

U.S. Hogs For Dogs, Inc.

Sample Lesson Plans For Educators

Lesson 1 -- Community Access

Communities are groups of people who work or live together. Good communities meet the needs of everyone in the community. People with disabilities may need to have the environment structured so that they can more fully participate in the life of the community. The following activity gives children an opportunity to see their surroundings through the eyes of someone else.

Goal: Children will look at their surroundings to see how they would meet the needs of someone in a wheelchair..

Materials needed: Measuring tapes, clipboards, paper, pens and wheelchair (if possible)

Working in groups, children go around the school (inside and out), looking for both barriers and adaptations that would affect people in wheelchairs. Depending on their ages, children may need help in recognizing and identifying the issues. The following list is a suggestion of things that may be investigated or observed:

- Doorways – are they wide enough for a wheelchair to easily pass through? What if the person has an Assistance Dog beside them?
- Steps – are there also ramps or elevators easily accessible?
- Drinking fountains – can a person get a wheelchair close enough to safely use the drinking fountain?
- Pay phones – are they low enough to use from a wheelchair?
- Doors – how would someone in a wheelchair open the door? What if they have a dog? Are their automatic door plates?
- Lockers – are they easy to reach from a wheelchair?
- Handicapped parking – where is it? Do the children know what it is for? Why are some spots extra wide? What does “van accessible” mean?
- What other obstacles or adaptations can they observe?

If a wheelchair is available, children can take turns being both an occupant of it and being the ones pushing it. How hard is it to get up ramps? Using the measuring tapes, the width of the chair can be compared to width of doorways, hallways, etc.

If the children do this in groups, one person can be the recorder for the group, noting their findings as they work through the building. The length of time and areas covered can be determined by the time available and the ages of the children.

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Discussion:

After all groups are finished, the class can discuss their findings. Here are some suggestions for questions to get discussion started and to raise some important issues:

- In what areas and in what ways were there problems of access – obstacles - for the person in the wheelchair?
- How could these issues be addressed or corrected?

- Have the children who were in the wheelchair talk about how they saw these obstacles from their perspective in the wheelchair. Would they have been prevented from doing things they wanted or needed to do?

- What if, instead of using a wheelchair, the person was blind? What kind of obstacles would there be for this person? How could they be overcome? What if the person was deaf? Are there any issues here for a person who could not hear in these surroundings?

An extension of this activity can be to follow up on any concerns students had with the appropriate members of the school community (e.g. principal, PTA, site council, etc.).

This gives students the opportunity to experience activism. They could:

- Write a letter to the principal
- Present their findings at a PTA meeting
- Invite someone with a disability to come and speak to their class about how they overcome environmental obstacles
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Note: U.S. Hogs For Dogs, Inc. provides sample lesson plans as generic outlines for activities and topics of discussion within the classroom. Not all activities or topics may be suitable for all ages. The appropriateness and suitability of these lessons are left to the educator's professional discretion.