

Ways to Make a Library Event or Program More Accessible to Youth with Special Needs

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<p>How do families know you'll work with them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ include a statement of inclusion on all event fliers, in press releases to the media, and on the library's program web site. "Open the door" by encouraging families to ask and be receptive to their suggestions for improvements. Changes will often make the activity better for <u>everyone</u>. ▪ offer program fliers in large-type format on demand (e.g., enlarge on your copier).
<p>Does the program include reading instructions or rules of a game?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide instructions in large size typeface or fonts using upper and lower case letters (not all capitals) ▪ print a set of discussion questions ahead of time and provide it to the participant, to read at a comfortable distance and to encourage him/her to formulate responses ahead
<p>Does the program include snacks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ask the participant if smaller pieces are needed for ease of chewing and swallowing ▪ find out if there are food allergies (e.g., dairy) and offer an alternative snack or choices for everyone
<p>Does the activity require individual participation or decision-making?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide a personal assistant for 1-on-1 help so the student can participate fully ▪ have the adult-in-charge spot check everyone's progress, offering encouragement and reinforcement ▪ use a team approach for trivia games, etc., so children help one another and increase their social skills. Proximity to typical children and teens helps youth with disabilities become included in the action.
<p>Does the program require individual writing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ arrange students in small work groups and have one child or a teen volunteer write notes to share on behalf of everyone in the group

<p>Are your crafts “cookie cutter” style or as unique as every individual who attends?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be flexible and encourage creativity by selecting activities that allow for individual decision-making, rather than “when you are done, it should look like this.” ▪ provide peer partners or assistants to encourage doing as many steps as the students can themselves ▪ put supplies at every table within easy reach or make “place settings” for every person (an accommodation for students with mobility impairments) ▪ offer crafts other than those dependent on fine motor skills (e.g., painting vs. pencil drawing, tie dye T-shirts vs. macramé bracelets, clay sculptures vs. stringing beads) ▪ along with verbal directions, provide a written instruction sheet and a demonstration of the steps <i>before</i> everyone starts, to meet several different learning styles ▪ use icons on directions (e.g., an image of scissors, ✂ as well as saying, “cut out....”)
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Basic Strategies and Techniques of Inclusion:

- have **good lighting** in the activity room – dim lighting is difficult for youth with visual impairments
- use a **sound system with a microphone** to give instructions clearly to everyone
- **introduce participants and provide name tags** so children and teens make a friend with someone they didn’t know before
- **circles of chairs** for discussions and tables set in a square or “U” **lets everyone see and hear better**
- when developing reader’s advisory lists and displays, **include some books that have persons with disabilities** as featured characters
- with summer reading programs, **allow a choice for reading for a set number of minutes** (as well as a number of pages or books). **Encourage the use of audio books** or e-books.