Accessibility isn’t enough—for some it’s a four letter word

Fact Sheet

• One in seven Canadians aged 15 or older reported living with a disability; that is 3.8 million individuals. Of those, 1 in 4 report a "very severe" disability. (Statistics Canada)
• Around the world, 15 percent of the population (or more than 1 billion people) live with a disability. (Rick Hansen Foundation)
• Disabilities aren’t always obvious when you see someone; the types of disabilities recognized by the government include pain-related (most common), flexibility or mobility, mental-health, dexterity, hearing, seeing, learning, memory and developmental. (Statistics Canada)
• Accessibility concerns, like all health issues, affect segments of the Canadian population differently; one third of Indigenous Canadians live with a disability. (Council of Canadians with Disabilities)
• People with a disability disproportionally live in poverty and experience homelessness. (Statistics Canada)
• Experts argue that the recent surge in people with disabilities reflects greater awareness and reduced stigma surrounding those who self-identify, as opposed to greater overall incidence rates of disabilities. (Toronto Star)
• 175 nations ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into effect in 2006. (UN)
• The disability rights movement in Canada arose in the second half of the 20th century, focusing its energy on legislation for people with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, housing and education. (Canadian Encyclopedia)
• People with disabilities experience significant education and wage gaps from the rest of Canada. (CBC)
• New efforts by accessibility activists are opening up previously inaccessible spaces (including everything from concerts and restaurants to new technologies.) (Vox, New York Times, Salon, New York Times)
• The latest arena of accessibility is online; Ontario has a stated goal of being fully accessible, including online, by 2025. (Government of Ontario)

Key Terms

• Accessibility—Disability is a spectrum. In the widest definition of accessibility, it is about ensuring that products (new phones), services (buses) or experiences (a concert) can be enjoyed by people across the entirety of the spectrum. At it’s core, concerns about accessibility reflect a desire for inclusion, fairness and human rights.
• Disability—A broad term that describes a physical, mental, sensory or cognitive condition that may limit full participation in life due to environmental or social barriers
• Disability rights movement/ Accessibility movement—A social and political movement that recognizes that people who need accessibility are often easily ignored; the movement seeks to affect change and empower them.
Classroom Activity - Grades 9 to 12:

Essential Question:
- How can you create an inclusive environment through accessible spaces, experiences and interactions?

Learning Goals:
Students will:
- Understand the meaning of accessibility
- Recognize that accessible spaces, experiences and interactions benefit all people
- Explore how the seven principles of Universal Design can be used to create inclusive spaces, interactions and experiences
- Assess how current spaces, experiences and interactions can be made more accessible through technology

Discussion:
1. What are some of the barriers to accessibility?
2. Why does the focus of accessibility tend to be on physical spaces? What is missing?
3. Why was Chris Pratt’s comment “ignore the subtitles and turn up the volume” considered offensive?
4. Why does Rich Donovan refer to a “tacked on type” of accessibility as a “four letter word”?
5. Why are many approaches to accessibility not enough?
6. What responsibility do we have as citizens to create inclusive spaces, interactions and experiences for all?

Dive Deeper:
Part 1

1. Show students the video “Apple—Accessibility—Sady” www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB4cjBYYwq (1:42).

2. In pairs, have them respond to the question: What does accessibility look like in our community? As a class, discuss students’ responses and create a definition of the word “accessibility.”

Extension: To extend students further, ask students to consider how accessibility has changed over time. Have them research how accommodations have changed over the past 10 years. How has technology created opportunities for all people to be able to access the same spaces, experiences and interactions?

3. Place Blackline Master 1: The Persona Spectrum on the front board. In the same pairs, have students select two people from the video and place them on the Persona Spectrum. Ask them to provide a rationale for why they fit in a certain category on the spectrum. Have students consider why it is important to place individuals on the Personal Spectrum. What is the purpose of this spectrum?

4. Explain to students that the Persona Spectrum is a tool used to understand related limitations across a spectrum of permanent, temporary and situational disabilities. Its purpose is to foster empathy and to show how no one person exists in isolation.

5. Ask students, where did most of the people from the video fall on the spectrum? What are some instances where individuals could have temporary or situational disabilities?

Extension: If students are comfortable doing so, have them place themselves on the Persona Spectrum. Ask them to consider if they have had a situational, temporary or permanent disability. How does the Persona Spectrum help them identify their own limitations and the accommodations they require as an individual? Ensure that students use respectful language when referring to themselves and others during the discussion.

6. As a class, create a list on the front board of the types of accessible accommodations that were present in the video. For example: Video calling features can help people communicate using sign language.

7. After creating the list, circle the accommodations that students would also find useful in their own lives. Ask students to justify why they would find specific types of accommodations useful and how they would help make their lives easier.

8. Ask students: How can accessible design features create an environment that is inclusive of everyone?
9. In small groups, ask students to choose one section or room in the school (e.g., classroom, playground, sports field, cafeteria, administration building, science lab or library). Have each group explore their selected section of the school, take photographs, sketch and write down all the design features they believe allow the space to be accessible.

10. After the groups have returned to the classroom, show students the video “Meet the Normals–Adventure in Universal Design” www.youtube.com/watch?v=A88E4DH2asQ (6.42). Have students discuss the following questions in their groups:
   - What is Universal Design? Why is it important?
   - What is the four-step process used to create accessible design?
   - Why is it important to think about the users of the experience?
   - What did the designers think about when creating an accessible space?

11. On the front board, place the seven principles of Universal Design. As a class, discuss the following principles and provide examples of Universal Design using the space students are in.

   Seven Principles of Universal Design:
   - **Equitable Use**: the design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
   - **Flexibility in Use**: the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
   - **Simple and Intuitive Use**: use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.
   - **Perceptible Information**: the design communicates information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.
   - **Tolerance for Error**: the design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
   - **Low Physical Effort**: the design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
   - **Size and Space for Approach and Use**: appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of the user’s body size, posture or mobility.

Source: [www.universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/#p1](http://www.universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/#p1)

12. In the same groups, have students use their photographs and notes to assess the space they previously explored using the following guiding questions. Provide them with chart paper and markers to record their ideas.

   Guiding Questions
   - What is the space currently used for?
   - What user experiences or interactions occur in that space?
   - Is the space accessible for all people across the Persona Spectrum?
   - What are the current features of the space, experience and interactions that showcase accessibility?

13. After the groups have assessed their space, have students use the principles of Universal Design and the four-step model of discover, define, develop and deliver to create an improved space that ensures all people across the Persona Spectrum will feel comfortable using it. Students should consider the design and the types of technology they can incorporate into the space to ensure that it is inclusive of all people.

14. Have students present their space to the class using a diorama, a poster, a physical 3D model or a 3D model made using software such as Sketchup, Room Arranger or Minecraft: The Education Edition. Ask students to explain the choices they made in their design and describe how each choice improves the space and makes it accessible for all.

### Part 2

1. In small groups, have students read the *Global Voices* article “Accessibility isn’t enough—for some it’s a four-letter word.” After students have read the article, assign each group two questions from the Discussion section. Have students present their responses to the class. Students can choose one person in the group to summarize their answers, or all members of the group can contribute.

2. Remind students about the seven principles of Universal Design and the four-step process to creating an accessible space they learned about in Part 1. Place the list of principles and the design process on the front board.

3. Distribute sticky notes to students. Ask them to make a list of the top five mobile or tablet applications that they regularly use.

4. Remind students that in the *Global Voices* article, Pratt challenged Instagram to make its app more inclusive. In pairs or groups challenge students to choose one application they regularly use and propose ways to make the application more accessible for all people.

5. Have students use the seven principles of Universal Design to evaluate the accessible features in the application currently, and then research new technologies to include in the application to make it more inclusive. Consider, what is the purpose of the application? How do users interact with the application? Is it currently an application that can be used by everyone?

6. Provide students with the following websites to begin their research:
   - Mobile Accessibility: [www.w3.org/TR/mobile-accessibility-mapping/](http://www.w3.org/TR/mobile-accessibility-mapping/)
7. Have students present their ideas to the class using PowerPoint, Sway, Prezi or a poster. Encourage students to provide a justification about how their improvements allow all people to use the application more easily.

8. After the presentations, have each student write a brief reflection in response to the following question: How can the principles of Universal Design change the way our society thinks about accessibility?

Go Further:

In the article, Donavan states “It’s the bare minimum, the very least we can do to meet basic accommodations and legal mandates.”

Challenge students to explore the local, provincial or national policies and legal mandates for inclusivity and investigate whether their school or community is adhering to these policies.

Have students make recommendations for improvement based on what they have learned about Universal Design and present these to the school principal, or send them in writing to school or local government officials.
Blackline Master 1: The Persona Spectrum

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The Persona Spectrum

We use the Persona Spectrum to understand related mismatches and motivations across a spectrum of permanent, temporary, and situational scenarios. It’s a quick tool to help foster empathy and to show how a solution scales to a broader audience.