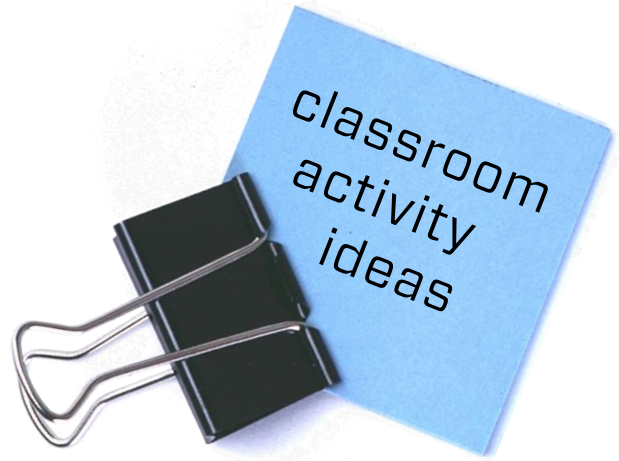


# Friends Like YOU Friends Like ME



- Ask students to create an artistic representation of the same thing (e.g. a flower, ball, hand, etc.) Encourage the use of different art mediums. Discuss/compare the similarities, differences, appeal, and uniqueness of the works of art. Emphasize that there is no measure or standard in artistic expression.
- Compare and contrast figurative and literal language. Discuss how people with autism may get frustrated because they might not understand meanings of common expressions (e.g. “Put a sock in it.” “Get out of here.” “I have butterflies in my stomach.”)
- Use person-first language. Help children understand that children are children, first. A disability is not who the person is.
- Create fictional stories to help students connect with feelings and interactions related to people with developmental disabilities. Use these stories to help illustrate various scenarios like working through differences, finding similarities, and supporting others. These stories can help students identify, connect with, and share such feelings as fear, pity, anger, loneliness, frustration, empathy, understanding, and acceptance. Older students can develop their own imaginative stories based on personal experiences.
- Describe how people see, hear, and feel things differently. Engage students in an interactive project that helps illustrate different sensitivities, aversions and preferences in sensations.
- Discuss common misconceptions that influence the general public's understanding of people with autism. Students can present the facts about each one.
- Discuss similarities and differences in people (physical, emotional, developmental, personalities). Offer exercises to help identify similarities and develop mutual interests.
- Each person has something about them that is impressive (e.g. a smile, writing ability, flexibility, sense of humor, organization skills, etc.) Help students identify other students' positive attributes.
- Encourage children to look for reliable research relating to autism. Related discussions can include genetics, environment, medical interventions/therapies, etc.
- Encourage students to write a poem about autism and friendship. Discuss different types of poetry and different ways autism affects a person.
- Engage in a discussion about friendship and cliques. Share commonalities in friendship groups. Then help children look for shared interests in kids with autism, rather than differences or disabilities.
- Everyone desires to be accepted/wanted/needed. Have students discuss experiences where they felt left out, unneeded and/or unwelcome. Discuss ways a person can help others feel more welcome and included.



- Explain advocacy. Offer research opportunities about autism awareness education programs for kids/teens. Have student groups present an autism awareness campaign.
- Explain why a disability doesn't have to be a barrier to participation.
- Facilitate a discussion with a student who has a developmental disability to help the students learn about his/her experiences in school and extracurricular activities.
- Have a group of students develop a community service project which supports and/or includes children with autism and other developmental disabilities.
- Have children make or adapt a game or activities so that children of all abilities can participate. Help expose implicit barriers as well.
- Have students write a composition (or have a classroom discussion) about friendship, cliques and those who "don't fit in." Help students identify feelings of all involved.
- Help students discover ways they can adjust an activity to help a person with autism participate in a particular adaptive sport or recreational activity.
- Inspire children to team-up to create pictures or collages that show children having fun in inclusive activities. Discussions can include shared experiences, feelings, accommodations, etc.
- Instruct about the various aspects of body language, gestures, eye contact, and tone of voice used as part of communication and socialization. Describe some of the challenges for many kids with autism who may not recognize or understand these gestures.
- Invite a parent who is comfortable sharing about the daily life of a child with autism to visit the class.
- Invite students to collaborate to write a list of rights for kids with special needs. These rights can be displayed as a poster in the classroom.
- Involve children in activities that challenge various senses (loud noises, slippery feeling, multiple distractions, etc.) Discuss how these challenges might affect a person's desire to participate in various activities (e.g. crowded rooms, movie theaters, loud music, etc.)
- Offer opportunities for role-playing various social scenarios. Guide the topics and situations in order to help build sensitivity and awareness of kids with special needs. Be careful not to identify, highlight, or expose a particular student, situation, or sensitive information.
- Offer research projects on disabilities which are not instantly recognizable (e.g. autism, epilepsy, diabetes, learning disabilities, etc.). What are some challenges faced by individuals with less obvious disabilities?
- Present a choice of books or stories with characters diagnosed with autism. Have students describe the challenges they discovered and how the character was able to overcome them.
- Provide students with strategies to understand and interact with students having different needs and abilities. Discuss introductions; identifying common interests; respecting sensitivities and challenges; making adjustments; and ways to interact together.



- Request students to identify favorite games, playground, and sport activities and rules associated with those activities. Discuss how some children may not know, understand, or remember these rules. Ask students to exchange ideas on how to encourage all children to participate.
- Share information about alternate/augmentative forms of communication. Share how technology can increase the capacity of children with communication challenges (socially, academically, etc.)
- Share ways children can be disrespectful to others who are not like them. Evoke various ways of teasing and exclusion. Have students share personal experiences and feelings of being left out and teased.
- Solicit discussion or composition about three aspects of friendship: being kind; sharing something in common; and respect.
- Talk about the types of services your community provides for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. What can the class/school do to help?
- Have the students research what services the community provides for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. Lead discussion regarding if there are needed services which are not provided.
- Talk to the students in a foreign language or special code. Discuss ways they can “decode” the conversation and ways that could help them better understand (pictures, hand gestures, etc.)
- Teach students about social stories. Have students use pictures to create social stories about fun and interesting activities or events. Help them to describe the various aspects and expectations of the setting.
- Work with a student group to create an autism-related display about friendship for the local library.



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