

Turning Challenges Into Opportunities

What do Steven Spielberg and Charles Schwab have in common? Steven Spielberg is known for directing many movies like Indiana Jones, Jurassic Park and Schindler's List. Charles Schwab is a businessman known for starting one of the largest banks and brokerage firms. He bluffed his way in school, reading Classic Comic Books. They both have dyslexia, a reading disorder.

How about Daniel Radcliffe and Albert Einstein? Daniel Radcliffe is an actor, best known for his role as Harry Potter. Albert Einstein received the Nobel Prize for Physics with his famous formula. They are also known for being clumsy, yet clever; both have dyspraxia. Dyspraxia is a common neurological disorder that affects motor skill development.

What do singer-songwriter Justin Timberlake, Howie Mandel from America's Got Talent and actress Cameron Diaz have in common? They all have obsessive-compulsive disorder or OCD.

What about Dan Aykroyd, Tim Burton, Bill Gates, Steven Jobs and Jerry Seinfeld? They are all on the autism spectrum.

How about Steven Hawking, Sue Austin, and Aaron "Wheelz" Fotheringham? They all are mobility challenged. Stephen Hawking had ALS amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and was an internationally known physicist. Sue Austin is a British artist that has been using a wheelchair for two decades. She has an underwater wheel chair, and she scuba dives to make visual art. "Wheelz" Fotheringham has been in a wheelchair since the age of three due to spina bifida. He is an extreme wheelchair athlete that is known worldwide for his unique performances adapted from BMX and skateboarding.

Celebrities with communication difficulties include Bruce Willis, James Earl Jones, Julia Roberts, and Tiger Woods. They all suffered from the speech impediment of stuttering. Winston Churchill was known for his lisp. Ludwig van Beethoven, Hellen Keller, Bill Clinton and Halle Berry work with hearing losses.

Famous people who were visually impaired include Homer, Harriet Tubman, and Stevie Wonder.

All of us have some difficulties and challenges. Most of us work hard and devise strategies to succeed. We hope our discomfort goes undetected, but we must embrace our differences and accept accommodations that can make us all feel like we not only belong, but are a valued member of our community.

Our goal in the special education department is for all students to have the confidence to learn, to change stumbling blocks into stepping stones, and to strive to learn by embracing the learning strategies that work for them. Our philosophy is that all students can learn if only we let them be free to learn, err, and try again. And, with our support, we believe that every one of our students has the capacity to achieve remarkable things in the future, to turn their challenges into opportunities.