

## Understanding (dis)abilities through children's literature

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The authors of this article examined how pre-service teachers can use children's and young adult literature about disabilities to enhance understanding of individual differences through a bibliotherapeutic approach. An introduction to bibliotherapy is provided along with related literature from the field. Strategies for using children's and young adult literature to enhance the understanding of issues associated with disabilities are presented along with one teacher candidate's application of the literature in her classroom. The authors have also included a selected bibliography of children's literature on disabilities as well as relevant websites.

**Keywords:** children | disabilities | literature

### Article:

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

## Understanding (dis)abilities through children's literature By Dr. Stephanie A. Kurtts and Karen W. Gavigan

### Abstract

The authors of this article examined how pre-service teachers can use children's and young adult literature about disabilities to enhance understanding of individual differences through a bibliotherapeutic approach. An introduction to bibliotherapy is provided along with related literature from the field. Strategies for using children's and young adult literature to enhance the understanding of issues associated with disabilities are presented along with one teacher candidate's application of the literature in her classroom. The authors have also included a selected bibliography of children's literature on disabilities as well as relevant websites.

Ashley F., a teacher candidate in special education, shared her reflections on *Becky the Brave* (Lears, 2002), a children's book about epilepsy.

*Like Becky, I also have epilepsy. I have been through everything Becky goes through in the story. I think this book could give children with and without epilepsy a positive view of the disorder... I feel it is extremely important for kids to be exposed to and get an understanding of the different kinds of disabilities that people may have to cause them to be different. If Becky received her services (special education) under OHI (other health impairments) then other students in her classroom would see that just because someone has epilepsy, it does not mean that that is all there is to them, but that they are people just like them with the same interests. When Becky's sister Sarah says, "In many ways we are alike, but there is one big difference between us. Becky is brave...and I am not," it really means how much respect and love she has for her sister. This is something all children need to know about people with disabilities (personal communication, March 12, 2007).*

Teachers who are preparing for inclusive classrooms in which they will be teaching diverse learners, including students with disabilities who are receiving special education services, constantly seek innovative ways to assist their students in developing empathy, acceptance, and understanding for individual differences. The use of children's literature is a way to share powerful examples of how we all may or may not relate to individual differences. This can be especially true for understanding how disabilities impact the lives of individuals and their families and friends. For pre-service teachers, exposure to the use of children's literature about disabilities is an effective instructional tool for helping students develop empathy and understanding of diversity, but also to inform their own professional practice as they prepare to meet the individual educational needs of children in their

classrooms as well as in practice. In light of increased emphasis on professional teaching standards that relate to diversity such as the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and professional organizational standards, it becomes even more apparent that children's literature and bibliotherapy are effective teaching tools to meet important pedagogical competencies.

### Why Bibliotherapy and Understanding Disabilities

For years, librarians, teachers, and school counselors have been using children's literature to help students deal with stressful issues such as abuse, adoption, death and divorce. Children's literature has also been used successfully to address disability issues with children and adolescents. Bibliotherapy has proven to be a useful strategy for addressing the needs of students with disabilities in addition to helping those without disabilities to understand the lives of children with special needs.

Bibliotherapy is the process of using literature in therapeutic ways. Herbert and Kent (2000) suggest that bibliotherapy is an attempt to use literature in a way that helps children understand themselves and to cope with problems relevant to their personal situations and developmental needs at the appropriate time. Davis (1992) describes bibliotherapy as a process that leads youth toward emotional good health through the medium of literature. The Greeks referred to *biblion* (book) and *therapeia* (healing) (Rudman, Gagne, & Bernstein, 1993). During ancient times, the library was considered the healing place of the soul (Galen & Johns, 1979). Much later, Samuel McChord Crothers, in 1916, was one of the first American authors to use the word *bibliotherapy* but, it wasn't until the 1930s and '40s that lists were prepared and other articles began to appear about bibliotherapy (Rudman, Gagne, & Bernstein, 1993).

## Related Literature on Bibliotherapy

There have been numerous studies regarding bibliotherapy and students with disabilities. For example, an examination of books portraying characters with learning disabilities was presented in a study by Prater (2003). The author examined ninety fiction books written for children and adolescents to determine how learning disability issues were addressed. Prater discussed the need for K-12 practitioners and teacher educators to be exposed to disability-related literature, as well as providing examples of how the literature could be used with pre-service teachers in methods and children's literature courses.

One study by Moody and Limper and another by Zaccaria (as cited in Lenkowsky, 2001) demonstrated that bibliotherapeutic instruction was an effective process for improving the self-efficacy, feelings, and productivity of children with disabilities. Similarly, Cornett and Cornett (as cited in Borders & Paisley, 1992) suggested that the use of bibliotherapy improved students' perception of self worth and achievement and had positive effects on students' social behavior, interpersonal relationships, and acceptance of people different from themselves. Roberts (1984) discovered that bibliotherapy was helpful in easing the social concerns and physical problems experienced by children who were blind. Further studies showed that children with physical impairments can also benefit from the use of bibliotherapy (Hopkins-Best & Wiinamiki, 1985).

Inquinta & Hipsky (2006) discovered that students without disabilities may be more willing to discuss their feelings about disabilities when a book or story is used as a focal point. For example, bibliotherapy is often used to help students without disabilities understand the numerous disabilities that exist in their inclusive classrooms. Although there are fewer studies exploring the use of bibliotherapy in specific inclusive educational settings, there are noteworthy examples of successfully using literature about children with special needs (Galen & Johns, 1979; Kramer, 1999; McCarty & Chalmers, 1997; Orr, et al., 1997). These researchers suggested that empathy, the development of social insights, and better understanding of an inclusive

society were promoted by the use of children's literature about disabilities.

While the positive impact of bibliotherapy has been reported, Beardsley and Moss (as cited in Lenkowsky, 2001) revealed this method was a less than effective means for improving the attitudes of elementary students who did not have disabilities toward those with disabilities. Findings from these studies did not support the theory that bibliotherapy is a sufficient way in which to change perceptions towards handicaps (Lenowsky, 2001).

“I...look forward to a time in the not too distant future when such prizes seem outdated and unnecessary, when children with learning difficulties of all kinds are as much a part of our society as children with red hair or children who play the clarinet and readers who do not even notice when a book contains a character with learning difficulties because such books are as common as rain.”

~ Author Mark Haddon, During his acceptance speech for the 2004 Dolly Gray Award for his novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*

## Bibliographic Strategies

Developmental bibliotherapy, as opposed to clinic or institutional bibliotherapy, is the approach used most often in library and school settings. The objective of developmental bibliotherapy is to promote and maintain mental health and to foster self-actualization (Rudman, Gagne, & Bernstein, 1993).

Bibliotherapy sessions consists of reading the literature, or listening to it being read aloud, followed by a discussion led by a facilitator (Borders & Paisley, 1992). Pardeck (as cited in Cook, 2006) established six goals of bibliotherapy. They are as follows:

- To provide information.
- To provide insight into a specific experience or situation.
- To provide alternative solutions to the problem.
- To stimulate a discussion of what the actual problem is.
- To communicate new values and attitudes with regard to the problem.
- To help students understand that they are not the only one who has experienced this problem.

Effective bibliotherapy sessions begin and end on a personal note with the reasons that the student found the literature either helpful or unhelpful (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). According to Forgan (as cited in Laquinta & Hipsky, 2006) a bibliotherapy lesson should include the following elements: (a) pre-reading, (b) guided reading, (c) post-reading discussion, and (d) problem-solving and reinforcement activities.

The bibliotherapy session can be part of a curriculum-based lesson or one that is specifically designed to teach children about disabilities. For example, Harvey and Goudvis (2000) share the account of a student's response to a story about a slow turtle and Leo, a boy who attends special education classes. After reading the short story, *Slower than the Rest* (Rylant, 1985), Randall, a shy fourth-grader, was moved to make the following comment to his classmates, "It reminds me of how I feel just like Leo sometimes, especially when Mrs. Steadily [the special education teacher] comes to get me" (69). Randall further revealed that he often wondered what the other students did while he was out of the room.

A teacher in California developed a successful lesson using the book, *A.D.D. not B.A.D.*, the A.D.D. referring to Attention Deficit Disorder. (Penn, 2003) with her first grade students. She began the class with a pre-reading activity in which she asked the students, "What does it mean to be different from everyone else?" After reading the book aloud, she allowed the opportunity for students to role-play a few scenes. She then conducted a post-reading activity and a culminating discussion of positive ways students can interact with A.D.D. students in their classroom (Jaquinta & Hipsky, 2006).

An example of a curriculum-based use of bibliotherapy was also described by Jaquinta and Hipsky (2006). In this lesson, the teacher introduces the book *Secret Signs* (Riggio, 1997), reads it aloud to the class, then asks students to make predictions about the plot. The story is about a young deaf boy's creative use of sign language to help slaves escape on the underground railroad. As the teacher read, she continued to ask questions throughout the reading. The students then engaged in a post-reading discussion and a problem-solving and reinforcement activity at the end of the lesson.

There are numerous other examples of children's literature that can be used successfully to provide bibliographic instruction in the classroom. Many of the books are award-winning titles such as the Newbery award books referenced in the Prater (2003) article.

In an effort to recognize quality children's books with positive portrayals of individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities, the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award was created in 2000

(Dyches, Prater, & Gay, 2006). The award is presented biennially to the author and illustrator of one picture book and one chapter book that includes a character with development disabilities. The award is in memory of Dolly Gray who had severe quadriplegic athetoid cerebral palsy. Books played a large role in her life especially those that portrayed characters with a disability.

### **Pre-service Teachers and the Use of Children's Literature on Disabilities**

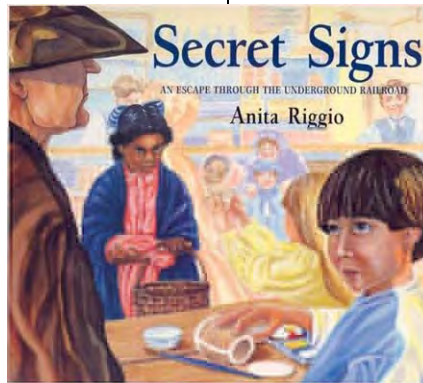
If teachers are to effectively use children's literature on disabilities to teach empathy, acceptance, and understanding of diversity, then it stands to reason that

there should be instructional activities that are part of their professional teacher preparation program that provide insights into the effectiveness of the literature and the use of bibliotherapy in their classrooms. One such activity is a review of children's and young adult literature that addresses issues associated with disabilities. In our work at University of North Carolina, Greensboro, (UNCG) with pre-service special education

teachers who are preparing to teach students with mild and moderate disabilities, we use an assignment that is a critical review, with reflection, of this literature. The assignment is part of the requirements of the introductory course to the profession of special education. Teacher candidates in this course are at the beginning of their professional program and as such may have had limited experiences with disabilities.

### **Children's Literature Assignment Guidelines; Reflection on Children's Literature Related to Individuals with Disabilities SES 250 Guidelines**

1. Select two books (children's literature) that address issues associated with individuals with disabilities. The Teaching Resource Center in Ferguson Building has a good selection; you can also check in public libraries or other book stores for selections.
2. Read these books with a critical eye for the following:
  - a. How are individuals with disabilities portrayed? Pathetic, sad, to be pitied? Heroic, succeeding against all odds? Or realistically?
  - b. How are relationships with non-disabled peers or adults described?



- c. What could children or youth learn from reading this book?
  - d. Any other questions you have?
3. Write your reflection on each of the two books you selected. Include: (a) a brief summary of the story told, (b) a reflection that is guided by the questions above in #2, and (c) a recommendation for or against this book as an appropriate book for children to learn about individuals with disabilities-include at least two support details for your recommendation.
  4. Word process your reflections, double-space, and use size-12 type and Times New Roman or Helvetica.
  5. Each reflection should be between 2-3 pages in length. Try to be concise yet follow your guidelines
  6. You can earn up to five points for each reflection.

### Application in the Field

Whitney K., now in her second semester of her teacher preparation program in special education, shares how the review of children's literature impacted a lesson that she planned to use with the students in her internship classroom. Her placement was in a high school, working with students with multiple disabilities. Her students were working on building community and spent part of the day with their non-disabled peers working on peer tutoring activities. Whitney wanted to help all of her students better understand disabilities and support the acceptance of individual differences in a community.

*When I was thinking about how to really demonstrate acceptance but also the whole range of emotions that people with disabilities experience, the first thing I thought of was Crazy Lady (Conly, 1993), the book I read for the lit review assignment in SES 250 (introductory course to the profession). I thought, now that is a book that will help high school students understand and accept one another, just like the characters did! I thought about Ronald, who had mental retardation, and his mom Maxine, who fought so hard to protect him, and then how Vernon, the neighborhood boy whose mom died, became friends with them after making fun of them. I wanted to read the entire book out loud to all of*



*the students (personal communication, January 20, 2007).*

Whitney spoke with her university instructor and her supervising teacher and they agreed that the book would be an appropriate teaching tool. Over a two-week period, she would read the book aloud during peer tutoring sessions, answering student questions as she read and using examples from the book to teach about community building.

Her students were enthralled. They couldn't wait to come to her classroom and listen to *Crazy Lady*. Whitney began to see an openness of communication between all of her students and a willingness to discuss what it is like to be "different," but even more so, how much alike everyone is, sharing fears, hopes, and dreams.

As Ashley and Whitney have shared, the review of children's and young adult literature opens the minds and hearts of the pre-service teachers as they begin to see disabilities as a very human condition that goes beyond their factual textbook knowledge about disabilities and what they may have assumed to be true about individuals with disabilities. Examining disabilities through children's and young adult literature provides a new perspective on understanding and acceptance of individual differences, and the importance of being sensitive to those issues that are part of the lives of individuals with disabilities. These

teacher candidates and their students begin to move beyond sympathy for individuals with disabilities and recognize their strengths.

Not only does this assignment stress the reflective element of understanding concerning issues of disabilities seen through a child's eyes, it assists us as we strive to ensure that the activities focus on professional teaching standards addressing issues of diversity. In Figure 2 the INTASC (2006), professional standards for beginning teachers are compared with the Council for Exceptional Children's (2006)

professional standards for diversity. These are the standards that our teacher candidates are addressing with the critical review of the children's literature on disabilities.

**Figure 2: Professional Teaching Standards (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2007; International Council for Exceptional Children, 2007).**

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)	Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
<p align="center"><b>Standard 3 Diverse Learners</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Standard 3 Individual Learning Differences</b></p>
<p>The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of disabilities on auditory and information processing skills.</li> <li>• Relate levels of support to the needs of the individual.</li> <li>• Effects an exceptional condition(s) can have on an individual's life.</li> </ul>

**Additional Resources**

The bibliography and weblibliography, located at the end of this article, can aid educators in selecting appropriate books and websites dealing with understanding disabilities. The categories and titles of books and websites included are not exhaustive; however, they may be helpful to pre-service and in-service teachers and librarians. For the complete bibliography of titles used for this assignment, please visit the bibliographies section of the Teaching Resources Center website at <http://www.uncg.edu/soe/trc>.

As with all literature, books characterizing learning disabilities may not always be of the highest quality. Children's and young adult literature dealing with disability issues is vulnerable to the same flaws as any other literary work (Prater, 2003). Teachers and librarians are advised to use the *Checklist to Evaluate Children's Books that Address Disability as Part of Diversity* that is listed in the weblibliography below.

**Conclusion**

In *Shadowlands*, the movie about the life of C.S. Lewis, the author professes, "We read to discover that we are not alone" (as cited in Herbert and Kent, 2000, 7). When compassionate and caring teachers, librarians, and counselors guide students with disabilities to appropriate literature, it can help those students understand that they are not alone. It can also help them develop a deeper understanding of themselves. Furthermore, when children's and young

adult literature is effectively used with students without disabilities, it can help them better understand the students with disabilities and become more responsive to their needs. This is what we want to instill in our teacher candidates as they prepare for meeting the educational needs of all their students.

During his acceptance speech for the 2004 Dolly Gray Award, Mark Haddon shared his reflections about writing his novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* (2003). Haddon ended his speech with the following quote, "I...look forward to a time in the not too distant future when such prizes seem outdated and unnecessary, when children with learning difficulties of all kinds are as much a part of our society as children with red hair or children who play the clarinet and readers who do not even notice when a book contains a character with learning difficulties because such books are as common as rain." (Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Developmental Disabilities and Special Needs Project, 2006). This is the future we strive for as we prepare highly qualified teachers, librarians, and school counselors to recognize that all children bring gifts and strengths to our classrooms.



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For pre-service teachers, exposure to the use of children's literature about disabilities is an effective instructional tool for helping students develop empathy and understanding of diversity, but also to inform their own professional practice as they prepare to meet the individual educational needs of children in their classrooms as well as in practice.

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## A Selective Bibliography of Books for Children and Young Adults about Individuals with Special Needs

### Attention Deficit Disorder

- Galvin, Matthew. (2001). *Otto learns about his medicine: A story about medication for children with ADHD*. Washington, DC: Magination Press. Otto, a fidgety young car that has trouble paying attention in school, visits a special mechanic who prescribes a medication to control his hyperactive behavior.
- Gantos, Jack. (1998). *Joey Pigza swallows the key*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Joey is a young boy who takes medicine for his hyperactivity. He tries to keep his life from degenerating into chaos. Others in the series: *What Would Joey Do?* and *Joey Pigza Loses Control*.
- Parker, Roberta N. (1993). *Slam dunk: A young boy's struggle with Attention Deficit Disorder*. Plantation, FL: Specialty Press. A realistic story of a young boy's efforts to overcome problems associated with attention-deficit disorder.
- Penn, Audrey (2003). *A.D.D. not B.A.D.* Washington, DC: Child and Family Press. Jimmy Jumpingbean and his teacher, Mr. Jugardor, demonstrate to the class why Jimmy's attention deficit disorder makes it hard for him to sit still.

### Autism

- Choldenko, Gennifer. (2004). *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. A twelve-year-old boy, Moose moves to Alcatraz in 1935 when guards' families were housed and contends with his new environment in addition to life with his sister with autism.
- Day, Alexandra. (2004). *The flight of a dove*. Four-year-old Betsy, a child with autism, begins to improve after she sees a dove, one of the animals at her preschool, fly into the air. Based on a true story.
- Haddon, Mark. (2003). *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time*. New York: Doubleday. Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a fifteen-year-old boy who is

mathematically gifted and has autism, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secret information about his parents.

Lears, Laurie. (1998). *Ian's Walk: A Story About Autism*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. Ian, who has autism, takes a walk with his sisters and demonstrates how he sees, hears, smells, and tastes things differently.

### **Cerebral Palsy**

- Mikaelsen, Ben. (2000). *Petey*. New York: Hyperion Paperbacks for Children. In 1922 Petey, who has cerebral palsy, is misdiagnosed as an idiot and institutionalized; sixty years later, still in the institution, he befriends a boy and shares with him the joy of life.
- Slepian, Jan. (2001). *The Alfred summer*. New York: Philomel Books. Four preteen outcasts, two of them with cerebral palsy, learn lessons in perseverance when they join forces to build a boat.
- Trueman, Terry. (2000). *Stuck in Neutral*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Fourteen-year-old Shawn McDaniel has severe cerebral palsy and he thinks his father wants to kill him.

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

- Dowell, Frances O'Roark. (2001). *Dovey Coe*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks. Accused of murder in her North Carolina mountain town in 1928, Dovey Coe, a twelve-year-old girl, comes to a new understanding of others, including her deaf brother, as she attempts to clear her name.
- Lakin, Pat. (1994). *Dad and me in the morning*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. A deaf boy and his father share a special time as they watch the sun rise at the beach.
- Litchfield, Ada B. (1976). *A button in her ear*. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman. A girl relates how her hearing deficiency is detected and corrected with the use of a hearing aid.
- Millman, Isaac. (2000). *Moses goes to school*. New York: Frances Foster Books. Moses and his friends enjoy the first day of school at their special school for the deaf and hard of hearing, where they use sign language to talk to each other. Also, *Moses Goes to a Concert*, *Moses Goes to the Circus*, and *Moses Sees a Play*.
- Shreve, Susan Richards. (1993). *The gift of the girl who couldn't hear*. New York: Beech Tree Books. Two friends, one of whom is deaf, help each other when tryouts are held for a seventh-grade production of "Annie."

### **Developmental Disabilities**

- O'Connor, Barbara. (1999). *Me and Rupert Goody*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Eleven-year-old Jennalee is jealous when a slow-thinking black man arrives in her Smoky Mountains community and claims to be the son of Uncle Bea, the owner of the general store and Jennalee's only friend.
- Shriver, Maria. (2001). *What's wrong with Timmy?* New York: Little, Brown, and Co. Making friends with a boy

who has mental retardation helps Kate learn that the two of them have a lot in common.

- Shyer, Marlene Fanta. (1978). *Welcome Home, Jellybean*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Neil's life turns upside down when his parents take his sister, who has mental retardation, out of an institution and bring her home to stay.
- Tashjian, Janet. (1997). *Tru confessions*. New York: Scholastic. Computer-literate, twelve-year-old Tru keeps an electronic diary where she documents her desire to cure her twin brother who has developmental disabilities and her plan to create a television show.
- Weeks, Sarah. (2004). *So B. it*. New York: Laura Geringer Books. Upon spending summer with her mother who has mental retardation and her neighbor who has agoraphobia, twelve-year-old Heidi sets out from Reno, Nevada, to New York to find out who she is.

### **Down Syndrome**

- Carter, Alden R. (1983). *Big Brother Dustin*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. A boy with Down syndrome helps his parents and grandparents get ready for the birth of his baby sister and chooses the perfect name for her.
- Dodds, Bill. (1996). *My Sister Annie*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press. Dealing with an older sister who has Down syndrome is the toughest challenge that eleven-year-old Charlie has to face.
- Fleming, Virginia M. (1993). *Be Good to Eddie Lee*. New York: Philomel. Although Christy considered him a pest, when Eddie Lee, a boy with Down syndrome, follows her into the woods, he shares several special discoveries with her.

### **Dyslexia**

- Banks, Jacqueline Turner. (1995). *Egg-drop blues*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Twelve-year-old Judge Jenkins has a low science grade because of his dyslexia, so he convinces his twin brother Jury to work with him in a science competition in order to earn extra credit.
- Betancourt, Jeanne. (1993). *My name is Brain Brian*. New York: Scholastic. Although he is helped by his new sixth grade teacher after being diagnosed as dyslexic, Brian still has some problems with school and with people he thought were his friends.
- Gehret, Jeanne. (1996). *The don't give up kid and learning differences*. Fairport, NY: Verbal Images Press. Alex, a child with dyslexia, finds out about learning problems and what is done to solve them.
- Polacco, Patricia. (1998). *Thank you, Mr. Falker*. New York: Philomel Books. At first, Trisha loves school, but her difficulty learning to read makes her feel dumb, until, in the fifth grade, a new teacher helps her understand and overcome her problem.



## Epilepsy

Lears, Laurie. (2002). *Becky the Brave: A story about epilepsy*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. Nothing seems to scare Sarah's big sister Becky, until having an epileptic seizure makes her reluctant to return to school, and so Sarah summons her own courage to explain the disease to the other students.

Moss, Deborah M. (1989). *Lee, the rabbit with epilepsy*. Kensington, MD: Woodbine House. Lee is diagnosed as having epilepsy, but medicine to control her seizures reduces her worries and she learns she can still lead a normal life.

## Physical Disabilities

Calvert, Patricia. (1999). *Picking up the pieces*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks. A girl who has suffered a paralyzing spinal cord injury begins the process of emotional healing.

McMahon, Patricia. (2000). *Dancing wheels*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Describes the creation, training, and performances of the dance troupe known as Dancing Wheels who incorporate the movements of dancers who dance standing up and those who are in wheelchairs.

Schaefer, Lola M. (2001). *Some kids use wheelchairs*. Manakato, MN: Capstone Press. Simple text and photographs discuss the challenges of using a wheelchair, why some children cannot walk, and the everyday activities of children who use wheelchairs.

Schaefer, Lola M. (2001). *Some kids wear leg braces*. Manakato, MN: Capstone Press. Simple text and photographs describe some of the reasons children might be required to wear leg braces and how they are helpful.

White, Paul. (1978). *Janet at school*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell. The story of a five-year-old girl with spina bifida.

## Speech Impairments

Gleitzman, Morris. (1995). *Blabber Mouth*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. An Australian schoolgirl who is unable to speak is embarrassed by her father's outlandish dress and behavior.

Lester, Helen. (1999). *Hooway for Wodney Wat*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. "Walter Lorraine books." All his classmates make fun of Rodney because he cannot pronounce his name, but it is Rodney's speech impediment that drives away the class bully.

## Visual Impairments

Davis, P.A. (2000). *Brian's bird*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. Eight-year-old Brian, who is blind, learns how to take care of his new parakeet and comes to realize that his older brother is not so bad after all.

Fraustino, Lisa Rowe. (2001). *The hickory chair*. New York: A.A. Levine. A boy who is blind tells of his warm relationship with his grandmother and the gift she left for him after her death.

Garfield, James B. (1994). *Follow my leader*. New York: Puffin Books. After being accidentally blinded by a

firecracker, Jimmy learns to live a normal life with the help of Leader, his seeing-eye dog.

Karim, Roberta. (1994). *Mandy Sue Day*. New York: Clarion Books. Using her senses of taste, hearing, touch, and smell, a girl who is blind enjoys a special day on the farm.

## Other Related Titles

Philbrick, W.R. (2001). *Freak the Mighty*. New York: Scholastic. At the beginning of eighth grade, Max, who has a learning disability, and his new friend Freak, whose birth defect has affected his body but not his brilliant mind, find that when they combine forces they make a powerful team.

Thompson, Mary. (1992). *My brother, Matthew*. Rockville, MD: Woodbine House. Though David knows frustration and resentment at times, he feels he understands his disabled little brother even better than his parents and together the two boys experience a great deal of joy.

## Webliography

*All Kids Can*

<http://www.allkidscan.com/about.htm>

A website hosted by the ARC of Dallas that helps children and young adults understand and respect diversity in others. Includes ideas for class projects.

*Bibliotherapy Bookshelf: Disabilities*

<http://www.clpgh.org/kids/booknook/bibliotherapy/disabilities.html>

Includes books regarding disabilities from the Carnegie Library at Pittsburgh that might be useful for teachers, librarians, and parents to use with children.

*Checklist to Evaluate Children's Literature That Addresses Disability as Part of Diversity*

<http://circleofinclusion.org/english/books/section1/cklistblk.html>

A list of nine criteria for evaluating children's literature with characters who have disabilities.

Developed by Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force (1989)

*Disability Social History Project*

<http://www.disabilityhistory.org/people.html>

Contains biographical sketches of famous (and not so famous) people in history who have had disabilities. Entries include links to further information.

*Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award*

[http://www.dddcec.org/dolly\\_gray\\_award.htm](http://www.dddcec.org/dolly_gray_award.htm)

Provides a list of books that have received the Dolly Gray Award for Children's Literature in Developmental Disabilities.

*Inclusive Stories: Teaching about Disabilities with Picture Books*

[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view\\_printer\\_friendly.asp?id=1011](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view_printer_friendly.asp?id=1011)

A lesson plan for grades 9-12 that encourages students to explore a variety of disabilities with the goal of teaching them to think critically and sensitively about differences. From the Read, Write Think Lesson Plan Website.

*LD OnLine: LD Basics*

<http://www.ldonline.org/ldbasics>

LD OnLine offers accurate and up-to-date information about learning disabilities and related issues.

*Meet Some Special Children*

<http://www.misd.net/SEHome/MeetSome/SEKidsHome.htm>

Hosted by the Macomb Intermediate School District in MI., this website provides children and young adults with an opportunity to learn about students with a variety of learning disabilities.

*Seeing Disabilities from a Different Perspective*

<http://library.thinkquest.org/5852/homepg.htm>

A ThinkQuest website created by six elementary students. The site focuses on the abilities of children with learning disabilities.

*What is a Disability?*

<http://das.kucrl.org/iam/studentdis.html>

An online guide describing and explaining disabilities



Dr. Stephanie A. Kurtts, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Specialized Education Services at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has been in the teaching field for over 25 years, first serving as a special education teacher in

K-12 settings and now as a teacher educator in special education teacher preparation. She considers her work with school librarians and media specialists to significantly inform her practice as she helps prepare her students to become effective special educators who are prepared to meet all children's diverse educational needs. She has become increasingly involved with the use of children's and young adult literature to help her teacher candidates understand how these rich literacy resources can help them teach empathy, acceptance, understanding and compassion.

Dr. Kurtts has presented, along with her co-author Karen Gavigan, at regional and international professional education conferences on the use of children's and young adult literature to help students and teachers understand disabilities. Her professional and research interests include teacher preparation for inclusive education with an emphasis on collaborative practice and accessibility of the general curriculum for students with disabilities.

An avid reader herself, Dr. Kurtts enjoys searching for original editions of primers and children's books. One of her most treasured selections is a 1941 edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll,

which was given to her by a favorite aunt. She also holds close to her heart a copy of *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow which was published in 1916 as part of a literature series for her aunt's high school English class.

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Karen Gavigan is the Director of the Teaching Resources Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has been a librarian for over 29 years, originally as a public librarian and then working as a K-12 media specialist for over 15 years until serving in her current position for six years. She is a member of the American Library Association, the American Association of College and Research Libraries (University Libraries Section and the Educational and Behavioral Science Section, the American Association of School Librarians, and the Young Adult Library Services Association. She is also a member of the North Carolina Curriculum Material Center Directors' Association.

Being a member of these professional associations has enabled Gavigan to better prepare pre-service librarians and teachers to work with diverse student populations in K-12 schools. Karen is currently working on a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in literacy. Her research interests include the use of graphic novels to improve the reading motivation and achievement of adolescent males.

Karen enjoys collecting autographed copies of children's and young adult books. She also loves to travel and hopes to visit all of the continents.

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