

# **Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee**

## **Innisfil Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program**

### **Introduction**

The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee (IAAC), is a volunteer Advisory Committee of Council that is responsible for making recommendations on matters prescribed by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and the Ontario with Disabilities Act (ODA Bill 125) 2001, to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities by promoting equal opportunity and a barrier-free community.

### **History**

This program was developed in 2013 by the IAAC and hosted at the Innisfil Summerfest and Family Fun Day. In 2016, the Committee modified the program so that demonstrations could be hosted at Innisfil elementary schools. The program is designed for Grade 5 students and can host 32 students at a time and teachers are asked to participate in the program as well. Our program is always evolving to be the best interactive learning day.

### **Proposal**

To create a long-lasting partnership with Innisfil Elementary Schools to provide a half-day of free, inclusive, and interactive learning activities to raise awareness of what life can be like for people with different abilities. Students will learn about various barriers that are experienced daily, change the stigma associated with disabilities, and establish community awareness related to universal access to spaces and information for everyone.

### **Lesson Plan**

The day is divided into a series of 4 stations. Students participate at each hands-on station which allows each student to experience different challenges that people with disabilities face each day.

**The program requires 90 minutes to accommodate opening comments, 20 minutes at each station and closing comments. IAAC Members would arrive by 8:45-9:00 a.m., to setup, and asked that students be in the gym by 9:25 a.m. for opening comments and to start demonstrations by 9:30 a.m. This allows all students and teachers time to take part at each station, keeping in mind of nutritional breaks.**

The program can accommodate up to 32 Grade 5 students at one time. Students are broken into 4 groups with 8 students per station. Each station takes 20 minutes to complete, (or depending on the first nutritional break time, timeframes can be adjusted). If there are more than 32 students, then groups are broken in half (example 2 classes of Grade 5 students) with everyone attending the welcome comments, then one class returning to their classroom until after the first nutritional break, then the second group attends the gym and takes part in the demonstrations.

**The IAAC provides the necessary equipment and volunteers to run this FREE program. Schools are responsible for providing a large space, preferably the gym, 6 tables and 30 chairs to accommodate 8 students per station, including 2 chairs for instructors.**

### **Wrap Up**

At the end the demonstrations, Instructors ask teachers and all students to return and attend closing comments where everyone can ask questions or share personal experiences and reflect on their experiences and share what they have learned.

## **Description of Each Station:**

### **Station 1 – Wheelchair Demonstrations**

- Activity requires two Instructors.
- Eight wheelchairs
- Purpose is to provide students with the opportunity to experience what life would be like using a wheelchair for mobility purposes.
- Students learn to turn, move forward and backwards, maneuver a wheelchair through doorways and access a washroom.

Learning Outcome: Students gain a better understanding of physical access and will be challenged to be more aware of the physical accessibility in their community.

### **Station 2 - Hearing Demonstrations**

- Activity requires one-two Instructors.
- One laptop, eight headphones and connection equipment for laptop
- ASL poster boards
- Instructors explain how the recording will play.
- Purpose is to demonstrate hearing loss and potential reasons for hearing impairments.
- Students will hear a recording that provides different sounds that reflect types of hearing impairments and loss.
- After the demonstration, the instructor explains hearing safety and provides examples of different types of hearing loss and suggestions ways to prevent hearing loss.
- Each student is required to use headphones.

Learning Outcome: Students will learn about ear health as well as hearing disabilities.

### **Station 3 – Vision Demonstration**

- Activity requires two Instructors.
- Ten blindfolds, two white canes, two small orange pylons
- Small cloth bag, set of three small stuffed animals, similar but able to determine the difference by touch.
- Students are each assigned a number.
- Purpose of activities is designed to demonstrate barriers for blind and low vision people.
- Instructor demonstrates the proper use of a white cane and how to locate the pylon approximately 20ft in front of students.
- Students are required to wear blindfolds (or have eyes closed) for the entire demonstration.

#### **White Cane Challenge**

- Instructor will choose a student by the number they were assigned.
- Using a white cane, students will walk blindfolded listening to instructor's voice and instructions until they locate the orange pylon.
- Students then navigate back to their chair and hand the cane to the next person, all while wearing blindfold.
- Instructor assist students using voice prompts to demonstrate challenges without vision.

### **Find the Object Challenge**

- Instructor hands a student a bag containing three related items and ask to choose a specific item by touch only.
- Purpose is to use touch to determine what each item is.

Learning Outcome: Students will learn how to identify someone who is blind or living with low vision, how to help a blind person who may ask for directions and how to approach someone who is blind or has low vision.

### **Station 4 – Interactive Demonstrations [6-8 students – approx. 20 minutes]**

- Activity requires one or two Instructors.
- Wooden puzzles, blocks, string, beads, ten pairs of gloves and blindfolds
- Vision Simulation kit
- ASL (American Sign Language) learning posters
- Students are asked to put on gloves and/or blindfolds and given the opportunity to try different items like tying a knot in a string; placing beads on a string; completing wooden puzzles by using only touch, with two figures tied together.
- Students are given the opportunity to use simulation goggles to learn about different eye diseases such as glaucoma, blind spots, cataracts, and macular degeneration.
- Students will be provided information regarding cognitive functions, which includes dementia, autism and fall prevention.

Learning Outcome: Students will learn about various vision disabilities, eye diseases and how to take care of their eyes. Students learn about various sensory challenges and cognitive functions that include dementia, autism and fall prevention. Students can learn basic ASL words (i.e.: hello, goodbye, yes, no, welcome, etc.)

Instructors clean up each station. Town Staff pick up all supplies and return to Town Hall.

### **Testimonials**

“Our Grade 5 students at Cookstown Central PS thoroughly enjoyed the day participating in the Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program hosted at our school. All students were engaged and participated eagerly in each learning centre. After, we had meaningful discussions of how we can help to advocate for all learners as well as in the community. We are so glad to have participated with this program!”

"I thought it was really cool to learn about the different disabilities that you could have and to see what it felt like to have one. I liked the hearing one because it was cool to learn what it would be like to live without hearing. I think it was fun to see how other people are doing stuff, how they are doing different things because they face barriers".

“The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee gave my students the chance to gain awareness and understanding about living with a physical disability, blindness, deafness, or sensory processing disorder in hands on, interactive way. They gained a sense of empathy and perspective into how our world is not easily accessible to everyone. They were very engaged in the presentation and workshop and appreciated the chance to ask questions in a safe space”.

## **Powerful Quotes**

Mayor Lynn Dollin

“The Town of Innisfil is committed to working to ensure all our residents and visitors have equal access to our community. A day focused on breaking down barriers reminds us to examine our community and identify whether there are obstacles that prevent people from being able to fully appreciate all that Innisfil has to offer. This important dialogue helps us to shape the future we want to see.”

Simcoe County District School Board AAC – Doug Mein, AAC Chair

“Innisfil’s Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Day Program is a great educational program for young children! I think it is very important to raise our youth to better understand the various forms of disabilities and barriers that people of all ages face in their daily lives while encouraging empathy for others. I would encourage other Accessibility Advisory Committees in Ontario to consider following Innisfil’s model within their respective communities!”

Deaf/Blind Ontario Services

“DeafBlind Ontario Services is pleased to partner with the Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee on the “Breaking Down Barriers Awareness” initiative. It is through collaborative efforts like these awareness days that we can all build a better understanding in the community about deafblindness for everyone, regardless of their ability.”

Superior Home Health Care – Barrie, Ontario – John Tom & Suzi Jennings

“Innisfil’s Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Day Program is a fantastic educational program for young children! It is very important to raise our youth to respect the physical mobility challenges so many people face. And to teach them empathy and understanding for others. Our company is absolutely thrilled to be the Wheelchair Equipment/Technical Partner in this Program with the Town of Innisfil...and highly encourage other Accessibility Advisory Committees to call them or us...and discuss how this Program can be implemented in their area!”

## **Sustaining the Program**

The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee is working towards the sustainability of this program so that students can enjoy these learning demonstrations for years to come.

## **FAQ**

How much does this cost?

The program is free to all schools. Members of the Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee and other volunteers donated their time to host this program. Supplies are provided.

Who will keep this program updated?

The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee will update lesson plans as required.

## **Contact Information**

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