Teacher's Guide

Make a Muscle, Make a Difference.
What is a Hop-a-Thon?

MDA’s Hop-a-Thon is a free program that teaches children ages 2 to 7 about physical disabilities and the importance of accepting and helping all children. The program culminates in a brief, high-energy hopping fundraiser that supports muscle disease research and services.

Hop-a-Thons teach and reinforce three key principles: Disability awareness, acceptance and assistance — plus they’re simply a lot of fun!

Why is Hop-a-Thon Necessary?

Of the 43 muscle-wasting diseases covered by MDA, more than half affect children. Some are present at birth, such as spinal muscular atrophy type 1, the number-one genetic killer of newborns. Others manifest more slowly, appearing in toddlerhood, adolescence or even the late teens.

By early childhood, some children with muscle diseases already are using power wheelchairs. Others may be just starting to show symptoms. They may have trouble getting up off the floor, can’t run fast, tire easily, fall often, have trouble climbing steps or walk with a distinct waddle.

Over time, depending on the disease, children require leg braces, wheelchairs, feeding tubes, respirators and other assistance to move, eat and breathe. As their physical abilities decline, it gets harder and harder to “just be a kid,” which is why opportunities like accessible summer camp are so important.

Most children with genetic muscle disorders face shortened life spans. No medical cures exist for any of these conditions — yet.

Featured in this MDA Teacher’s Kit, are photos of many children and adults with neuromuscular disease, including MDA Goodwill Ambassador, Abbey Umali, who has a form of Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease.

A Message From Abbey

My name is Abbey, and I live in Redlands, California with my mom and dad.

I love school. Most of all, I like reading, math and geography (and recess, of course.) One of my favorite things is learning state capitals.

After school, I stay very busy reading, singing, swimming, dancing, riding my bike and spending time with my friends. I also play the piano, love to act, and I like to play lots of games, especially cards and Rubik’s Cube. I have a pet bunny and two new kittens.

The message I want to tell people is that there is hope for people with muscular dystrophy because of people with generous hearts. Remember, even if everyone gives a little, it’ll all add up to something BIG!
For more than 50 years, the Muscular Dystrophy Association has sponsored critical research into neuromuscular diseases. Today, MDA is funding clinical trials of potential treatments for several forms of muscular dystrophy and related diseases.

Besides research, MDA also provides vital services to children and families coping with muscle weakness and paralysis. These include:

- Medical care through a nationwide network of clinics
- Accessible summer camp for children
- Support groups
- Help obtaining wheelchairs and other equipment
- Up-to-date, accurate research and health information

Hop-a-Thons help MDA continue these important missions of help and hope.

Items Included in the Teacher’s Kit

- **Hop-a-Thon Teacher’s Guide** (planning guide and five days of activities)
- Hop poster with fundraising barometer (one per classroom/center)
- *Everybody’s Different, Nobody’s Perfect* book (one per classroom/center for teacher to read to students)
- **Flip Flop Hop Book** (activity book/one per child)
- Hop Thank You Certificate (one per child)
- “MDA Hopper” stickers (one per child)
- Hop collection envelope prestuffed with sponsor flier and receipt strips (one per child)
- Sample pre- and post-event press releases
- Sample of all Hop thank-you prizes for display in the classroom/center (where incentives are used)
- MDA Hop Accounting Form
Before the Hop: Build Awareness

- Review all lesson plans and materials in your Teacher’s Guide carefully.

- At least 10 to 15 days before your Hop, distribute Hop-a-Thon envelopes provided by MDA to each child to take home to parents. The envelopes, which already come to you stuffed, contain information for parents about what the children will be learning during the week and information about MDA.

- Parents and guardians are asked to get pledges for the number of hops their child completes in 2 minutes. Some people prefer to make a flat donation to MDA for their child’s participation. (As a guideline, most children hop between 150 and 250 times during the 2 minutes.)

- Encourage online fundraising. Go to www.mdahops.org to learn more.

- Arrange for the loan of a wheelchair to be used in the lesson on Day 4. (Your local MDA representative may be able to help.)

- Arrange with your local MDA representative for any special visitors, such as the local MDA Goodwill Ambassador or someone who uses a power wheelchair.

- Send press releases to local media announcing your Hop-a-Thon.

- Hang Hop-a-Thon posters.

- Schedule someone to take photos during the Hop.
The Week of the Hop:
Do the Lessons and Activities

- Follow the daily disability awareness lesson plans in this Teacher’s Guide. Each lesson takes between 20 and 30 minutes.
- Use the Flip Flop Hop Book for additional activities. Ask local disability educators or a person with a disability to visit your classroom.
- Creatively connect disability awareness and acceptance to daily activities and special events.

During the Hop: Have Fun!

- Help children make a connection between their Hop-a-Thon and assisting children who have weak muscles because of muscular dystrophy.
- Encourage children to help each other during the hopping event by sharing the counting, by hopping for someone in the class who can’t hop, or by saying encouraging things to each other.
- Ask some parent volunteers to help out on the day of the Hop. Make sure someone is taking photos!
- Play lively music to make your Hop festive and fun.
- Have children hop for a timed 2-minute period.
- After each child hops, record his/her total on the Hop-a-Thon Sponsor Sheet, and send the sheet home with the child. The sponsor sheets are used to collect Hop-a-Thon pledges.
- Present each child with the MDA Hopper sticker and write his/her name on the Hop Thank You Certificate, along with the number of total hops, date, teacher and place of the Hop for the child to take home.

After the Hop: Collect and Submit Funds

- Each child collects his/her donations.
- Within 10 days, children turn in their contributions to the school/center.
- Record all pertinent information on the MDA accounting form provided.
- Please convert any cash collected into a check or money order payable to MDA, and forward it, along with checks from parents, to the local MDA office (with your accounting form). Call MDA to report your success!
- MDA will provide you with the incentives you and your children earned.
“Hop-ful” Hints for Teachers:

- Give parents plenty of notice before the Hop-a-Thon so relatives can make arrangements to attend if possible. Some schools have a parent-child breakfast or lunch in conjunction with the event.

- Combine the event with Parent Appreciation Day, Disability Awareness Week in April, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day or another holiday to encourage media coverage.

- Have children cut and color popsicle stick puppets to hold while hopping. During art class, have children make costumes (like bunny ears) to wear while hopping.

- Challenge a neighboring child care center/school to a Healthy Hop Competition!

- Ask MDA to invite a local MDA Goodwill Ambassador’s family to visit your center/school.

- Consider asking local businesses to donate token giveaways, such as drink or fast-food coupons, skating or miniature golf coupons, pencils, cups or other promotional items.

Daily Lesson Plans

Note to Teachers: Throughout these lessons, you are instructed to **ASK** or **SAY** certain things. These are just guidelines — use your own words and style. You know best how to talk to your individual group!

When talking about disabilities, please try to use “people first” language. This means you put the emphasis on the person, not the disability. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Way</th>
<th>People First</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handicapped child</td>
<td>Child with a disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cripple</td>
<td>Person who can’t walk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also try to avoid language that makes people with disabilities seem in some way inferior. It’s better to say, “he has weak muscles” than “he is weak.” Sometimes it can be tricky to know how to phrase things, but if you strive to be respectful and sensitive, you’ll do fine!
**Lesson:** Introduction

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Objectives:** Students will identify unique and common body characteristics.

Students will say the words “disability” and “muscular dystrophy.”

Students will identify (in a picture) a child who uses a wheelchair and his friend.

Students will connect hopping with helping people.

**Materials:** MDA *Flip Flop Hop Book* for each child, crayons, Hop-a-Thon collection envelopes

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**Preparation required:** If the children cannot write their own names, prewrite each child’s name on a *Flip Flop Hop Book*. Write each child’s name on a Hop-a-Thon collection envelope, and put them in the place where parents collect their children’s work.

**Directions:** While seated in a group, ask, “Who here has a body? Who has hair, a cut or scrape, two ears, has lost a tooth, etc.” Ask body questions that apply to only a few as well as to everyone in your group. After each question, have children look around and see whose hand is up. End by asking a question applying to everyone, such as “Who is a part of (teacher’s name) class?”

**SAY:** Our bodies all have things that are the same as other people, and things that are special just to us. This week we are going to learn something new. We are going to learn how our bodies work, and how everyone’s body is special just to him or her.

**ASK:** Is everyone’s body the same? No! There are tall people and short people and round people and skinny people. Can everyone’s body do the same things? No! Everyone’s body works a little bit differently.

**SAY:** Some people can’t walk, so they use wheelchairs. We say that they have a DISABILITY. Let’s say that word together. This week we are going to learn about disabilities. We are going to learn about MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY. Let’s say that together. Muscular dystrophy is a disease that makes it hard for kids to walk. It makes their muscles weak. But they still like to have fun! Let’s read a story about a little boy named Travis who has muscular dystrophy.
READ: “Travis: I Got Lots of Neat Stuff” (the coloring pages in the *Flip Flop Hop Book*)

ASK: Does Travis have a disability? (Yes, it’s hard for him to walk.) Is Travis happy or sad? He’s happy! He finds lots of fun things to do, just like you. Do you know somebody who uses a wheelchair? Would you like to be friends with Travis? What would you do together?

Pass out the *Flip Flop Hop Books*. (Collect the books at the end of each lesson, and send them home after the Hop event.) Turn to the “coloring” side of the book, and open to the last page of the “Travis” story.

ASK: Can you find the child in this picture who uses a wheelchair? Can you find his friends? How do you know they are friends? (They are playing together.)

Allow children to color the picture.

**SAY:** Travis has muscular dystrophy. It makes his muscles weak. It is hard for him to walk. This week we are going to help fight muscular dystrophy. We are going to HOP in a HOP-A-THON! When we hop for muscular dystrophy, we can raise money. That money will buy wheelchairs for kids and help find special medicines for their muscles. We are going to practice hopping every day, and on Friday we will have our special Hop-a-Thon celebration!

(Optional: Teach children a song to sing to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle”:

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Hop, hop, hop
In the Hop-a-Thon
Help, help, help
Muscles be strong!
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Have the class stand up and practice hopping while singing the song a few times.)

If some children in the class aren’t able to hop, give them a special Hop-a-Thon job. For example, they could say “go” and “stop,” bang a drum or shake a rattle, or “conduct” the hopping by waving a baton. Children who can count could count the hops, or count out the seconds for hopping time. Be creative in finding ways to include children with different abilities!
**Lesson:** Everybody’s Different, Nobody’s Perfect

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Objectives:** Students will identify their abilities and disabilities and hear about others’ abilities.

Students will identify one thing they know about a child with a disability.

Students will identify things that are the same but look different.

Students will hop in different ways.

**Materials:** *Everybody’s Different, Nobody’s Perfect* book, *Flip Flop Hop Books*, crayons

**Directions:**

**SAY:** It’s time to learn more about our bodies and practice for our Hop-a-Thon. Let’s all HOP to (the story area) and listen to a story!

**REVIEW:** Is everybody the same? What are some ways that you’re special? Remember the story about Travis, who has a disability? He has weak muscles and uses a wheelchair because of a disease called muscular dystrophy. We are going to help children with weak muscles by hopping. Remember when we hopped yesterday?

**READ:** *Everybody’s Different, Nobody’s Perfect.* Stop at appropriate times for children to answer the questions in the text.

**ASK:** What is one thing you know about someone who has a disability? (Possible answers might be, “They are nice,” “They can play games,” “I like them,” etc.) Do you think that maybe someday you might have a friend who uses a wheelchair?

Pass out the *Flip Flop Hop Books*, and turn to the “Activity” side. Have children complete the exercise “The Same But Different.” (For younger children, have them color a page on the “Travis” side.)

Remind children that they will have a big Hop-a-Thon Friday to raise money to help children with muscular dystrophy.

**SAY:** We’ve learned that there are lots of different ways to do something! How many ways can we hop? Practice hopping in different ways: on one foot, in a circle, with arms up, etc.
Lesson: Our Marvelous Muscles

Time: 30 minutes

Objectives: Students will identify that muscles help you move.

Students will move big and small muscles.

Students will experience using weak muscles or muscles that can’t move properly.

Students will match muscles to activities.

Materials: *Flip Flop Hop Book*, crayons

Directions:

SAY: It’s time to learn about our bodies and practice for our Hop-a-Thon! Let’s all hop over here and sit in a circle!

REVIEW: Yesterday we learned that everybody is different and nobody is perfect. What is one thing you are good at? What is one thing you can’t do well? Some kids have disabilities because their muscles are weak. But they are good at other things. Today we are going to learn more about our bodies. And we are going to practice hopping for our Hop-a-Thon to help kids with muscular dystrophy.

ASK: Does anyone here have a muscle? (Notice and praise the different muscles that are shown to you, which may look a lot like elbows.)

ASK: How many muscles do you have in your body? (Answer: more than 650) Why do we have so many muscles? Because MUSCLES HELP US MOVE!

SAY: Some muscles are big and some are small. Big muscles help us make big movements, and little muscles help us make little movements.

Now let’s move some of our big muscles. When I tell you to, move these big muscles:

- Use your arm muscles to flap your arms like a bird.
- Use your leg muscles to hop up and down.
- Use your neck muscles to shake your head “no.” Now use them to nod your head “yes.”
- Use your back muscles to bend over, then stand up straight again.
- Use your breathing muscles to take a great big deep breath and hold it, hold it, hooooold it — OK, let it out!
Now let's move some of our small muscles:

- Use your finger muscles to point at a friend. Touch your nose. Wave a little “bye-bye.”
- Use your mouth and face muscles to smile really big. Now frown! Smile again!
- Use your eye muscles — now don't move your head! — to look up and down and side to side. Now use your eyelid muscles to close your eyes. Open. Close. Open wide!
- Use your tongue muscles to say, really slowly, “Little Lucy Likes Lollies.” Now say it fast. Wow! Your tongue muscle was really moving!

(Optional: Older children may want to play a guessing game in which they make a movement and others guess which muscle is being used.)

**SAY:** You can make your muscles stronger by exercising. But sometimes people have a DISABILITY that makes their muscles weak. Remember that word, DISABILITY? When people have MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY, their muscles won't get strong even if they exercise. Muscular dystrophy makes muscles weak. It is hard for them to move.

Let's see what it's like to have a weak muscle or a muscle that won't move.

Have children try to balance on one foot without holding on for a slow count of 10 or 20. Explain that when they are older, their muscles will be stronger and will help them balance better. What might happen if their muscles got weaker? Have children grab hold of their tongues, hold them still and try to say “Little Lucy Likes Lollies.” Explain that when their tongue muscle can't move, they can't talk. What would happen if their arm muscle couldn't move?

Finish by having children shake out all their muscles, then go sit at their desks or tables.

Pass out the **Flip Flap Hop Books** and turn to the “Activity” side. Have children complete the exercise “Match the Muscles.” (For younger children, have them color a page on the “Travis” side.)

**ASK:** What do we use to help us HOP? (Muscles!)

**SAY:** Let's practice our hopping to get ready for our Hop-a-Thon, when we will raise money to help children whose muscles are weak! (Optional: Hop while singing the song from Day 1.)

(Optional: Put up a poster that shows the muscles in the body. They are available through the local library or can be found online.)
Lesson: Braces and Wheelchairs

Time: 30 minutes

Objectives: Students will identify why some people use braces and wheelchairs.

Students will experience moving in a wheelchair.

Students will identify ways to help people in wheelchairs.

Students will identify that people in wheelchairs are similar to other people.

Materials: *Flip Flop Hop Books*, crayons, a wheelchair, an open space to practice riding in the wheelchair, items to use to create an obstacle course

Preparation: Borrow a wheelchair. (Note: If you can’t find a wheelchair anywhere, an office chair on wheels or a wagon can be substituted. This is not as effective as a wheelchair, but will work.) Create an obstacle course area that will give the children examples of things that hinder wheelchair users: big items left in a pathway, closed doors, steps or curbs, too small a space to turn around, etc.

Directions:

**SAY:** It’s time to learn about our bodies and practice for our Hop-a-Thon. Let’s hop over here and sit down together!

**REVIEW:** What do we use when we run or throw a ball or turn a page? (Muscles) Who can show me how to move their mouth muscle, foot muscle, etc.? (Continue with examples until several children have had a turn.) We have learned that some people with disabilities have weak muscles. They have to figure out other ways to move.

Today we will look at ways that people with disabilities can move. And we will practice for our Hop-a-Thon that will happen tomorrow, when we will raise money to help children with weak muscles because of muscular dystrophy. Reread “Travis: I Got Lots of Neat Stuff.”
**ASK:** What does Travis use to help him move? (leg braces and wheelchair) Do you know someone who uses leg braces or a wheelchair?

**SAY:** A wheelchair looks like it would be fun to use. But it can be hard, too. Can a wheelchair climb up steps? Can a wheelchair jump over a big mess on the floor? We need to make sure that people in wheelchairs can get around easily.

Give children a turn using the wheelchair on the obstacle course you have created. (If you have a lot of children, you can have half the group work in the *Flip Flop Hop Book* while waiting their turn. See below.)

**ASK:** Was that fun? Was it a little hard, too? Why do people use wheelchairs? (To help them move) Are wheelchairs toys? NO! They are special tools to help people move.

**ASK:** Are people who use wheelchairs just as smart and nice as other people? Can children who use wheelchairs still have fun? Could they be your friend?

**SAY:** Sometimes people who use wheelchairs need your help. How could you help someone with a wheelchair? (Open doors, move things, carry things, bring things to them, be their friend.)

Have students do the “What’s in the Way?” activity in the *Flip Flop Hop Book*.

**SAY:** Tomorrow is our big Hop-a-Thon! We are going to hop to raise money to help kids who have weak muscles because of muscular dystrophy. The money will help buy them wheelchairs and find special medicines to help their muscles. You are going to be big helpers for people with disabilities! Let’s practice hopping while singing our song. (Alternative: Have kids hop their way through the obstacle course.)

(Optional: Invite a person who uses a power wheelchair to visit and demonstrate the chair. Ask your local MDA representative to help set this up.)
Lesson: Hop-a-Thon Event!

Time: 45-60 minutes

Objectives: Students will identify why they are hopping.

Students will hop for 2 minutes.

Students will receive positive feedback for helping people with disabilities.

Materials: *Flip Flop Hop Books*, scissors, tape, popsicle sticks, crayons, music, MDA Hopper stickers

Preparation: Read page 3, “How to Host a Hop-a-Thon.” Schedule parent helpers and a photographer.

FOR VERY YOUNG STUDENTS: Precut the finger puppets in the *Flip Flop Hop Book*.

(Optional: Invite local media to the event.)

Directions:

SAY: Well, today is the day of our Hop-a-Thon! Let’s use our muscles to hop over here, and remember the things we learned this week!

REVIEW: Everybody’s different and nobody’s perfect. What are some things you are good at doing? What are some things you need help with? Does everybody need help sometimes? What can you do to help someone else?

We learned about our bodies. What do we use to help us move? Who can show me a moving muscle? What happens to muscles when someone has muscular dystrophy?

What do people use to help them move when they can’t walk? What things did you learn about using a wheelchair?

Flip Flop Book art to come
Pass out the *Flip Flop Hop Books*. (Students will take them home after today.) Turn to the “Activity” side. Have students color, cut out and construct the finger puppets.

Turn on the music and have students hop for 2 minutes, while wearing their finger puppets. Options: Hop in one big group while the teacher keeps count; have students hop in pairs and take turns counting for each other; or have parent helpers help count.

(Note: if you have students who can’t hop, they can participate in the event in one of the ways discussed in the Day 1 lesson plan. These students can choose a “designated hopper” from among the others in the class, and record the same number of hops as done by that child. Be creative in finding ways for non-hopping children to contribute to the event.)

Lead a big cheer for your hoppers! Call up each child to record his/her number of hops and award each child with the MDA Hopper sticker and Hop Thank You Certificate. While recording the hops, have the other students color in their *Flip Flop Hop Book*.

(Optional: Celebrate the Hop with a special snack. Invite a local MDA Goodwill Ambassador to thank the children for hopping to help fight muscular dystrophy.)

See the instructions on page 5 for what to do after the hop event.
Other Resources for Teaching Disability Awareness

These books, videos and teaching kits can be used in conjunction with the lesson plans in this Teacher’s Guide, or to continue disability awareness education when the Hop-a-Thon is over.

Books


Ages 4 to 8. April is a young girl who, while on her way to her grandmother’s house, meets a number of people each different from her — one is older, another speaks a different language and some have physical disabilities. The message is simple: People are different in some ways, but we’re still essentially the same.

**Featherless/Desplumado (bilingual edition)**, by Juan Felipe Herrera, 32 pages, Children’s Book Press, 2004

Ages 4 and up. Tomasito, a young boy with spina bifida, is trying to adjust both to his wheelchair and to a new school. To help him, his father buys him a small parrot which cannot fly, and which Tomasito initially rejects. But, with the help of his new featherless friend, Tomasito gains enough confidence to join his school’s soccer team and learns you don’t need feathers to fly. Written in both English and Spanish, and paired with brightly-colored oil illustrations.

**Floppy Cat**, by Kari Kay, 36 pages, Floppy Cat Company, 2009

Ages 4 to 8. Floppy Cat is based on the life of a real cat that didn’t fit in. Instead of running, leaping and pouncing like all the other cats, Floppy stumbles from side to side as he travels across the rickety barn floor. Every step he takes is a challenge, and sometimes he wonders why he has to be so different. But Floppy doesn’t let his odd walk stop him from enjoying life. The book emphasizes finding and utilizing inner strengths. An interactive Web site, www.floppycat.com, includes a video of the real Floppy Cat.

**Let’s Talk About It: Extraordinary Friends**, by Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers), 32 pages, Putnam, 2000

Ages 4 to 8. Told in Mr. Rogers’ gentle, straightforward style, this book of colorful photographs shows friendships between children with and without handicaps, and suggests ways to interact with someone who seems different at first.

**Me and My Amazing Body**, by Joan Sweeney, 32 pages, Dragonfly Books, 2000

Ages 4 to 8. What’s under my skin? Why do I have bones? What do my muscles do? Written in simple, casual language (i.e., “My brain is the boss of my body”) with engaging illustrations, this book is a great way to show young children how the body works.


Ages 3 to 8. These books from the “Understanding Differences” series have colorful photos and short, simple texts written in a textbook-like format. Each title explains a little about the adaptive equipment.
Videos and Software

No Body’s Perfect, Everybody’s Special!
Attainment Company,
www.attainmentcompany.com,
(800) 327-4269, $59
Ages 5 and up. Upbeat 20-minute, closed-captioned videos profile three children with different disabilities: deafness, blindness and the loss of a leg. Through interviews, we learn about their disabilities and how they cope with them. Students are introduced to signing, prosthetics, assistive technology and Braille. Works with Windows and Mac operating systems.

Miracle in Lane 2 (VHS only)
Walt Disney Video, 2004
Ages 6 and up. When he was 12 years old, Justin Yoder became the first disabled child to drive a soap box in the All-American Soap Box Derby. In the process, the young boy with spina bifida managed to change the rules of the sport forever. The film promotes triumphing over adversity while candidly portraying the challenges of being (and parenting) a child with a disability.

Dragon Tales: It’s Cool to Be Me (DVD only)
Sesame Street Workshop and Sony Pictures, 2002
Ages 3 and up. Five short cartoons all share the common theme of accepting and accommodating differences in oneself and others. In one story a character breaks her wing and cannot fly with her friends to a park, prompting her friends to suggest an alternative way to get there. Children learn that differences are not hindering, but grant us the chance to view things differently. Other titles in the Dragon Tales DVD series include “Believe in Yourself.”

Someone Special, Just Like You, by Tricia Brown, 64 pages, Henry Hold and Co., 1995
Ages 4 to 8. Preschool-aged children with varying physical and mental disabilities are shown engaging with one another, playing and learning in a series of lively pictures captured by photographer Fran Ortiz. The book emphasizes that, regardless of ability, all children need social interaction and community.

Zoom!, by Robert Munsch, 32 pages, Cartwheel, 2004
Ages 4 to 8. Young Lauretta needs a new wheelchair and insists on the fast, “92-speed, black, silver and red dirt-bike wheelchair.” Unfortunately, her love of speed gets her into some trouble. The book humorously focuses on Lauretta’s adventurous spirit; her speedy wheelchair is just another aspect of her personality.
During the weeks after Hop-a-Thon, sprinkle in activities to remind children about what they’ve learned and to extend that learning to new situations.

Reading a book or playing a video from the resource list on pages 12-13 is a quick and easy way to keep Hop lessons alive. Invite special guests to speak to your class about disabilities.

Concepts to reinforce in group discussions, activities or other “teachable moments” include:

- Everybody’s different, nobody’s perfect, and we’re all special in some way. Our bodies are amazing! Muscles help us move.

- People with physical disabilities can’t use their bodies easily, but they find other ways to do things, like using wheelchairs or leg braces.

- People may look and act differently, but they are the same in many ways. We can be friends with people who have physical disabilities.

Some activities that build on these concepts include:

- **What’s Special About Me?**

  Ask children to draw pictures that show “what’s special about me,” then write or dictate captions that explain their pictures. Encourage them to think beyond just the way they look, and show the special things they like to do, something they’re good at, sports they like, people they love, etc. Have each child explain his/her drawing to the class, then post under the banner “Everybody’s Different — And We’re All Special!”

- **I Give Help/I Get Help**

  This art activity helps children identify their strengths and weaknesses, and see that we all depend on one another. Divide a paper in half and label the halves “I Give Help” and “I Get Help.” On each half have a child draw a picture of himself or herself either giving or getting help. Add a caption that explains the drawings. Share as a large group and post.

- **Making Sense of the Senses**

  Learning about the senses is a natural extension of learning about bodies. Blindness and deafness are two physical disabilities that involve the senses. People with these conditions use their other senses to compensate. Create some activity centers to increase students’ sensory awareness:
• **Touch Box:** Put several items in a box and have kids identify them by touch alone.

• **Sound Can Game:** You need 6 to 10 empty soda cans or film canisters with lids (not the clear ones); a variety of materials that will fit in the containers (such as rice, sand, little bells, water, popcorn kernels, pebbles, etc.), and pairs of number stickers. Fill two containers with the same amount of the same item (i.e., fill two soda cans halfway with rice), then seal the containers with tape. On the bottom of each container, place a number 1 sticker. Continue making pairs of sound cans, and label the pairs with the same number on the bottom. Mix up the cans on a tabletop and allow children to shake them and match up the pairs. They can self-check this activity by turning over the cans to see the numbers on the bottom.

(Optional: Play a smell-matching game similar to the Sound Can Game.)

• **I Spy:** Everybody uses their eyes in this classic game which also reinforces color recognition. Play inside or outside: “I spy something that is red, etc.”

• **What Stinks?** Dip cottonballs in extracts of vanilla, peppermint, almond, lemon, etc., and place them in film canisters or small paper cups for the kids to sniff and comment on. Some containers could have an onion slice, potpourri, shampoo or fragrant herbs.

• **Tongue Testers:** Let children experience different tastes by putting a little of each item — salt, sugar, mildly spicy chili powder or paprika, cocoa mix powder, chicken or beef bouillon powder — on squares of paper and letting them taste them with their tongues. (Have cups of water available.) Can they name the tastes? Which ones do they like best? Would sugar be good on french fries? How about salt on breakfast cereal?

(Optional: Taste things while holding your nose — can you tell the tastes apart? Why not? Our noses help us taste.)
Thank You for Helping MDA!

We Want to Hear From You!

We welcome feedback about the lessons and activities, and new ways you have found to help teach disability awareness to children.

Contact us at:
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