

Beyond Sensory Storytime: Expanding Library Services to Children with Special Needs

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Why expand library services?

- To provide a supportive and inclusive environment for a traditionally underserved group in your community
- To include children with special needs who might otherwise not be included in regular library programming and services
- Provide opportunities for learning, social interaction, and connection among families with children with special needs
- To advocate for your library and its services to non-users
- To be responsive to your community's needs
- To fulfill the mission of your public library



What do the numbers tell us?

- Nearly 56.7 million people, 18.7% of the US population, had a disability in 2010
- 38.3 million people, 12.6 %, had a severe disability
- According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 27% of U.S. adults live with a disability that interferes with activities of daily living
- Prevalence of autism spectrum disorders in the US is 1 in every 68 births
- Estimated that 1 – 1.5 million people throughout the country live with autism, and only 56% of students with ASD finish high school



Where do you begin?

- Conversations
- Family Tour Services
- Surveys—online, paper, formal, informal
- Focus Groups
- Meetings with Community Stakeholders
- Strategic Planning



Who are your community partners?

- Park Districts
- Museums
- Disability Related Community Organizations
- Therapists & Therapy Centers
- Hospitals & Health Centers
- Support Groups
- Volunteers
- National & Local Organizations
- Neighboring Librarians
- Special Education District



NSSSED Community Needs Assessment

- 42% of responders were somewhat familiar with home library and its services
- Another 42% responded that they were very familiar with their home library services.
- The **top three library materials** requested
 - 1) High Interest/ Low Reading Level book collection and lists
 - 2) Pairing chapter books with audio books
 - 3) More parenting books on special needs topics
- The **top four services** requested:
 - 1) Storytime events specially designed for children with special needs
 - 2) Book discussions for teens and adults with special needs
 - 3) Demos of how to download books to e-readers
 - 4) Social Story about the Library



Disability Awareness Training

- ALSC Online Education
- Local Special Education District
- Disability Awareness Training



Inclusive Customer Service Strategies

- Person First Language
- Adjust Your Mindset
- Be Patient, Allow Processing Time
- Simple Questions, Offer Choices
- Make Accommodations
- Offer Visual Supports
- Assistive Technology



Tips for Inclusive Spaces

- **Universal Design:** a design philosophy that considers a broad range of abilities, ages, reading levels, learning styles, languages, cultures, and other characteristics
- A space where everyone
 - Feels welcome
 - Can access facilities and maneuver within them
 - Can make use of equipment and software
 - Is able to fully benefit from materials and services
- ADA Standards for Accessible Design: ada.gov
- Noise (or perceived?) Requirements



Peer Programs vs. Inclusion

Benefits of Peer Programs



Drawbacks to Peer Programs?



Benefits of Inclusion

Drawbacks to Inclusion?



What programs do you offer?

Life Skills

- Cooking classes & demos
- Computer training
- Homework help
- Job searching & resume building skills

Exercise

- Storybook Yoga
- Zumba
- Family sing-a-long programs

Inclusion

- Storytime
- Sensory friendly family programs: magic, animal shows, science demos, movement shows, bubbles
- Gaming
- Family tours

Socialization

- Lego building
- Arts & crafts
- Book clubs



Sensory Storytime vs. Adapted Storytime

Adapted Storytime

- consists of combination of books, flannel board, fingerplays, movement activities
- may include a craft or art project
- may use visual supports, limit group size, have designated seating, and may alter the environment to support various needs



Sensory Storytime

- Specifically designed for children with autism, sensory processing disorder, and other disabilities
- Emphasis is often on sensory integration activities, although books, movement, any rhymes may be part of the mix
- Activities are similar to those that children encounter in therapist or special education preschool programs
- Storytime program that combines books, songs and movement with therapeutic sensory activities

SOURCE: Kipper, Barbara. Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder. ALA Editions, 2014.



Read to Rover



- Local non-profit volunteer organization
- Utilizes TDI certified therapy dogs that work in schools, nursing homes, at-risk youth facilities, and assisted living facilities
- Provides emotional support through animal-assisted therapy

- 1 hour dog-themed storytime for children ages 8 & up
- 30 minute structured storytime with 30 minute exploration stations
- Time with dogs, craft stations, & movement activities



Sensory-Friendly Family Films

Audience: Children of all ages and abilities with parent or caregiver

Description: Join us for our first sensory-friendly movie showing of "The Gruffalo." The room will be lighter, the volume will be lower, and audience members will be welcome to move around, talk, and sing. The intended audience is children with special needs accompanied by siblings and caregivers, although everyone is welcome. Noise cancelling headphones and fidgets will be available to use. No registration required—just drop in!

Room setup

- TV monitor with chairs arranged in auditorium style
- Large aisles and walkways in between rows of chairs and along the edge of the room for accessibility
- Available print copies of *The Gruffalo* and collection of fidgets and other manipulatives for children to use during the program
- Fidgets and manipulatives made available
 - Noise cancelling headphones
 - Tangle toys and puzzles
 - Giant sensory tubes
 - Sensory and stress balls



For more information on this program, check out my ALSC Blog "Sensory-Friendly Films: Family Programming for Autism Awareness Month" <http://www.alsc.org/blog/2013/03/sensory-friendly-film-family-programming-for-autism-awareness-month/>



Smart Starts


- Provides a hands-on, interactive environment where parents help their child develop early reading, writing, and math skills through open-ended play
- Program promoted as "fun activities that build young brains!"
- Hosted three times a week with weekly themes for a 4-week series
- Designed for children ages 3 to 8 of all abilities with parent or caregiver
- Drop-in format with 6-8 stations around program room
- Crafts, games, and exploratory/sensory activities
- Encourages collaboration, problem solving, exploratory learning and socialization

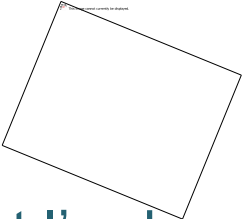





Tips for Advocating to Non-Users

Listen first
Acknowledge the experience
Go to the mountain
Tell your story





What I've Learned



Thank you!!

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