

“Everyone Can”

A project of the Disability Law Center

Reaching Youth - Creating Change - Growing Leaders
Promoting the Abilities of Every Person

Institute on
Special Education Law

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Ogden, Utah

“The Disability Law Center has a long and distinguished reputation of advocating for people with disabilities in Utah. I highly recommend support of the *Everyone Can* program.”

- Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.

An Overview of the “Everyone Can” Program

The “Everyone Can” program is an innovative outreach and education project of the Disability Law Center (DLC). Since 2006, presenters have been using literature, arts instruction, peer education and discussion groups to teach children that disability is a natural part of the human experience, and everyone has unique abilities that contribute to the strength of our society. Negative attitudes and perceptions remain some of the most challenging barriers faced by people with disabilities. Incidents of discrimination and intolerance are typically the result of prejudice, paternalism or ignorance toward disability in general. One of the most effective ways to influence negative attitudes and create social change is through early youth intervention. This program is designed to reach young people during the time in their development when they are forming opinions about diversity, relationships and an understanding of community.

The core message of this program is one of inclusion. The “Everyone Can” program introduces the idea that everyone has unique talents and abilities, everyone can promote the strengths of others, and everyone can be part of making our communities more inclusive for people with disabilities. It encourages youth to think critically about ideas of fairness, inclusion and equality. Our hope is that these early interventions will plant the seeds that will lead to a community that is more aware of the needs and rights of all its citizens .

For more information about the “Everyone Can” program, please contact Sheri Newton at (435) 232-4269 or

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or visit our website at www.disabilitylawcenter.org and click on “Everyone Can.”

Achievements of “Everyone Can”

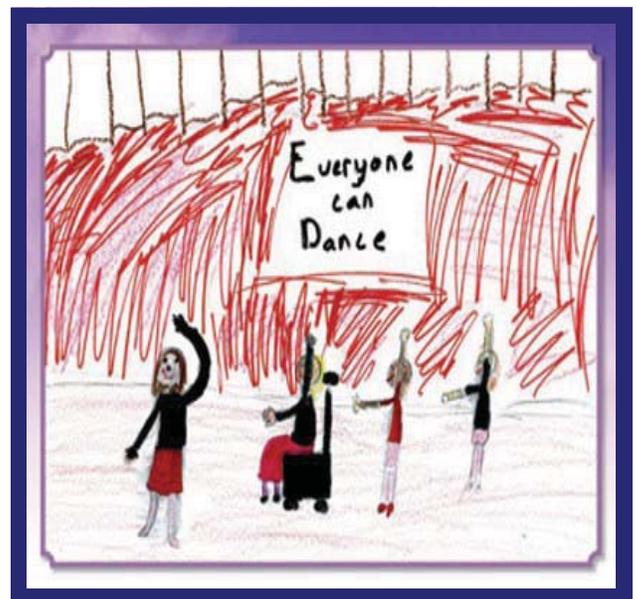
Since 2006, the “Everyone Can” program has been presented to over 11,000 students in classrooms across Utah. To date, advocates have also trained over 100 adults, including classroom teachers, about the program.

In 2007, an art contest was held among the students who participated in “Everyone Can.” The top winners of the art contest had their entries printed in a calendar, which was used as a further promotion of the program. The art contest entries have also been displayed on a portable gallery around the state.

Classroom teachers have an opportunity to provide feedback on the presentations they observe by taking a brief, simple on-line survey following the presentation. Survey results indicate:

- 94% of teachers felt the presentations were age appropriate and helped meet core curriculum requirements
- 74% reported they would be likely or very likely to engage in supplemental activities if the DLC supplied lesson plans and materials
- 72% of teachers anticipated that the presentation would result in a change in students’ language or behavior regarding disabilities and people with disabilities, with the biggest change being increased sensitivity
- 100% reported that they knew of no other organization providing positive, realistic experiences about disability in Utah’s public school system

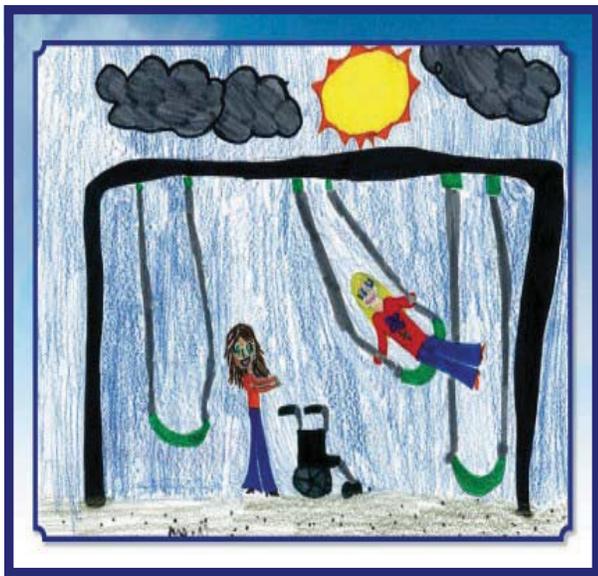
“We really enjoyed the “Everyone Can” presentation and appreciate you coming. After your presentation, I found out there is a boy in my class who has a form of muscular dystrophy that is non-degenerative. He has only fine muscle mass, no large muscle mass. He could be cured if there is ever a cure found for MD. In the classroom it has been challenging because prior to the Everyone Can presentation, we were uncomfortable discussing his disability. Although he uses a scooter at times to get around, no one has ever told us why. This presentation gave us an opening to ask appropriate questions and discuss his needs. The other students wanted to know why he used a scooter, and he was able to tell them. I was also able to talk to his parents and let them know about the things we had discussed in the classroom. We learned that many people automatically assume he has mental disabilities as well as his physical even though he doesn't. It has really held him back because people, especially teachers, don't push him like they do the other kids. It made me as a teacher want to find out his real capabilities and help him reach his full potential.” (3rd Grade Teacher)



Future Growth of “Everyone Can”

In 2010 and 2011, we will expand our efforts to new audiences and new areas of the state. Our goals for expanding the program will include three main areas of emphasis:

- 1) Provide free lesson plans to educators who will use them in their classroom. These are available now at www.disabilitylawcenter.org. Click on the “Everyone Can” tab.
- 2) Expand “Everyone Can” presentations to classrooms in middle schools by loaning classroom sets of books and accompanying assignments and discussion questions.
- 3) Partner with other organizations that will support the “Everyone Can” philosophy and program.



It has been a thrilling experience to have children approach me at the grocery store, the park or public events and say: “I know you! You came to my school. You are the “Everyone Can” Lady!”
(Sheri Newton, DLC Educator)

I signed up for the DLC to come to my class because we have a little person in our class. A reminder that being different doesn't matter seemed like a good idea. I didn't realize what an impact this presentation would have on each child's self concept. One little girl was beaming. She has been struggling because her friends all like to jump rope and it is very difficult for her to do. The message that everyone is born with important abilities just waiting to be discovered was great for her. She understood that jump rope is just one thing to be good at. It is not the most important thing and she has abilities that are valuable. I was thrilled to see this knowledge in her face.

(Third Grade Teacher, Wellsville Elementary)