

All Kinds of Readers: A Guide to Creating Inclusive Literacy Celebrations for Kids with Learning and Attention Issues

In the following article, amended from the article "All Kinds of Readers: A guide to creating inclusive literacy celebrations for kids with learning and attention issues" gives readers some great tips on how to plan an inclusive event to foster a love of reading by readers of all ages. The full article can be accessed online.

Special literacy events and celebrations can be a great way to get kids excited about books and reading. But for kids who struggle with reading, these kinds of events can challenge their self-confidence. Below are some strategies to help you plan a successful, joyful reading event for all kinds of readers and learners.

Throughout the year, literacy events and celebrations can be a great way to get kids excited about books. When we celebrate reading, we send the message that reading matters, that it is important, and that it's fun! However, it can be challenging to plan an event that appeals to kids who have difficulty with reading, or who may feel high levels of anxiety or discomfort about reading. This may be the case for kids with learning and attention issues such as dyslexia or ADHD.

Henry Winkler, who has dyslexia, speaks to this feeling when he recalls that, as a kid, going to the library "would have been my worst nightmare: a whole room full of books that I couldn't read." He remembers, "To me, reading looked like a magic trick, and I wasn't in on the secret."

The good news is that there are steps planners can take in making reading events engaging and accessible for all students. This guide can help you get started, but the best ideas will be the ones that come from your own school community!

Listen to kids' voices when planning literacy celebrations

The first step in planning a successful event is to give students a chance to express their interests and preferences, whether at the classroom, grade, or school level. Get student input through, class discussions, or activities tied to the curriculum such as an author study. Individual conversations one-on-one can also be an effective way for students with learning and attention issues to verbalize preferences and concerns. Students appreciate the opportunity to express their choices, especially when it comes to reading! Explain to students that while you may not be able to implement all of their ideas, their suggestions do matter, will be taken seriously, and will help shape the event you plan.



All Kinds of Readers...con't

Consider an event where kids can share, swap, or recommend favorite books

Kids often like to talk about the books they enjoy and make recommendations, even if they seem resistant to reading what has been assigned. (Jon Scieszka recalls a fourth-grader he met who, in response to his mother's declaration that he was a reluctant reader, said, "No, Mom, I'm a picky reader.") Kids can share their ideas in a book club, book swap, or "book of the week" pick for classmates.

Give students a chance to contribute and share their experiences

Create opportunities in which students can:

- Contribute their own talents and skills
- Highlight an important cultural tradition or experience
- Make a contribution to the school or local community as reading buddies or through holding a book drive
- Share their activities through a classroom newsletter, school website, or the local media

Ideas for kids with learning and attention issues: Offering students a chance to share a talent or skill or make a difference to others can be a powerful, positive experience. Here's why:

- It takes the pressure off the "reading" part of the literacy event
- It builds confidence and highlight the contributions and strengths of students, as opposed to their challenges
- It gives students a chance to share their experience and represent the class or their school publicly

Include student supports, accommodations, and accessibility considerations in the planning

As you plan your activities, keep in minds the needs of diverse learners and the things that will allow all students to participate in the event.

Ideas for kids with learning and attention issues: For kids with learning and attention issues, this may mean technology, digital books, or other kinds of assistive technology.

For kids with other special education needs or disabilities, this may mean consideration of the event venue and activities, as well as accommodations that students use in the classroom.

Look for reading "role models"

If visitors, volunteers, or special guests will be speaking with kids or reading aloud, consider the following:

- Make an effort to include a diverse range of readers as well so that students can see various adults (and ideally some adults with whom they identify) participating in reading activities.
- Ask your guests to share stories of challenges they have overcome regarding reading or learning a new language.
- Ask your guests to talk about reading as part of their life: favorite books, what they like to read, reading habits, places they like to read, and what they find hard about reading. Kids may be surprised to know that adults struggle with reading too!

As appropriate, make your guest aware of kids' interests and abilities to help facilitate a positive

Placement Student Final Reflections

Hello,

April marks the final days which I will be here at ATN Access Inc. As the end of my placement term comes to an end, it is fitting that I reflect on specific memories of learning which have benefitted me as a placement student.

First, it is paramount for me to thank all the workers here at ATN – I am truly thankful for the experience you have provided me. Whether it was helping clients in the LD Lab enhance their educational skills, shadowing the different worker roles, visiting the Old East Village Grocery Store, writing for the LD Edge newsletter, or creating posters for the annual golf tournament, I have had a wonderful time completing these tasks.

I have learned that the work accomplished here with clients at ATN requires a team effort – all the workers work efficiently in supporting clients. Like cogs working effectively in a machine, clients are supported through different workers in achieving their goals.

ATN has also showed me the need to continuously meet the clients' needs first – working in the LD Lab has helped me come to appreciate the small tasks. Amidst teaching clients math and upgrading their English skills, I found that during this time is when clients are at most at ease and provides the opportunity for the workers to connect at a personal level.

Thank you again for having me at this agency – I have had a magnificent time familiarizing myself to the “ins and outs” of this place and have had a wonderful time with you all!

Wishing you all the best,
Frankie Lui

Inspirational Quotes – Issue # 77

But most importantly, art “made me feel good about myself. You just need to find something where you can come out the other end feeling confident, feeling skilled, and feeling good about yourself,” he added.

— Chuck Close, Dyslexia

Chuck Close is a world-renowned artist, painter and photographer. Prior to his rise to the top of the North American Arts scene in the 1960's, Close was raised by artistic parents in Washington. Close was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of four, and found he struggled in all classes except art class. In interviews, he has described his artistic gifts as what “saved his life.” Despite difficulty with school, Close attended Yale University for their Masters of Fine Arts program. He has gone on to have a successful career spanning decades.

In 1988, an injury left Close paralyzed from the neck down. As a result, he worked to develop a new method to paint that did not affect the quality of his painting. Growing up with a learning disability taught him how to adapt and work with his strengths. He experimented with different methods of painting that he was able to do, including putting the paint brush between his teeth and between his two hands.

Reference: Sherwood, Emily. Retrieved April 5, 2018 from <http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2007/JUN/html/speced-artistchuck.html>

Volunteer Opportunities

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Are you interested in helping to make a difference in someone's life? Do you have talents and skills that you would be willing to share? If so, being an ATN volunteer may be just for you!

ATN is looking for individuals that are willing to volunteer a few hours a week to help make a difference in someone's life. Opportunities exist in our academic upgrading lab, assistive technology lab, employment services, class room assistance and drop-in computer lab.

For more information and to get involved, please call us at

519 - 433-7950 ext. 372.
or visit our website at www.atn.on.ca



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We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.



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If we give them an edge...
They may give us one!