

Fauquier County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Disability Awareness Resources

Updated February 2026

****Denotes Resource Added Since 2025**

This list is for parents, teachers, and librarians to support disability awareness in Fauquier County Public Schools. Elementary fiction titles are listed by recommended reader age, from youngest to oldest, with nonfiction titles at the end of the list. Please send questions, comments, and suggested additions to seac@fcps1.org.

Books For Elementary School Students

The ABCs of Inclusion: A Disability Inclusion Book for Kids, by Beth Leipholtz, tells the stories of 26 real children with disabilities, including blindness, anxiety, OCD, being deaf, using sign language, osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease), cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus, fragile X syndrome, Sanfilippo syndrome, Down syndrome, sensory processing disorder, Mowat-Wilson syndrome, Moebius syndrome, albinism, kidney failure and transplant, achondroplasia (dwarfism), diabetes, muscular dystrophy, heart defect, limb difference, Goldenthal syndrome, autism, CHARGE syndrome, spina bifida, epilepsy. Profiles are very short and expose children to a wide range of differences. (Ages 3-7; 40 pp.)

*****All of Us: A First Conversation About Disability***, by Megan Pamela Ruth Madison & Jessica Ralli, is a picture book introduces disability as a natural and normal part of human diversity. Through everyday scenes, children using wheelchairs, communication devices, service animals, and other supports, the book helps young readers understand that disability is not something to fear or pity, but simply one of many ways people move through the world. (Ages 2-4; 40 pp.)

Buzzing, by Samuel Sattin and Rye Hickman, is a graphic novel about a middle school student with obsessive-compulsive disorder who deals with his invasive thoughts and a mother whose attempts to help are not always successful. (Ages 8-12; 224 pp.)

Charley and Emma Stories (When Charley Met Emma; Awesomely Emma: A Charley and Emma Story; and Emma's Awesome Summer Camp Adventure), by Amy Webb and Grace Webb, illustrated by Merrilee Lidiard. These books tell the adventures of Emma, a girl with limb differences who uses a wheelchair, and her non-disabled friend Charley. (Ages 3-7; 32 pp.)

A Day with No Words, by Tiffany Hammond, illustrated by Kate Cosgrove, is a *New York Times* bestseller and Dolly Gray Award winner. *A Day with No Words* invites readers into the life of an Autism Family who communicates just as the child does, without spoken language. The story highlights the bond between mother and child and follows them on a day when they use a tablet to communicate with others. (Ages 4-8; 48 pp.)

All the Way to the Top: How One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed Everything, by Annete Bay Pimentel, illustrated by Nabi H. Ali, is the true story of Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins is a girl who faced obstacles every day in her wheelchair. When the Americans with Disabilities Act was being considered by Congress, Jennifer and other disability-rights activists showed the world how vital accessibility is by leaving their wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers and crawling up the steps of the U.S. Capitol. (Ages 6-9; 48 pp.)

El Deafo, by Cece Bell, is a #1 New York Times Bestselling graphic novel and Newbery Prize winner. It is the origin story of a student with hearing loss and a hearing aid becoming a superhero. (8-12 yrs.; 248 pp.)

Fighting for Yes!: The Story of Disability Rights Activist Judith Heumann, by Maryann Cocca-Leffler, illustrated by Vivien Mildener, is a lengthy picture book about the life and work of Judith Heumann is a leader in the disability rights movement. Following a description of her childhood, the book details her fight for the enactment of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the adoption of its regulators. The book ends with a note from Judith Heumann herself.

Included: A Book for ALL Children About Inclusion, Diversity, Disability, Equality, and Empathy, by Jayneen Sanders, illustrated by Camila Carrossine, explains that everyone has differences, and these can include disabilities. This picture book describes the lives of children with six disabilities: cerebral palsy, autism, deafness, Down syndrome, ADHD, and limb difference. The book includes discussion questions for parents and teachers. (Ages 5-12; 42 pp.)

Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You, by Sonja Sotomayor, Ali Stroker, et. al., was read by Dr. Brill and the FCPS administration team for 2024 Disability Awareness Month and made available on video to FCPS schools. (Ages 4-7; 32 pp.)

My Friend Isabelle, by Eliza Woloson, illustrated by Brian Gough, tells the story of two young friends, one of whom has Down syndrome. Told from the perspective of a little boy, the book shares the activities that the two do together. Each page has one sentence or a picture. The small format is not well-suited for reading to a whole classroom. (Ages 3-6; 26 pp.)

Roll with It, by Jamie Sumner, tells the story of Ellie, who uses a wheelchair to navigate her daily life, including an unexpected move. (9-12 yrs; 272 pp.)

Stella, by McCall Hoyle, is the story of a beagle who is trained to detect chemicals. When she fails to detect an explosive in me, she becomes fearful and is no longer able to do that work. When Stella has an opportunity to warn a girl's family about her oncoming seizure, Stella must overcome her own fears to protect the little girl. (8-11 yrs.; 32 pp.)

Tic and Twitch: A Story About Tourette Syndrome, by Melissa Mederos, is about a boy diagnosed with Tourette's at age 13, who learns to focus on his uniqueness and on his friends and family. (3-10 yrs.; 31 pp.)

****We Are the Scrappy Ones**, by Rebekah Taussig, This memoir-style collection offers firsthand reflections on living with disability, adaptation, and self-advocacy. Through personal essays, readers gain insight into disability pride, identity, and systemic barriers, making it a strong text for discussions about ableism, representation, and inclusion at the high school level. (Ages 5-9; 32 pp.)

We Want to Go to School!: The Fight for Disability Rights, by Maryann Cocca-Leffler and Janine Leffler was written by a woman with cerebral palsy who is reflecting on a 'me before she was in school, when children with disabilities were not allowed to attend school or had to go to special schools, and were not taught what other kids were learning. The book describes the activism and legal process that resulted in a Supreme Court decision requiring that children with disabilities be admitted to public schools. The end of the book contains additional historical information, including a memo and note from the plaintiff's attorney in *Mills v. Board of Education*. (Ages 4-8; 32 pp.)

Wonderfully Wired Brains: An Introduction to the World of Neurodiversity, by Louise Gooding, illustrated by Ruth Burrows, is a DK book that begins with an overview of the brain and how it functions. The largest section addresses different types of brain diversity, including autism, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, synesthesia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, processing disorders, sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, OCD, bipolar disorder, 'cs, seizures and epilepsy, and cerebral palsy. A section on the history of neurodiversity and profiles of neurodiverse individuals follows this. The conclusion addresses brain care and the future of neurodiversity, followed by a glossary. (Ages 6-10; 96 pp.)

You Are Enough: A Book About Inclusion, by Margaret O'Hair, illustrated by Sofia Cardoso, was inspired by Sofia Sanchez, a girl with Down syndrome. This book is addressed to children with disabilities and encourages them to be courageous and be themselves. (Ages 3-7; 40 pp.)

47 Strings: Tessa's Special Code, by Becky Carey, illustrated by Bonnie Leick, was written for the seven-year-old brother of baby Tessa to explain his sister's Down syndrome diagnosis. The book gives a straightforward explanation of chromosomes and trisomy. (Ages 5-8; 26 pp.)

Books For Middle School Students

****The Bionic Boy** by Lynn Plourde. This middle-grade novel features a protagonist born without hands who navigates school, friendships, and self-identity while using assistive technology. The story supports disability awareness by addressing physical disability in an age-appropriate way and emphasizing self-advocacy, resilience, and body diversity. Readers are encouraged to reflect on how adaptations and inclusive attitudes empower individuals with disabilities. (Ages 8-12; 208 pp.)

Buzzing, by Samuel Sattin and Rye Hickman, is a graphic novel about a middle school student with obsessive-compulsive disorder who deals with his invasive thoughts and a mother whose attempts to help are not always successful. (Ages 8-12; 224 pp.)

El Deafo, by Cece Bell, is a #1 New York Times Bestselling graphic novel and Newbery Prize winner. It is the origin story of a student with hearing loss and a hearing aid becoming a superhero. (8-12 yrs.; 248 pp.)

*****Golden Boy's Guide to Bipolar***, by Sonora Reyes. This middle-grade novel centers on a young person living with bipolar disorder. It supports disability awareness by offering an honest portrayal of mental health challenges, reducing stigma, and encouraging empathy and understanding for peers managing mood disorders and mental health disabilities. (Ages 13+; 384 pp.)

*****It's All or Nothing, Vale***, by Andrea Beatriz Arango. Written in verse, this novel explores acquired disability following an injury, helping readers understand how disability can emerge unexpectedly. The book emphasizes emotional resilience, identity shifts, and the importance of support systems, making it useful for discussions about invisible and evolving disabilities. (Ages 10-14; 272 pp.)

*****The Seaside Sleepover*** by Jacqueline Wilson. This elementary novel includes a character with a disability as an integrated and meaningful part of the story, rather than the focus of a lesson. The presence of a disabled sibling helps young readers see disability as part of family life and everyday experiences. By portraying accessibility needs alongside friendship and adventure, the book builds understanding while reinforcing that disabled individuals are full participants in their communities. (416 pp.)

*****Splinter & Ash***, by Marieke Nijkamp. This novel includes a main character with a mobility disability who uses a cane and braces. Disability is presented as a natural part of the character's identity rather than something to be overcome. The book promotes awareness by challenging assumptions about physical ability and highlighting how accessibility and attitudes shape participation and belonging. (Ages 8-12; 368 pp.)

Books For High School Students

*****Artifice & Access: A Disability in Fantasy Anthology***, edited by Ella T. Holmes. This anthology features fantasy stories with disabled and chronically ill protagonists, challenging traditional portrayals of heroes. By placing disability at the center of imaginative storytelling, the book expands readers' perceptions of ability, agency, and strength, reinforcing the idea that disability belongs in all genres and narratives. (Ages 13-18; 195 pp.)

1% Better: Reaching My Full Potential and How You Can Too, by Chris Nikic and Nik Nikic, is Chris's story as the first person with Down syndrome to complete an Ironman Triathlon, and includes his advice for overcoming obstacles and achieving one's goals. (Ages 13+; 224 pp.)

Disability Visibility (Adapted for Young Adults): 17 First Person Stories for Today, edited by Alice Wong is a highly acclaimed collection of essays that sheds light on the real-life experiences of adults with disabilities. The original adult book has been adapted for a YA audience. (Ages 12-17; 160 pp.)

Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law, by Haben Girma, is the autobiography of the first deafblind person to attend Harvard Law School. An immigrant from war-torn Eritrea, Haben has spent her life overcoming obstacles and creating new ways to

communicate with those around her (Ages 13+; 288 pp.)

How Did You Get Here?: Students with Disabilities and Their Journeys to Harvard, by Thomas Hehir and Laura A. Schifter tell the stories of sixteen students with disabilities who attended Harvard University, giving candid accounts of the challenges they faced and how these individuals and their families equipped themselves for an education at Harvard University. (Ages 15+; 264 pp.)

Same But Different: Teen Life on the Autism Express, by Holly Robinson Peete with Ryan Elizabeth Peete and RJ Peete are written by a mother and her teenage twins, Ryan and RJ, who have autism. The book shares each family member's perspective on how RJ's autism affects their family and each of them individually. (12 yrs+; 224 pp.)

The Silence Between Us, by Alison Gervais, is the story of a deaf teen who moves across the country and attends a hearing school. Featuring a "clean" romance, this YA novel is written by a deaf author who tells the story from her first-person perspective. (Ages 13+; 320 pp.)

The Thing with Feathers, by McCall Hoyle, tells the story of a homeschooled teen with epilepsy who enrolls in public school. She faces the fear of having a seizure in public and, when that happens, who has to decide whether to stay in school or withdraw. She is also dealing with the death of her father. (Ages 13+; 304 pp.)

Unbroken: 13 Stories Starring Disabled Teens, by Miereke Nijkamp, is an anthology of fictional stories featuring characters with disabilities. (Ages 14-18; 320 pp.)

Videos

(Recommended grade levels: H-high school, M-middle school, E-elementary)

[“Amazing Things Happen” \(:04\)](#) is an animated introduction to autism and neurodiversity. The narrator explains the brain function that addresses both the strengths and challenges faced by people with autism. The narrator also explains the purpose of adaptive behaviors, including self-soothing and self-regulation. **(E, M, H)**

[“A Brief but Spectacular Take on the Disability Rights Movement” \(:04\)](#)

A PBS New Hour interview with Judith Heumann, a pioneer in the disability rights movement and author of *Being Human: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*. She gives a brief overview of the movement and her personal experience. Ms. Heumann is featured in the Ne'lix documentary film, *Crip Camp*, which includes extensive video recorded at a summer camp for teens and young adults with disabilities, followed by archival video of the first disability rights protests and the federal building sit-in in San Francisco, which were a catalyst for the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. **(H)**

[A news report about the Crip Camp \(:07\)](#) containing interviews with individuals featured in the *Crip Camp* is appropriate for all ages but best suited for middle and high school students. Note: the film *Crip Camp* contains mature themes and is best for older high schoolers with parents.

permission.

[“Commemorating 30 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act” \(:11\)](#)

Overview of disability history in the US, starting with eugenics and segregation. Compares disability rights movement to other civil rights movements. Call to action for disability civil rights activism. Produced by the President’s Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy. (H)
“Disability Awareness: How Do You Want to Be Identified?” (:02) is a brief discussion of the language used to describe people with disabilities. **(M, H)**

[“Disability Inclusion Matters for All” \(:02\)](#)

The World Bank’s explanation of its programs to include people with disabilities worldwide. Gives a global perspective on disability inclusion. Introduces the World Bank’s framework document. **(H)**

[“The Hiring Chain” \(:02\)](#) is a musical illustration of how hiring a person with a disability can start a chain reaction of such hirings. This video, featuring music by S'ng, garnered worldwide recognition. **(E, M, H)**

[“I’m Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much” \(8:59\)](#) is a TED Talk in which Australian comedian Stella Young describes how non-disabled people often view her and others with disabilities as inspirational, and explains why this is a problem. This thought-provoking talk challenges the audience to stop treating people with disabilities as exceptional just for living their everyday lives. **(H)**

[“Inclusion Makes the World More Vibrant” \(03\)](#)—A boy shows his blind mother a painting in an art gallery. **(M, H)**

[“NOT Special Needs” \(:02\)](#) A video featuring young adults with Down syndrome making fun of the term “special needs,” making the point that the needs of people with disabilities are really like those of everyone else. Appropriate for all ages who can understand tongue-in-cheek humor. (M, H)

[“Ridiculous Excuses Not to Be Inclusive” \(:02\)](#) is another offering from the Italian inclusion organization CoorDown **(M, H)**

[“Talk to Me” \(3:18\)](#) introduces an 11-year-old girl with cerebral palsy who communicates using an eye-gaze device. She and her mother are featured in the video, explaining that her interests are the same as those of her peers, and that she does not like it when people ignore her or treat her like a baby **(E, M)**

[“Understanding Disabilities” \(:02\)](#) features real kids explaining each other’s disabilities and emphasizing that we are more alike than different. **(E)**

[“We Need to Talk About Disability” \(:02\)](#) is an introduction to the social model of disability and Universal Design. The narrator has an Australian accent. **(H)**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Book Lists

[Easter Seals “10 Great Reads for Kids About Disabilities and Accessibility”](#)

National Education Association “Books to Uplift Perspectives and Experiences of Disability”

[“Timeline of Disability Rights in the United States”](#) gives a timeline of American disability rights legislation from 1776 through 2020.

[“Parallels in Time: A History of Developmental Disabilities,”](#) published by the Minnesota The Governor’s Council on Disabilities is a highly detailed chronology with embedded videos, photographs, and links to documents, detailing the evolution of the treatment of people with developmental disabilities from ancient times to the 2000s.

[**“Americans with Disabilities Act”](#) The ADA underpins and inspires all of ODEP's work. Through policy development, outreach and education, and technical assistance, ODEP assists both workers with disabilities and employers in understanding their protections and obligations under the law. Brings complementary expertise to help employers address today's workplace challenges. Join these technical assistance centers for a free webcast and learn how their collaboration provides HR professionals with practical tools, guidance, and resources to translate policy into effective workplace practices.

National Resources

[Association on Higher Education and Disability \(AHEAD\)](#) is the leading professional membership association for individuals committed to equity for persons with disabilities in higher education. AHEAD offers webinars and other professional development resources.

[American Association of People with Disabilities \(AAPD\)](#) is a national disability-led and cross-disability disability rights organization advocating for full civil rights for over 60 million Americans.

[The Arc of the United States](#) promotes and protects the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lives. The Arc was founded in the 1950s by parents of children with IDD.

[The National Council on Disability](#) is an independent federal agency that advises the President, Congress, other federal entities, states, tribal communities, and local governments regarding policies impacting people with disabilities.

[Special Olympics](#) provides sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type events for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Through its Inclusion Revolution, including Unified Sports, Special Olympics supports the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in schools and throughout their communities.

Virginia Resources

[**Disability Resources and Advocacy Organizations in Virginia**](#) – the comprehensive list of Organizations and government agencies serving people with disabilities were compiled by OlmsteadRights.org.

[**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center**](#) – Virginia’s statewide parent training and information center is a resource for parents of students with disabilities, educating them about the special education process and how to advocate effectively for their children. PEATC offers a wide range of free online trainings, as well as an extensive library of documents on their website. PEATC staff members are available to answer parent questions and provide additional support.

Local Resources

[**The Arc of North Central Virginia**](#) is the local chapter of the nation’s oldest and largest organization of and for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in Fauquier, Culpeper, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock counties.

[**Encompass Community Supports**](#) is the local community services board (formerly Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services Board), which provides a range of social services in the five-county area that includes Fauquier County. Services include mental health, developmental disability, and case management services. Encompass coordinates early intervention services for children ages birth to three, and adult developmental disability waivers in Fauquier and neighboring counties.

[**Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services \(DARS\) Culpeper Office**](#) is the local point of contact for DARS services, which include employment and independent living supports for individuals with significant disabilities.