

Powerful Quotes

"The Town of Innisfil is committed to ensuring 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."

– Mayor Lynn Dollin

"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!"

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

"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."

-Deaf/Blind Ontario Services

"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!"

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



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"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 in this program!"

- Cookstown Principal

"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".

- Grade 5 Student

"The IAAC gave my students the chance to gain awareness and understanding about living with a physical disability, blindness, deafness, or sensory processing disorder in a 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".

- Sunnybrae School



Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program Guide

The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee (IAAC) is a committee of Council responsible for making recommendations related to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA). The Committee's goal is to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities by promoting equal opportunities and a barrier-free community.



History

The IAAC developed the Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program in 2013, initially hosting it at Innisfil Summerfest and Innisfil Family Fun Day. In 2016, the Committee modified the program to offer demonstrations at all local elementary schools for **Grade 5 students**.

Sustaining the Program

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

Objective

To create a lasting partnership with Innisfil elementary schools and provide **free half-day programs** that teach children what everyday life is like for people with different abilities. Through interactive activities, students will learn about various barriers that may prevent someone from fully participating in their community. The program aims to change the stigma associated with disabilities and reinforce the importance of universal access and inclusion for everyone.

Lesson Plan

The program includes four demonstration stations. Students will participate in each hands-on station, which provides a simulated experience of different abilities and challenges that people face.

The Town and Committee supply the necessary equipment to run the program. Schools are responsible for providing a large space, such as a gymnasium, five rectangular tables, and 30 chairs to accommodate eight students and two instructors per station. For the Hearing Demonstration station, a quiet area like a gym change room or stage is beneficial.

Committee members and volunteers arrive between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. to set up the tables, chairs and equipment for the program. Teachers and students are asked to arrive after their morning announcements. Opening comments will explain the schedule for the day, and teachers will divide students into four groups, aiming for eight students per station.

Each station takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. If there are more than 32 students, the group will be divided in half. For example, with two Grade 5 classes (about 50 students), all students would attend the opening comments, then one class would return to their classroom. After the first nutritional break, the second group would return to participate in the program.

Wrap Up

At the end of the demonstrations, all teacher and student participants are encouraged to attend the closing comments. This is an opportunity for everyone to ask questions, share personal experiences, reflect on their time, and discuss what they have learned.



Station 1 – Wheelchair Demonstration

Instructors: Two provided.

Equipment: Eight wheelchairs (additional wheelchairs available on-site if needed).

Purpose: To give students an experience of what life would be like using a wheelchair for mobility.

Activities: Students learn how to turn, move forward and backward, navigate through doorways, and access a washroom in a wheelchair.

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



Station 2 - Hearing Demonstration

Instructors: Two provided.

Equipment: One laptop, eight headphones, connection equipment, and an electrical outlet.

Purpose: To demonstrate hearing loss and potential causes for hearing impairments.

Activities: Students listen to recordings that simulate various types of hearing impairments. After the demonstration, instructors discuss hearing safety, different types of hearing loss, and prevention strategies. Each student is required to use headphones.

Learning Outcome: Students gain knowledge of ear health and hearing disabilities.



Station 3 – Vision Demonstration

Instructors: Two provided.

Equipment: Ten blindfolds, two white canes, two small orange pylons

Purpose: To demonstrate barriers for people with blindness or low vision.

Activities: Instructors demonstrate the proper use of a white cane and how to locate a pylon 20 feet away. During the demonstration, students wear blindfolds or close their eyes. Each student is assigned a number and uses a white cane to find the pylon. Once they locate it, they navigate back to their chair while remaining blindfolded and pass the cane to the next participant. Instructors offer guidance through voice prompts to emphasize the challenges of navigating without sight.

Learning Outcome: Students learn how to identify someone who is blind or living with low vision, approach them respectfully, and assist them in finding directions.



Station 4 – Interactive Demonstration

Instructors: One or two provided.

Equipment: Wooden puzzles, eight pairs of gloves and blindfolds, simulation goggles for understanding eye conditions and diseases, Deaf/Blind calendar kit, and ASL (American Sign Language) learning posters.

Purpose: To educate students about eye diseases and prevention, adapting to sensory loss, and communicating using ASL and adaptive ASL.

Activities: Wearing gloves and blindfolds, students try to put together a puzzle using other senses to simulate the experience of those with sensory challenges.

Learning Outcome: Students learn about vision disabilities and eye diseases, how to care for their eyes, and various sensory challenges and cognitive functions, including dementia, autism, and fall prevention.