about how autistic kids can be included in normal activities, Jason was allowed to suit up for the team's final game of the season and was put into the game with four minutes left. Within the four minutes Jason hit one three-pointer after another for a total of 20 points, working the entire crowd of Jason's classmates into a frenzy, whom eventually stormed the court. The amazing news coverage of Jason's story can be viewed here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAc4N_drTXU&feature=related

Family Guy (Television Show)

One of the most popular television comedies of its time, Family Guy surprisingly breaks down a barrier with one of it's characters. The shows main character, Peter Griffin, has a close friend and neighbor, Joe, who is a paraplegic. Unconventionally though, Joe is an "All-American" who takes part in everything that Peter and the rest of his gang does. He is extremely athletic and is always treated on the show as if his disability does not even exist. I think this is an important lesson for students because of the fact that this show is so popular with the younger audience and it can provide kids with the idea that people with disabilities should be treated like everyone else. Reruns of the show can be seen weeknights on TBS.

A Beautiful Mind (Movie)

Winner of four Academy Awards in 2001, including Best Picture, this film is a true story about a mathematical genius named John Nash who had a case of paranoid schizophrenia. Despite his disease, Nash won many awards for his contributions in the field of mathematics. Students of today would benefit from seeing this film because it would allow them to understand that even people with disease and disability can make great contributions to society and we should give every child, disability or no disability, a chance to prove themselves and excel in the classroom. This film is available on DVD.

Ray (Movie)

A biographical film about the life of blind R&B artist Ray Charles, this film highlights the notion that people with disabilities (in this case blindness) don't lead lives much different from our own. The film touches upon Charles' love of and contribution to music, as well as other aspects of his life, such as a troubled marriage. It makes one wonder what the music world would have been like if Charles was told as a youngster that he couldn't have a piano because he was blind. Perhaps the doors would not have been opened for other important artists such as Stevie Wonder. The film is available on DVD.

Sesame Street (Television Show)

Linda Bove was the first deaf person in a television series. Because of the shows educational purposes, having Linda (a librarian on the show) as one of the main community members, it shows that people with disabilities like Linda not only can be an everyday part of the community but they can also act as teachers and help people learn. The other members of the community learn a lot from Linda, and this is an important lesson that can be passed on to students today who are in classes with students with disabilities that not only can we learn together with people who are disabled, but also can learn *from* each other as well.

Simon Birch (Movie)

Actor: Ian Michael Smith

Release Date: September 11, 1998

Websites:

The Internet Movie Database – www.imdb.com/title/tt0124879/ Youtube – www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4cCetl3qc&feature=related

A 12-year-old boy with sever physical disabilities is guided by his faith in God that he is destined to be a hero. Throughout the movie his friendship with Joe Wenteworth, and his mother prove vital is his navigation through life. This movie proves to be a prime example of how those with disabilities can overcome all obstacles, excel past societal limitations, and earn the admiration of his peers as well as the community. Simon achieves this through an amazing act of valor.

The Biggest Problem (Is in Other People's Minds) (Poem)

Words and Music by Don Haynie Illustrated by Simms Taback

Found in: Free to Be... You and Me by Marlo Thomas and Friends

In this poem, the narrator talks about his experiences with his brother and his two friends. Each of the three people in the narrator's life has some type of disability. His brother, Bobby, is deaf. His friend, Rosa, is in a wheelchair. His other friend, Angie, is blind. The poem explains how each person has overcome the obstacles presented to them, have found things they love doing, and have the support of the narrator. The narrator explains that there is nothing wrong with Bobby, Rosa, and Angie. What actually is wrong, is the way people treat and act around Bobby, Rosa, and Angie.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (Movie)

The Internet Movie Database http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0421715/

Based on a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button chronicles the journey of a boy who was born old. The story is told in the style of magical realism, and the disability is the stuff of fiction, but his condition has an impact on his consciousness, particularly in the area of social ostracization.

The first half of the film deals almost exclusively with Benjamin's childhood. The disease he was born with manifests as a progressive transformation from an elderly condition to that of a newborn. The first half of his life is spent as a decrepit old man, with wrinkly skin, frozen joints, and age spots. While he appears to be old, he is actually a child. People treat him variously with fascination and with repulsion, but over time he overcomes this, and finds his true voice.

Ironically, as he ages he looks younger. This brings new social problems, as his contemporaries are visibly older and middle-aged. He eventually leaves his wife and children as he approaches the physicality of adolescence, spending a number of years essentially in exile.

This film's theme is both relevant and profound for any viewer who has known what it is like to be "different" and has learned to find ways to live with grace and dignity in the face of living the life of a social outcast.

Harry Potter Books, written by J.K. Rowling (Books/Movies)

Within the Harry Potter series, Harry has had to deal with being isolated from family and friends. Harry has two true friends that he met at school. He has made more friendships throughout the books, but Ron and Hermonie have been his only friend that he can count on.

Below is a summary of Harry's isolation. http://www.harrypotter.ca/characters/harry-potter-01.php

Harry was raised by Petunia and Vernon Dursley in a small town in Surrey, England called Little Whinging. They neglected him in favour of their own son Dudley and in their attempt to remove all traces of his magical self to make him "normal," kept him fully isolated from the wizarding world.

Harry has always been isolated and alone. He has lost his parents, his godfather, and finally his last protector, Dumbledore. He tends to lean to towards Remus Lupin and the Weasleys whenever he needs help or advice. Mrs. Weasley in particular is something of a mother figure for Harry, and she treats him as any one of her sons. At other times, Hagrid will offer support to Harry but as he progresses as a teenager his relationship with Hagrid diminishes ever so slightly.

Harry has a very strong sense of loyalty to others and expects loyalty in return. This streak has often prevented Harry from looking at things objectively and will occasionally prevent him from heeding constructive criticism even from friends such as Hermione.

Harry tends to feel very concerned about whom he can trust and whom he cannot. For example, Harry is reluctant to trust Severus Snape, the Potions Master, even though Snape has the open and firm confidence of Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore. Since Harry has been raised by the Dursleys, and has experienced nightmarish events (witnessing the deaths of Cedric Diggory in *Goblet of Fire*, Sirius Black in *Order of the Phoenix* and Dumbledore in Half-Blood Prince), Harry seems to feel rather misunderstood. Harry's feelings of isolation increase at the end of *Order of the Phoenix* when he learns that he alone must battle Voldemort to the death.

Extraordinary People with Disabilities (Collection of Writings)

Author: Deborah Kent and Kathryn Quinlan

Publisher: Scholastic Publishing

A number of different disabilities are chronicled throughout the book. These include, but

are not limited to, dyslexia, deafness, blindness, and ADD/ADHD.

Description: This book profiles the lives of forty-eight different people who are well know figures in history. Some of the short stories focus on people such as Beethoven, Helen Keller, FDR, Tom Cruise, and Heather Whitestone (Miss America 1995). This book could be used in a history classroom to show how all people can overcome struggles in their lives. An activity could be to have the students read a passage and attempt to name the person who it applies to. Doing this will allow students to see that even some of the most influential people in history accomplished great heights, even with some form of disability.

Reading level: Grades 5-8.

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key (Book)

Author: Jack Gantos

Publisher: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Disability: ADD/ADHD

This comic story looks at a boy named Joey Pigza, and his coping ability with hyperactivity and mood swings. It is one book of a three book series, which chronicles the life of Joey Pigza. In this book Joey is removed from the classroom, and later placed in a full special education school setting. Through his travels he receives positive reinforcement, counseling, and confides in friends to become successful. This book would be a valuable tool in the classroom to teach about how one copes with ADHD, as well as how classmates can handle various situations. It can also teach the lesson that it is not the behaviors that you should judge a person on, but rather the emotion and feeling that the person has when the hyperactive mood swings are controlled.

Reading level: Grade 6+.

Are You Alone on Purpose? (Book)

Author: Nancy Werlin

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co.,1994 Autism, Physical Disabilities, Giftedness

This novel focuses on the lives of two Jewish families, one including an autistic boy and his academically gifted sister, the other featuring a bully who suffers a severe spine injury in a diving accident and is paralyzed from the waist down.

Reading Level: Young Adult

Emily in Love (Book)

Author: Susan Goldman Rubin

Publisher: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1997 Disability: Developmental Delays

Story Profile: Emily is developmentally delayed. She is included in a general education high school and has to deal with her feelings of confusion, frustration, and anger towards her parents for protecting her too much, and at herself for being unable to understand and

accomplish everything she wants.

Reading Level: Young Adult

The Kid and I (Movie)

Starring: Eric Gorges, Tom Arnold, Shannon Elizabeth, Linda Hamilton, Joe Mantegna,

Arnold Schwarzeneger, Jamie Lee Curtis

Director: Penelope Spheeris

Release Date: 2005

Synopsis: Follows a 17-year-old with cerebral palsy who dreams of being in an action movie. His wealthy entrepreneur father (Mantegna) tells Aaron he can have anything he

wants for his 18th birthday, only to have to hustle to get the movie made.

Trailer: www.kidandi.com/video/kid_and_I.mov

The Ringer (Movie)

Starring: Johnny Knoxville, Brian Cox, Katherine Heigl

Director: Barry W. Blaustein

Written: Ricky Blitt

Release Date: Dec. 23, 2005

Synopsis: Johnny Knoxville (*Jackass*, *A Dirty Shame*) stars as a man who pretends to be mentally challenged so he can fix the Special Olympics. This morally dubious premise (the movie goes to great lengths to be sure you understand how appalling it is) is not as inflammatory as it could be--*The Ringer* is careful not to mock its mentally challenged characters. This is sometimes a source of strength, as some of the funniest jokes come from the perspective of the athletes--for example, a group of the other athletes recognize that Steve (Knoxville) is not the high-functioning mentally disabled guy he pretends to be, but they go along with the masquerade and even help Steve because they can't stand the snotty reigning champion. But this respectfulness also makes the movie feel cautious and inhibited (Special Olympics, who gave the movie its blessing). As a result, the movie's real plot turns out to be a love story, as Steve falls for one of the Special Olympics volunteers (Katherine Heigl, *Romy and Michelle: In the Beginning*) and has to find sneaky ways to undermine her slimy boyfriend.

Trailer: www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1153228-the ringer

Graduating Peter (Documentary)

The HBO documentary "Graduating Peter" is the follow up to the original, award winning documentary "Educating Peter." That film followed the story of Peter Gwazdauskas as he became the first student with Down Syndrome to be included in the general education classrooms at his school. This new film picks up in middle school and chronicles Peter's progress and setbacks during adolescence. He eventually graduates high school with a certificate of attendance. This film takes an unflinching look at Peter's daily life that can be difficult to watch. He has poor verbal ability which frustrates him and leads to outbursts. However, Peter has triumphs and builds his independence. The film shows that Peter faces the same challenges as every other teenager. His disability only complicates those challenges, it does not create them. Peter's relationship with his mother is interesting to watch. It is a great reminder that people with Down Syndrome are not defined by their disability. Peter's relationship with his mother more "ordinary" than one might suppose. Lastly, the film demonstrates the critical importance of a parent as an advocate. Judy Gwazdauskas works tirelessly on behalf of her son to provide him with as normal and rich a life as possible.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time (Book)

This book written by Mark Haddon is the story about fifteen year old Christopher who sets out to investigate the murdering of his neighbor's dog. Along with going against his father's will this detection poses extra challenges for Christopher due to the fact that he is autistic. Told through the eyes of Christopher the story illustrates how he is unable to understand emotions normally, he finds many everyday events threatening and ordinary activities challenging. To cope he has surrounded himself with rules and rituals. Red cars are a good sign, yellow cars a bad one; yellow and brown food can't be eaten. He also has his own coping mechanisms; he relaxes by crouching down and groaning, or by listening to white noise. And he does his best to understand the interactions of the people around him intellectually, helped by his photographic memory and mathematical talent. While some of Christopher's struggles are unique, his search to find stability within his family is one that is universal for all teens. The relations with his father and other family members show trust that at first seems true, but eventually falls apart and becomes one of forms of stability that Christopher so desperately needs to find.

Friday Night Lights (Television Show)

The theme of families managing new disabilities is shown in the high school football show Friday Night Lights. Scott Porter plays Jason Street, a high school quarterback who was injured during a tackle at the beginning of the series and becomes paralyzed from the waist down. At first, very reluctant to accept support from friends and family, he becomes depressed at losing the one thing he loves. After enrolling in physical therapy finds friends and relies on his team as family he becomes more accepting. He joins a team at his therapy center for wheelchair basketball and later becomes an assistant coach for his football team. The more he interacts with friends and family, the better able he is to use his disability to his advantage. Episodes can be found online at www.youtube.com or www.imdb.com

What's Eating Gilbert Grape (Movie)

In the movie, <u>Gilbert Grape</u>, a young Leonardo DiCaprio and Johnny Depp play brothers living in the fictional working class town of Endora, Iowa. Arnie, played by DiCaprio, is a mentally challenged seventeen year old looked after by his older brother Gilbert, played by Johnny Depp. The story is told through the eyes of Gilbert, who has remained home to care for his family after his father's suicide. Arnie is a source of trouble for Gilbert. He gets himself stuck on the top of the water tower and still needs Gilbert to give him a bath. <u>Gilbert Grape</u> is available on DVD for people to enjoy and learn about the challenges that face families living with disabilities. After viewing this film, people will walk away with a new found respect and sympathy for mentally challenged people and their families.

Life Goes On (Television Series)

This series aired on ABC from September 12, 1989 to May 23, 1993. The show centers on the Thatcher's, a family living in suburban Chicago. Life Goes On was the first television series to have a major character with Down syndrome. The drama featured the Thatcher family, whose son Charles "Corky" Thatcher had Down syndrome, while their daughter Becca was gifted but socially awkward with her fellow classmates. The show is set in the Chicago suburb of Glenbrook, Illinois. During the show's first couple of years, the focus mainly was placed upon Corky. Much of the show examined the challenges of a family whose son had Down syndrome. The Thatcher's sought to have Corky interact with regular society after spending years socializing Corky amongst other kids with Down syndrome in "special" classes. Indeed, this need to integrate Corky into "normal" society was the main storyline in Season 1 of the series, as the Thatcher family opted to enroll Corky into a regular high school despite the principal's demand that Corky be placed in an alternative program for those with Down syndrome. In addition, during the first three seasons, episodes included Tyler, Becca's high school crush, who also had a brother with Down syndrome. Eventually, Becca and Tyler would start a relationship. Corky eventually got a job as an usher at a local movie theater. He later found a girlfriend, who also had Down syndrome, and whom he married by the end of the series.

Arthur's Glasses (Book)

The book <u>Arthur's Glasses</u>, by Marc Brown, is a wonderful story about an Aardvark who needs glasses to do his best in school. This book could be particularly helpful in a younger general education classroom because many children need glasses, and this story shows how hard Arthur struggles when he does not wear them. This will help the students in the class to understand that even though their classmates may not want to wear glasses, they have to in order to be the best they can be. It could also open up a discussion that we all struggle with schoolwork from time to time.

This is a very popular book and could be found in most public libraries, in addition PBS also made a cartoon adaptation of this book. It is available for sale on the PBS website: http://shop.wgbh.org/product/show/7596

Helen Keller (Multiple Essays & Books)

Helen Keller at the age of 18 months became very ill resulting in serious disabilities; losing her vision and hearing. Before the incident Helen Keller was a normal child like many others. As a result of her disabilities she had to function differently to adapt to the world that surrounds her. Keller went through many years of her life lost in darkness.

The first critical moment in her life was when her teacher Anne Sullivan discovered how to communicate to Keller in a way that made sense and later changed Keller's life. Even as a blind and deaf women she became very successful obtaining a degree from Harvard and written many famous books and essays.

Helen Keller is an inspirational story that could be used for students to learn from. As they read stories (ex: The story of my life) they can exercise reading skills. The stories could be discussed with the class about what they feel and learn from the reading (share thoughts on how a person that is deaf or blind may feel). The class may also do fun activities like learning sign language and spelling it into their friends hands, like how Keller first discover the alphabet. The fact that Keller was a normal child before she turned ill is something everyone has in common; disabilities can happen to anyone at anytime, having the children understand this may help their understanding for disable students around them. Most importantly Keller's story is true and successful. This can act as a lesson shared among the general classroom at the same time inspire disable student to strive and do well.

There are many books, essay written and movies made about Helen Keller, students have many choices of what is suitable. Below are some titles of related materials.

Some Essays about Helen Keller:

Are We Wasters of Time? as published in Home Magazine, (January, 1933)

Blazing the Trail as published in Home Magazine, (October, 1934)

A Chant of Darkness as published in Century Magazine, (May, 1908)

Dreams That Come True as published in Personality, (December, 1927)

An Epic of Courage: See (n.d.; document source not identified)

The Great Choice as published in Home Magazine, (January, 1932)

Intelligent Reading as published in Home Magazine, (July, 1933)

Let Us Create Beauty as published in Home Magazine, (March, 1932)

Optimism (1903)

We Can Do More as published in Home Magazine, (February, 1934)

Books Written by or about Helen Keller:

Light In My Darkness by Helen Keller

Teacher: Anne Sullivan Macy by Helen Keller

Story Of My Life by Helen Keller

To Love This Life: Quotations From Helen Keller by Helen Keller

My Religion by Helen Keller

Helen Keller's Journal by Helen Keller

Helen Keller: From Tragedy To Triumph by Katharine E. Wilkie

Helen And Teacher: The Story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy by Joseph P.

Lash

Helen Keller: Courage In The Dark by Johanna Hurwitz

Helen Keller: A Life by Dorothy Herrmann

*List copyrighted: http://www.sapphyr.net/women/helenkeller.htm

For a more comprehensive list of her essays, please visit American Foundation For The Blind.

<u>Autism: The Musical</u> (HBO Documentary):

Autism: The Musical is a documentary that follows The Miracle Project's, a non-profit theatre and film arts program for children with special needs/disabilities and their siblings and peers, efforts to help a group of autistic children develop, write, cast, rehearse and eventually perform their own original full-length musical. The documentary, filmed over six months, focuses in particular on five autistic children (Adam, Henry, Wyatt, Neal & Lexi ages 8-14) and their families, by exploring the trials and tribulations that arise not only as a result of putting on the musical, but also from being autistic, or from being the parent of an autistic child.

While this film would be most appropriate for high school or mature middle school students, due to mature issues including divorce, violence, and the familial stress and pressures that arise from having a child with autism, clips from the documentary could be extremely enlightening, if properly presented and examined, for upper elementary general education students. In particular, clips from interviews with Wyatt, a 10 year old who has seen too much bullying as a result of his autism but who still holds out hope that he'll be able to make friends, and Henry, a 10 year old with a penchant for dinosaurs who also just wants to be better understood by his peers, would help every student to recognize that, although children with autism may act differently at times, ultimately they have the same needs and desires as any other child: they want to belong, they want to form friendships and meaningful connections with their peers, and they want to be understood and appreciated for who they are.

More information about the film, including where to find a copy for your classroom, can be found online at www.autismthemusical.com or at www.themiracleproject.org.

Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair (Book)

This book describes the life of Taylor who has cerebral palsy. Taylor explains how his wheelchair has made a difference in his life. It allows him to be independent and keep up with his friends. He is even able to play basketball with his twin brother who does not have cerebral palsy.

Although the wheelchair has increased Taylor's mobility, he still struggles with daily tasks and accommodations. But with everything he has to endure Taylor remains positive and energetic. Teachers and students will be able to understand the limitations associated with cerebral palsy and also see how successful these same children can be.

Recommended for grades K-3. Author: Jamee Riggio Heelan

The Boston Children's Museum's "Access/Ability" Exhibit (Museum Exhibit)

Theme: Empathy

As a result of exploring this exhibit, students will be able to empathize with other students who have disabilities. They will be able to experience what it is like to not be completely able-bodied.

Students will take a fieldtrip to The Children's Museum where they will focus on the "Access/Ability" exhibit, which is catered to young children understanding the similarities between themselves and others with disabilities. They will be able to distinguish and compare disabilities, such as physical handicaps, visual impairments, and hearing impairments. Photographs will be taken of students while engaging in the exhibit, which will later be displayed in the classroom. Having these photographs on display will allow the children to reflect on their experience and recall its importance.

Chicken Soup for the Soul (Book)

Children with Special Needs: Stories of Love and Understanding for Those Who Care for Children with Disabilities by <u>Jack Canfield</u>, <u>Mark Victor Hansen</u> <u>Heather McNamara</u>, Karen Simmons

- <u>Ten Things Your Student with Autism Wishes You Knew</u> by Ellen Notbohm (Book)
- The Other Sister (Book)
- Eli Stone episode on Autism and vaccines (Television Show)
- Survivor: The Amazon (Television Series)
- Sue Thomas: F.B.Eve
- http://www.disabilityfilms.co.uk/ (Website)