



UNDERSTANDING  
OURSELVES & OTHERS:

*A Summer  
Guide to  
Inclusive  
Play*



# UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES & OTHERS: A SUMMER GUIDE TO INCLUSIVE PLAY

*A resource for building confidence and encouraging belonging for all.*

The Inclusive Schools Network, in collaboration with Finding My Way Books and Changing Perspectives, is pleased to share Understanding Ourselves and Others: A Summer Guide to Inclusive Play. Designed for K-8 students, the guide provides parents, caregivers, camp counselors and others with strategies and activities to build student confidence and encourage belonging during the summer months.

Although opportunities to develop the essential skills of empathy, self-awareness, confidence, and inclusion are present every day, the summer hiatus from school offers unique possibilities for students to travel, attend camps, connect with kids from other schools, and engage socially in more unstructured ways than during the scheduled academic year. It is a prime time to nurture our young people to become confident, inclusive changemakers for tomorrow.

We sincerely hope this set of resources will empower and inspire you and your children.

[Inclusive Schools Network](#)

[Changing Perspectives](#)

[Finding My Way Books](#)

“At the Inclusive Schools Network, we continue to be energized by the network of partners sharing support, resources and collaborative ideas to address the ongoing need to build inclusive communities and schools where every child belongs.

This summer resource guide is an example of the benefits of “Unity Within Our Community,” our theme for this year. We are most grateful for the time and commitment of our partners, Changing Perspectives and Finding My Way Books. United, we model to our children the strength that comes from the working together, and we move closer to our shared vision of authentic inclusion around the world.”



*Cathy Giardina*

**Moderator**  
*Inclusive Schools Network*

---

“At Changing Perspectives, we believe that awareness is the foundation to empathy. In order to cultivate empathy, we must provide safe spaces for students to gain an awareness of themselves and of others. Summer is a time for us all to pause, to reflect on ourselves and others, and to consider the actions we can take together to support all children and youth.”



*Sam Drazin*

**Founder and Executive Director**  
*Changing Perspectives*

---

Finding My Way Books supports inclusion one true story at a time. Reading is an exciting way to make new discoveries and to meet interesting people. We all look forward to summer and more time in the sun. Let’s celebrate how we shine, together!



*Jo Mach*

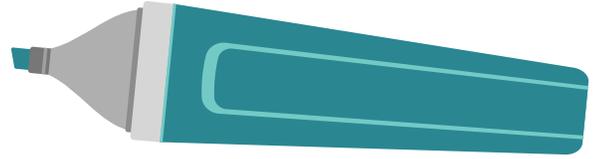
**Publisher/Author**  
*Finding My Way Books*



*Mary Birdsell*

**Photographer/Author**  
*Finding My Way Books*

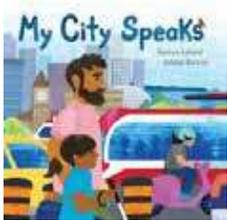
# Table of Contents



<b>Inclusive Summer Book List</b> <i>Children's books featuring inclusion in summer activities</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>Summer Reading Guide: Let's Get Ready to Read!</b> <i>Tips for reading with your child</i>	<b>8</b>
<b>Summer Reading Guide: What's Next?</b> <i>Activities for making reading meaningful and inclusive</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>Character Activity</b> <i>Activity page for exploring how we are unique and what we have in common</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>Inclusion in Play</b> <i>Preparing your child for inclusive friendships</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>Being an Inclusive Friend</b> <i>Activity page for encouraging new friendships</i>	<b>12</b>
<b>Let's Talk!</b> <i>Tips for talking about feelings and developing empathy</i>	<b>13</b>
<b>Let's Play!</b> <i>Activity page for understanding feelings</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>Inclusive Schools Week</b> <i>Unity Within Our Community</i>	<b>15</b>

# Inclusive Summer Book List

These stories introduce readers to individuals with disabilities who, are like everyone else, doing amazing and ordinary things as they take part in their communities. These books offer new perspective on typical summer activities.



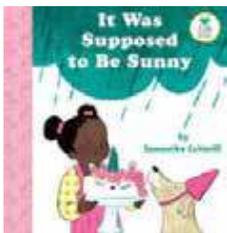
## Visiting a city

*My City Speaks*

by Darren Lebeuf

For ages 3-7

A father explores the city with his daughter, who has visual differences.



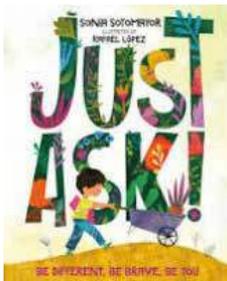
## Going to birthday parties

*It's Supposed to be Sunny*

by Samantha Cotterill

For ages 3-7

A young girl on the autism spectrum overcomes her anxiety and realizes she can still enjoy her birthday, even when plans have to change. (ebook available)



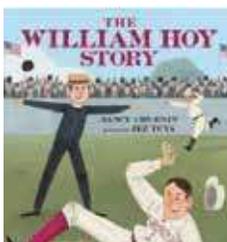
## Helping in a garden

*Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You*

by Sonya Sotomayor

For ages 4-8

Children with mixed abilities work together in a community garden and get to know each other. (audiobook and ebook available)



## Watching a baseball game

*The William Hoy Story: How a Deaf Baseball Player Changed the Game*

by Nancy Churnin

For ages 4-8

This is a biography of a famous baseball player who was deaf. (ebook available)



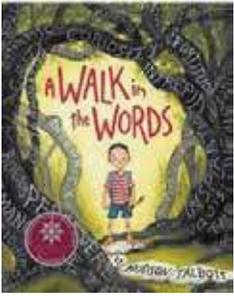
## Visiting a zoo

*Kaitlyn Wants to See Ducks/Kaitlyn Quiere ver Patos*

by Jo Meserve Mach and Vera Lynne Stroup-Rentier

For ages 4-8

During her family's visit to the zoo, Kaitlyn, who has Down syndrome, sees many animals as she looks for her favorite ducks. (ebook available)



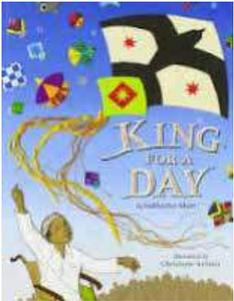
### **Reading new books**

*A Walk in the Words*

by Hudson Talbott

For ages 4-8

A young boy with dyslexia shares how he learned to read.



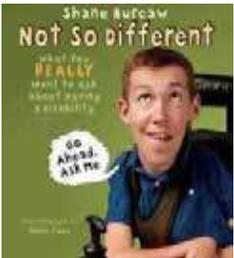
### **Flying a kite**

*King for a Day*

by Rukhsana Khan

For ages 5-9

Malik, a young boy who uses a wheelchair, has fun at a community kite-flying event.



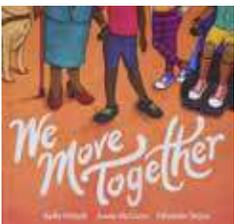
### **Meeting new people**

*Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask About Having a Disability*

by Shane Burcaw

For ages 6-9

Shane uses humor to help others understand how he lives with spinal muscular atrophy. (ebook available)



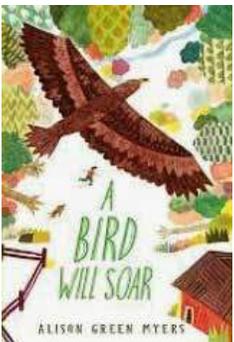
### **Playing in the community**

*We Move Together*

by Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire

For ages 6-9

A group of kids with mixed abilities share their experiences as they navigate their environment and learn about each other.



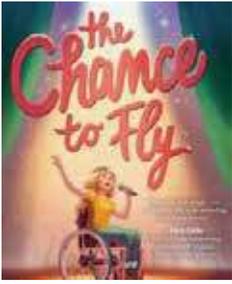
### **Spending time outside**

*A Bird Will Soar*

by Alison Green Myers

For ages 9-12

A young Autistic boy discovers an eagle. (audiobook and ebook available)



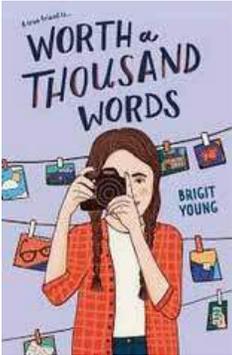
### **Being part of a theater production**

*Chance to Fly*

by Ali Stoker and Stacy Davidowitz

For ages 8-12

A young girl who uses a wheelchair shares her story of being accepted into her local community theater productions. (audiobook and ebook available)



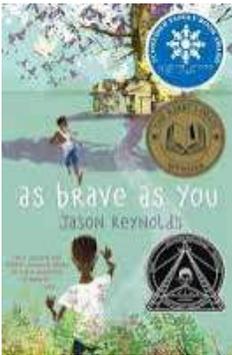
### **Solving a mystery**

*Worth a Thousand Words*

by Brigit Young

For ages 8-12

A girl who was in a car accident and now has a limp and chronic pain uses her camera to help solve a mystery. (audiobook and ebook available)



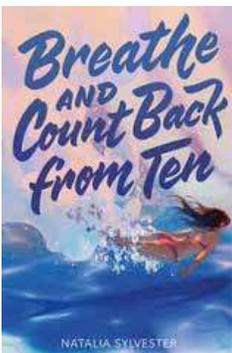
### **Visiting grandparents**

*As Brave As You*

by Jason Reynolds

For ages 10-14

During their summer visit, two brothers get to know their amazing grandpa who is blind. (audiobook and ebook available)



### **Going swimming**

*Breathe and Count Back from Ten*

by Natalie Sylvester

For ages 13+

A young girl with hip dysplasia works hard to get a job as a mermaid at a community water park. (audiobook and ebook available)

# Summer Reading Guide: Let's Get Ready to Read!

Literature is an engaging and dynamic avenue for learning about others and developing empathy for all of our differences. Here is a list of tips and tricks to help you enhance your child's reading experience.

## 1. LET THE CHILD PICK OUT THE BOOK.

Having the child pick the book gives them a chance to make choices and build confidence in decision making. There are so many wonderful books to choose from, you can't go wrong! Take a look at our Summer Reading List for some fun, new titles.

## 2. ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY THEY PICKED THAT TITLE.

Does the cover interest them? Have they read it before and want to read it again? What do they think the book will be about? What makes this book unique? Is it part of a series or written by a favorite author?

## 3. START READING OUT LOUD OR ALTERNATING PAGES READ WITH THE CHILD.

As they read, don't be afraid to stop and talk about what is happening in the book. Think of it like a commercial break.

Some things to talk about:

- **Characters (who is in the story)**  
What are the characters' names? What do you like about them? What makes each character unique?
- **Setting (where the story takes place)**  
What is the setting? Is there more than one setting? Have you ever been to any of the places mentioned in the book?
- **Plot (what events happen in the story)**  
What has happened? What do you think will happen next? Do you want to change the story?

---

*Reading a book isn't about just reading.*

**It opens the door to talking about issues in the world.  
Reading also introduces people with different abilities  
and teaches us how to be inclusive.**

---



# Summer Reading Guide: What's Next?

Try some of these activities after you've finished reading.



Use the Character Activity on page 10 or refer to it to create your own version on a separate piece of paper.

- Talk about qualities individuals have, such as hair or skin color, or how someone gets from place to place, such as using a wheelchair or walking. Ask your child to share their ideas about why it's good that everyone is unique.

HAVING DIFFERENCES IS GOOD, NATURAL AND EXPECTED.



Choose a story, change the setting, and retell it comic strip style. Fold a piece of paper into four sections and draw lines in the folds to create four boxes. Using crayons, colored pencils, or markers, draw a comic strip to show the story's events taking place in a new setting.

- Talk about what's unique in different settings, such as using a quieter voice in the library, how playing in the park differs from playing at home, or how a city may differ from the countryside.
- Invite your child to be creative, such as imagining a story taking place under water. Ask, "How would the characters communicate or get things done in this new setting?" For example, could characters use sign language under water similar to how members of the Deaf community use sign language to communicate?

THE SETTING WE'RE IN CHANGES OUR BEHAVIOR AND ACTIONS.



Create a unique retelling.

- Practice telling the story you just read, but make a change. What if one or more of the characters had different abilities? For example, if a character were blind, how might the story change but still have the same ending?
- Practice the retelling so your child can entertain a friend or family member with a new story.

# Character Activity

Understanding others is the first step in learning about ourselves and how to be friends with those who are different from us. After reading an inclusive book with your child, use the Venn Diagram below to help your child compare themselves to one of the characters. Ask probing questions to help your child consider how they are unique, how the character they selected from the story is unique, and what they have in common.

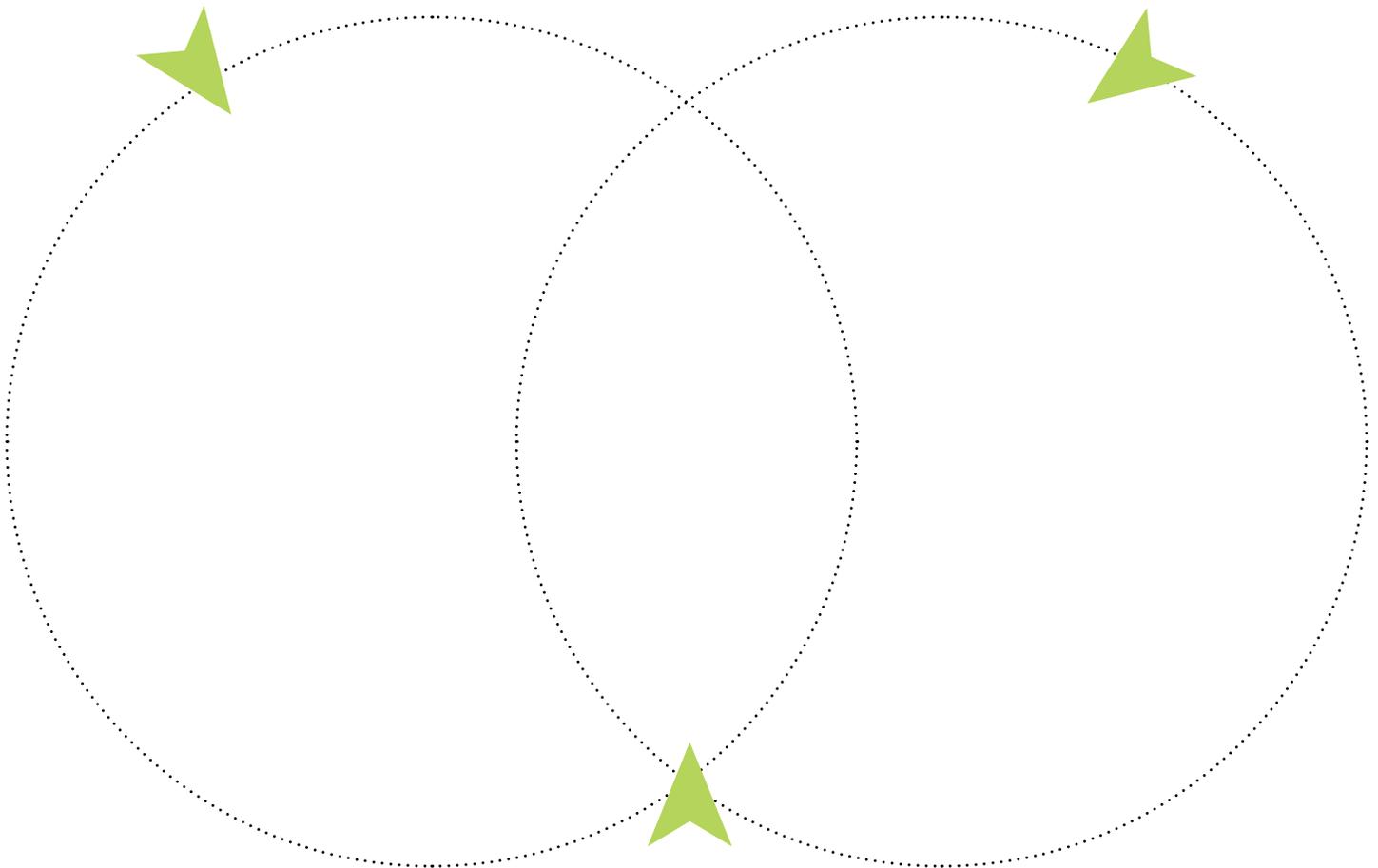
## HOW AM I SIMILAR TO & DIFFERENT FROM THE CHARACTER IN MY BOOK?

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

Character's name is \_\_\_\_\_

How am I unique?

How are they unique?



What do we have in common?

# Inclusion in Play

Being an inclusive friend takes practice and understanding. When your child has the opportunity to play with a child with different abilities, help them feel positive about how they can have fun together. Think about these questions together:

## TOGETHER, TALK AND SHARE IDEAS ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS:

### **What are you are similar to the new child?**

This could be something physical, common interests, number of siblings, family pets, or favorite foods.

### **What are ways you could have fun together?**

This might be sharing a joke, having a favorite snack, visiting a special place, or reading a book.

During the playtime, help facilitate problem-solving, if needed. After the playtime, encourage your child to share about positive things that happened. Ask questions such as: Did you have fun? What did you learn about your new friend? What did you share about yourself?



# Being an Inclusive Friend

Summer offers new opportunities for kids to meet people who may be different from themselves—at parks, summer camp, or in their neighborhoods. The following worksheet is **designed for kids** to reflect on their interactions with new friends who may be different.

Fill in the blanks or talk aloud about your new friend. Imagine the fun you can have with a friend who is as unique as you are!

I WANT TO BE AN INCLUSIVE FRIEND WITH: \_\_\_\_\_

**Two ways we are alike:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Two ways we are different:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Two ways we can have fun together:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# Let's Talk! Feelings and Empathy

Empathy is a vital skill. When young people develop empathy for others, they are able to better understand different perspectives, learn how to communicate and collaborate effectively, and be inclusive. At times, kids may feel nervous about meeting someone who seems different from them. Use conversation prompts like the following to encourage kids to reflect on their experiences.

Ask your child how they are feeling. Why?

Remind them that the new person probably is feeling scared, too.

Explain that you understand how meeting new people can be scary. Share an example from your life.

Brainstorm together what they have in common with the new person. For example, similarities could be hair color, neighborhood, age, family size or pets.

Talk about new people they have met in the past and how they enjoyed it.

Talk about how everyone wants to be treated. They want others to be kind to them and they can do the same by being kind to others.

# Let's Play! Feelings and Empathy

For this activity, help your child fill in the blanks below. Or, have a conversation about how they feel and why. Let them take selfies of how they look when they feel different ways. With parent permission, take a picture of your child and their new friend playing together!



I feel \_\_\_\_\_,

because \_\_\_\_\_.

I'm going to be kind.

I think we can \_\_\_\_\_ together.



I'm glad I met \_\_\_\_\_,

because \_\_\_\_\_.

**DRAW A PICTURE OF YOU AND YOUR NEW FRIEND PLAYING TOGETHER.**

A large rectangular area enclosed by a dotted line, intended for drawing a picture of the child and their new friend playing together.

# Inclusive Schools Week



From ancient civilizations to the present time, unity and connection have been essential in order for communities to not only survive, but also to thrive. Standing together, communities remain strong even in the face of danger, threats, or peril. The ancient and wise proverb, “Together We Stand, Divided We Fall,” dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC when it appears in one Aesop’s fables.

Last year, our theme for Inclusive Schools Week focused on “Rebuilding our Inclusive Community.” It was an energizing year for many across the world. We not only learned what our partners are doing to promote effective inclusion, but we also shared tools and materials to address the ongoing need to rebuild and strengthen our inclusive communities.

At the Inclusive Schools Network, we are excited about the many new partnerships, resources, and progress we have made and want to continue that momentum in 2022 with our theme: “Unity within Community—Inclusion Around the World.” United, we are stronger to focus on our common need—inclusive practices in our schools and in our communities!

Let us stand together as we continue to advocate for all schools to be places where all children can belong, thrive, and be supported by their teachers, peers, family members, and neighbors. Let’s learn more about the work of other organizations and groups in our communities and share ideas, resources, and support. By our own actions, let’s teach our children how to treat others, how to communicate and build relationships, and how to work in harmony to address our common needs.



thank you

FOR ALLOWING US TO BE A PART OF YOUR SUMMER!

[Inclusive Schools Network](#)

[Changing Perspectives](#)

[Finding My Way Books](#)