



The Jewish Special Needs/Disability Inclusion Consortium of Greater Philadelphia

Presents

Jewish Disability Awareness & Inclusion Month (JDAIM) Lesson Plans



Jewish Learning Venture innovates programs that help people live connected Jewish lives.

261 Old York Road, Suite 720 / Jenkintown, PA 19046 / 215.320.0360 / jewishlearningventure.org

Partners with Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

INTRODUCTION

Jewish Disability Awareness & Inclusion Month (JDAIM) is a unified national initiative during the month of February that aims to raise disability awareness and foster inclusion in Jewish communities worldwide.

In the Philadelphia area, the Jewish Special Needs/Disability Inclusion Consortium works to expand opportunities for families of students with disabilities. The Consortium is excited to share these comprehensive lesson plans with schools, youth groups, and early childhood centers in our area.

We appreciate you making time for teachers to use these lessons during February—or whenever it's convenient for you.

For additional resources, please email me at gkaplan-mayer@jewishlearningventure.org or call me at 215-320-0376.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer,

Chief Program Officer

JDAIM Lesson Plan: Grades PreK – K

Created by Ellen Walters, Jewish Learning Venture, Director, Learning Initiatives in Early Childhood Education

Adapted from [Anti-Defamation League Curriculum – Getting to Know People with Physical Disabilities](#)

Book: A Very Special Critter by Gina and Mercer Mayer

Synopses of story: Little Critter is nervous when his teacher announces that a new student who uses a wheelchair will be joining his class. After realizing that the new student enjoys doing a lot of the same games and activities as the rest of the class, Little Critter and the other students are happy to have a new friend and classmate.

Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with the Jewish value of *b'tzelem elohim*.
- Students will learn the term disability and physical disability.
- Students will understand and recognize the *International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities*.
- Students will discover the various abilities of people who use wheelchairs.

Jewish Value: *B'tzelem Eloheim* (in G-d's image). At the end of the lesson(s), students will recognize that we are each created in G-d's image. Every human being faces different challenges and has different families, friends and ideas.

Materials:

- At least one copy of A Very Special Critter by Gina and Mercer Mayer.
- A copy of the *International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities*.
- Blackboard or chart paper with picture frame drawn upon it.
- Each child receives a large puzzle piece to decorate.
- Markers/crayons and any additional materials of your choice to use for decorating the puzzle piece.
- Bulletin board and tacks to display puzzle pieces.

Introduction (5 minutes)

“Today we are going to be thinking about a Jewish value called *b'tzelem elohim*. When we say *B'tzelem elohim*, we mean that every person is “made in G-d's image”.

1. What does it mean to be made in G-d's image? What do you think this says about you and your friends? (We were all created in goodness. We are all good just the way we are.)
2. Is everybody the same? No, everybody is different and unique. Those things that make us different and unique also make us special and interesting.



Disability Introduction:

1. **SHOW** students the [International Symbol of Access to People with Disabilities](#) for all students to see. (follows the lesson plan)
2. **ASK** students:
 - a. Have you seen this sign before? Where have you seen this sign?
 - b. What does this symbol look like to you?
(EXPLAIN: this symbol is a picture of a person who uses a wheelchair, and is for people who are disabled. This sign can be found in parking spaces close to the entrance of a store, or a park, or a school so that people who use wheelchairs or who have trouble walking do not have to travel far to get inside. Sometimes it can be found on seats in buses or trains and means that those seats are reserved for people with disabilities.)
 - c. What is a disability?
(EXPLAIN: a disability is a condition that limits a person in being able to see, hear, walk, or speak. Some people with disabilities may be blind, or deaf, or may use a wheelchair if they are unable to walk.)
 - d. Have you ever met a person with a disability?

Read the book (10 minutes)

- **SAY:** *Now we are going to read a book called A Very Special Critter. The book is about a new student at school who has physical disability - he can't walk - and so he uses a wheelchair. Some of the students are nervous because he is different and has some special challenges. Soon, they realize that the new student enjoys a lot of the same games and activities as the rest of the class. The students are happy to have a new friend and classmate! Let's see if any of the people in the book remind you of you or anybody you know.*
- **READ:** As a class, read A Very Special Critter by Gina and Mercer Mayer. You can also watch this video as a class (a link to the book being read aloud): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHec30tFCRQ>

Follow-Up (5 minutes)

- **ASK** some or all of the following discussion questions after you read the story aloud to students:
 - a. Why do you think Little Critter was scared to meet Alex, the new student who uses a wheelchair?
 - b. Why do you think Alex felt scared on his first day at school?
 - c. How would you feel if you were the one who was different the way Alex was?
 - d. How did Little Critter and the other students make Alex feel welcome?



- e. What could Alex do using his wheelchair?
- f. Was there anything that Alex could do using his wheelchair that surprised you?
- g. How did the other students help Alex?
- h. How did Alex help the other students?
- i. If a person who uses a wheelchair joined our class, how could we make him or her feel welcome?
- J. After reading the book, do you have anything more to say about being made in G-d's image?

- **SAY:** *In the book, we see that people might appear different from us when we first meet them, but on the inside there are lots of hidden surprises that connect us and make us special! We should appreciate all the differences in the world. Our differences make the world an interesting place to live!*

Picture Frame Activity (10-15 minutes)

SAY: *Everybody in this class has things about them that are very special and that make them unique. Now is our chance to show appreciation for the things that make our friends unique.*

- Draw a picture frame on a blackboard or chart paper. Allow each child to stand in front of the picture frame. Have each child in the class say something nice about the child.

(ie: he is tall and can reach high shelves for me, she is really smart and helps me understand in class, she is fast and I like when she is on my team, he is quiet and I always feel like he is listening when I speak)

WRAP-UP

SAY: *When we talk about b'tzelem elohim, being made in G-d's image, we are remembering that we are all important and we all deserve love. Our differences make us special and when we come together, all our differences make the world a beautiful place.*



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