

Talking About Disability in Your School

Discuss with the family of the student with cerebral palsy what information they would like shared about their child's disability with other students, staff and families.

Some parents may prefer not to do anything special.



Sharing with your school community

- Discuss with the family, what terminology school staff may use with students and other adults - some families prefer general terms e.g. additional or special needs rather than naming the disability.
- Ask the student's family to write down some questions and answers about what they would like others to know about their child - this gives the family control over what is said to other parents/peers.
- Have information on cerebral palsy available for families to read / borrow. Ensure they are aware of the benefits of inclusion for all students eg. refer to **What is Cerebral Palsy?** fact sheet.
- A talk at a staff meeting by parents or therapy / educational staff may be useful.
- Some families may be concerned that their child will miss out because too much time will be given to the child with a disability - reassure them that this will not occur. There are benefits to all students in the class e.g. a teacher's aide will support the teacher not just work with the student with a disability.

Things to do in the classroom:

Talk about what different people:

- **Do well** e.g. painting, drawing, climbing, using a computer
- **Find hard to do** e.g. whistle, tie shoe laces, doing somersaults

Talk about some people's **particular difficulties** and the things they **can** do.

This can apply to all students. What can help them to learn to do things as independently as possible?

e.g. cannot see but **can**.....

cannot walk but **learning to** ...

cannot talk but is **signing** (talk with hands) or **using a communication device**

Show and explain the use of any specific equipment the student may use e.g. communication device, walking frame. The student may like to help demonstrate these. If the student and family are willing, other students may like to try out the equipment under adult supervision.

Read books about people with disability to the students

Particular ones that include cerebral palsy:

Why do some people use wheelchairs?

Atkinson, M., (1997)
Dorling Kindersley, London
ISBN 0 7513 - 5603 - 4

Nicholas Nigel Norris

Publication of The Cerebral Palsy Association of Western Australia, (2000)
A story book and accompanying "CP and Me' workbook
- pages can be adapted for individual classes

Hands up for Andie

Palmer, B., (1998)
Hemi-Help, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Storybook for 7-11 year olds

What do we think about Disability?

Powell, J.,(1998)
Hodder Wayland, U.K.

Ideas to consider when the student comes to your class

- It is important to focus on the positive aspects. Teachers should provide opportunities for the student to succeed and use his/her personal abilities in the classroom
- To promote the student's sense of his/her identity in the classroom, teachers can give classroom responsibilities e.g. class monitor. If the student cannot perform the usual class roster duties, the teacher can design jobs to fit the student's ability.
- To increase the student's self esteem, the student with cerebral palsy could assist a peer eg. with reading or be a buddy to a younger student.
- Teachers can model acceptance and appropriate interaction to the class and all students in the school.
- Small groups can be used to encourage peer interactions and cooperative learning.
- Some students can find the challenges they face to be emotionally overwhelming. A caring, supportive classroom environment where all students' attempts are encouraged and accepted would be beneficial.
- Encourage peers to include the student in their activities in the playground as well as in class, particularly in activities the student enjoys eg. the student could be a referee or keep the score in a game of handball.
- The buddy system can work well with the student, but all peers need to learn what the student can do and only help when really needed.
- Help the student learn to adjust to and understand their disability and cope with the individual challenges it may place on them in different areas of their lives.
- Keep the student's routine and expectations of them (as much as possible) the same as their peers e.g. If the student needs special scissors, keep them in the same place as other scissors so that they have to get them as their peers do. If the student has a modified worksheet, give it out at the same time as other students receive theirs.

See also **Resources** fact sheet

**Each student with cerebral palsy has individual needs.
In partnership with the student and their family,
The Spastic Centre team can advise on their needs.**