

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Someone Like Me. Someone Like Me (SLM) is an arts-based competition which promotes disability awareness among primary school pupils. At the heart of the initiative is recognising the uniqueness of ourselves and the uniqueness of one another. We have prepared lesson plans and activity sheets to support teachers to explore the themes of inclusion, disability awareness and empathy in class, prior to creating their art piece for the competition.

We are sharing this parent pack with you to keep you up to date on the conversation and to support you in continuing the conversation at home with your child. Within this pack, you will find some information on the conversations that your child might be having in class, ways to continue this conversation at home, and how to celebrate and acknowledge uniqueness with your child in a supportive way.

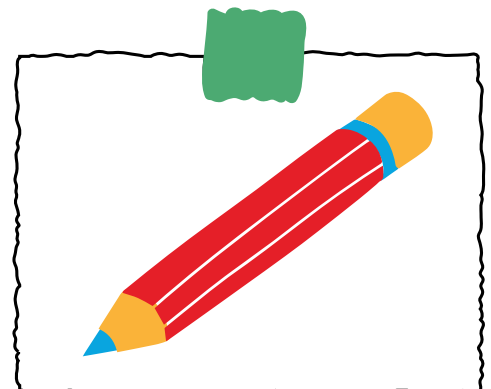
What your child will learn in class as part of this project

- Children learn to appreciate and respect similarities and differences in people. They will also discuss how these differences can improve our lives and communities.
- Children will gain a deeper understanding of visible, non-visible and intellectual disabilities. This helps them to be more understanding and supportive towards people with different abilities.
- In class, children will discuss the importance of treating everyone in a caring, considerate, sensitive and inclusive way, ensuring that everyone feels valued and supported.

Important to remember:

It is important to use nuance. The person best qualified to speak about a disability and how it affects them is the person with the disability. Use words such as 'some', 'maybe', 'could' when speaking about challenges that some people with disabilities might face.

The key to building a more tolerant and accepting society is developing curiosity and asking and answering questions in a safe space. However, this doesn't mean you need to know all of the answers. Remember this programme is designed to promote values of inclusion, acceptance and empathy.



Starting the conversation

The following are some ideas which might be helpful in starting the conversation about disability awareness with your child. These ideas will lead on nicely from what your child will have talked and learned about in class.

Having a chat: (All Ages)

A casual conversation can be a good way to introduce disability awareness to your child. By aiming for open dialogue, encouraging questioning and thinking empathetically, we can build foundations for inclusion and a better life for many. Some talking points might include:

- * What is a disability?
- * Why might it be important to include people with disabilities?
- * How do we know if someone has a disability or not? (we never know for sure as some disabilities are invisible)
- * Some people are born with a certain disability, others develop their disability over time, or as a result of an accident. How do you think this might affect disabilities and people in different ways?

Want to hear more about the language and terminology you can use to approach these topics with your child?

Check out the [NDA Advice Paper on Disability Language and Terminology - National Disability Authority](#).

Character Observation:

Discussing characters in a book/story, or those seen on TV/ in a movie, can be helpful to explore disability awareness and support discussion on this topic. Some of the questions might be helpful in starting the conversation:

Juniors to 2nd Class

- * Tell me about Character A
- * What are the differences and similarities between the characters in the book or movie?
- * What does Character A find challenging?
- * Is there anything that Character A is particularly good at?
- * How do the other characters respond to Character A?
- * What might be holding this character back in an unfair way?

Sample Video: 'Float' short by Disney to [watch here](#).

3rd to 6th Class

- * Do you identify with any of the characters in the book or movie? Whom do you identify with the most? Why do you identify with this character?
- * Some disabilities we might be able to see, and some we might not. Is this character facing any hidden challenges?
- * Our actions have impact. How do the other characters react to the differences in the characters that you noticed? What impact does that have in their lives?
- * Look at the setting of this book, does each character have the same opportunities? Do you think this is important? What might it be like in the real world?

Sample Book/Movie: The book *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio was also made into a movie and explores important topics such as disability, inclusion and acceptance.

Regulation Station:

Self-regulation occurs when a child learns to manage their emotional response to their surroundings by themselves. This is an important skill for positive mental health throughout all life stages. Without developing this skill, we can experience a number of challenges in everyday life. For example, sometimes people might feel too hot but not understand what that means, and what they might need to do to help themselves.

Example situations:

Juniors to 2nd Class

- * You have a lot of energy, but it's time to get ready for school.
- * You like the feel of your friend's jumper and you want to feel it.
- * You feel like running around the house, but mom wants to have a chat.

3rd to 6th Class

- * You might be playing football in the yard and the ball hits your hand. It was an accident, but suddenly three of your classmates are shouting that it was a handball. It is very loud and you feel overwhelmed.
- * Imagine you are tired after not having a good sleep. Your parent gives you a list of jobs to do before lunch time even though you want to meet your friends.

Discussion Prompts:

- * Some of these scenarios might be challenging for some people to cope with. How might it be challenging for people with certain disabilities? (e.g., they might not understand their sensory inputs, have challenges with communication or emotional regulation or might not know what supports them to regulate)
- * Why might a quiet room be helpful to calm and regulate people?
- * When you think about a busy shop with a lot of people and different noises, is there anything they can do to make it more accessible for people with disabilities?

Looking for more tips on discussing sensory processing difficulties with your child?

Check out [Sensory Processing Tips and Strategies](#)

How does that feel? (All Ages)

This exercise explores children's sensory preferences. We have seven different sensory integration inputs and outputs (not just the five!). These are: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, vestibular (movement) and proprioception (body position). The exercises and questions below might help children develop an awareness of these feelings. The suggestions can be adapted for the seven sensory areas also.

Explore the Senses with Children!

Vision/Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blindfold Drawing• Use water and a brush to paint on a surface and watch it disappear• Watch the sand on a sand-timer while it falls
Sound/Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sound Hunt - identify different sounds outdoor or indoor• Sound Walk - listening for sounds in your environment• Use cups and string to make a "telephone" and listen to sounds travel
Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scent Matching Game - Match different scents to corresponding pictures or objects• Play with scented dough to explore different smells
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taste Testing - Sample different flavours and discuss them• Cooking together - Taste ingredients during simple cooking or baking activities
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sensory Bins - Explore different textures with hands in bins filled with various materials• Texture walk - Walk barefoot over different textured surfaces to describe the feel
Vestibular/ Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigate a course with crawling, jumping, and balancing activities• Experience swinging or spinning to explore balance
Proprioception/ Body Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mimic different animal movements• Carry or push light weighted objects to understand body movement

After exploring the senses, ask your children the following questions:

Junior and Senior Infants to 6th Class

- * What did they like the most/the least? You can make 'I like to' lists, e.g.: I like to look at sand timers, I like to eat pizza, I like to move my body by jumping up and down, I don't like carrying objects, I don't like blindfold drawing...
- * What it felt like...? E.g.: What it felt like identifying different sounds? What it felt like walking barefoot? What it felt like tasting different ingredients?
- * Rank the visual inputs, e.g.: 'I like x, y and z, but I prefer a' 'My favourite is b' 'D makes me calm, and I like E, but it makes me a bit too excited'

5th & 6th Class:

- * Encourage your child to think beyond the experienced visual cues to what they visualise when they relax, and what might this be based upon.



More activities you can do with your child:

The following section might be helpful to celebrate and acknowledge diversity beyond the Someone Like Me competition and to continue conversation on disability awareness.

Juniors to 2nd Class

- * Create an artistic piece, such as a poem, drawing, or sculpture that explores the experiences of someone with a disability.
- * Explore some art created by Irish artists who have a disability here: <https://adiarts.ie>.

3rd to 6th Class

- * Read this website with your child: <https://www.dyslexia.com/question/what-dyslexics-see/>. Here you could ask them to think about how they might navigate the specific learning disability of dyslexia in school.
- * How would you explain a sum $24 + 78$ (or any other sum) to someone who found it very difficult to understand the meaning of numbers?

All Class Levels

- * Interview a local person with a disability you know. Perhaps show them the questions your child might intend to ask them pre-interview.
- * Research a Paralympic athlete, celebrity or famous person who might have disabilities, hidden or otherwise. e.g. some famous actors with dyslexia include Orlando Bloom – this will also show people that sometimes, even people with difficulty in a certain area can work hard and excel at it.
- * Sensory restriction: In order to help your child understand different disabilities, they could explore the world of a person who might have difficulty in seeing by wearing a blind fold and being asked to complete a household task. Similarly, they could wear noise-cancelling earphones, or not speak for a short period, and to only communicate via actions or pictures. Ask your child about what they experienced and how they felt during these periods of sensory restriction. Ask them how they might imagine a person with these types of challenges feel? How might they need support? Do you think they would constantly feel the same level of challenge?
- * My Family Tree: (All ages) Encourage your child to create a family tree highlighting each member's unique qualities, interests and talents. Discuss how these differences make the family special.

Enter the Someone Like Me Art Competition!

Art pieces created at home school can also enter the competition!

To participate, simply explore this Parents' Pack with your child and encourage them to create a piece of art that showcases what they've learned in class and at home. Entries can come in all shapes and sizes and any format your child wishes! This can be anything from a painting, collage, or papier-mâché sculpture - imagination is key!

Send us your entries to the address below before:

November the 14th

to be in with a chance of winning fantastic cash prizes! For more information, visit our website: <https://someonelikemecompetition.ie>

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Additional Resources

Below are a number of organisations where you can find some helpful information on the topics covered in this year's competition.

Autism

Autism Awareness Day; Wednesday April 2nd 2025 (April Autism Awareness Month), www.autism.ie

AsIAm

The AsIAm charity often hold numerous events throughout the year. <https://asiam.ie/what-we-do/events>

Down Syndrome

World Down Syndrome Day 21st March annually, DSI (Down Syndrome Ireland) www.downsyndrome.ie

Dyslexia Association of Ireland

Dyslexia Awareness Week: October 7th – 13th www.eda-info.eu and www.dyslexia.ie

National Disability Authority

The National Disability Authority (NDA) is the independent statutory body providing evidence-based advice and research to Government on disability policy and practice <https://nda.ie>

Paralympics

Happen alongside the Olympics (Summer 2024) and feature participants who have a physical disability. <https://www.paralympic.org>

Rare Disease Ireland

Rare Disease Ireland, 1 in every 17 people have a rare disease. Many of these are invisible. www.rdi.ie

Special Olympics

Olympics for people with intellectual disabilities, the next games will be held in 2027 in Santiago <https://www.specialolympics.ie>, <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/careers?locale=en>

Vision Ireland

Charity supporting people with vision difficulties with shops in many local areas. <https://vi.ie>

Glossary

The following is a Disability Glossary that might be helpful in discussions with your child. Please bear in mind that this is not an exclusive list and that there are other disabilities not included here.

If you have any concerns about your child having a disability, it would be best to contact your GP for a referral. If you have any further questions, there are some helpful links at the end of this document that might be useful.

ADD / ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder): A condition whereby people might find it difficult to focus, be prone to inactivity / hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

Autism: Autism is a lifelong developmental disability or difference which relates to how a person communicates and interacts with others, and how they experience the world around them.

Cerebral Palsy: A group of disorders that impacts movement and muscle tone.

Chromosomal Syndromes (e.g. Down Syndrome, William's Syndrome): These are caused by genetic mutations in utero. These can result in intellectual disabilities and health challenges for people.

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (also known as Dyspraxia): This can impact people's movement and co-ordination skills. Fine and/or gross motor skills might be impacted which can result in daily challenges.

Down Syndrome: A genetic syndrome, caused by an additional 21st chromosome. Down syndrome is marked by growth, developmental, and learning delays that vary from mild to severe.

Dyscalculia: Sometimes called 'number blindness' it affects ability to understand and work with numbers, similar Specific Learning Disability to Dyslexia with writing.

Dysgraphia: Dysgraphia affects writing abilities, and can impact the organisation of thoughts on paper. Specific Learning Disability similar to Dyslexia with reading.

Dyslexia: A commonly known Specific Learning Disability. Dyslexia is primarily a set of processing difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling.

Epilepsy: A person with epilepsy might have repeated seizures due to activity within the neurons in their brain.

Fragile X Syndrome: Another genetic syndrome which might cause intellectual disability, and behaviour and learning challenges.

GAD (General Anxiety Disorder): People with GAD have persistent worry about sometimes everyday situation. This can be debilitating and result in exhaustion, social withdrawal and difficulty engaging and concentrating.

Hard of Hearing: A moderate to severe loss of the sense of hearing.

Intellectual Disability: Significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn and apply new skills.

Muscular Dystrophy: A degenerative disease, which is caused by genes and affects muscle tone and mass over time.

OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder): A pattern of thinking that involves persistent unwanted thoughts and result in repetitive behaviours.

Sensory Input: A piece of sensory information the body is receiving from its environment.

Sensory Processing Difficulty: A significant difference in the way the brain receives, processes or responds to information coming from one specific sense or more. This can result in different sensory preferences, e.g. only loose clothing, or using chew toys.

Self-Regulation: The ability for oneself to be able to relax one's body in a given scenario and to focus on one task and move from task to task.

Speech and Language Difficulty: This disability affects one's ability to communicate effectively and can range from having difficulty producing one or a number of sounds, to having difficulty learning words and their meaning, to having difficulty in understanding how to use words in context.

Specific Learning Disability: This is the name given to a specific disability which affects learning, e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc.

Visual Impairment: The full or partial loss of the sense of sight.

William's Syndrome: A genetic condition that can result in developmental challenges, such as intellectual disabilities, health disabilities, particularly related to the heart. Children with William's Syndrome can often have a very outgoing personality.

In terms of some of these disabilities, people can access professional support, through therapies, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychological therapy and chemical therapy (medication).

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**Someone
Like Me**
ART COMPETITION

NDA
Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority