

Disability Pride Month

A framework for history, belonging
and academic connection



Fayette County
Public Schools

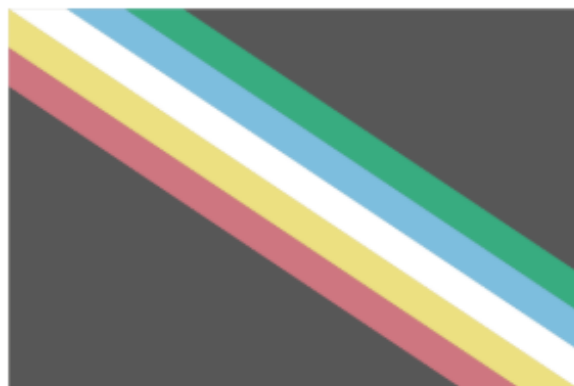
History

The history of Disability Pride Month is rooted in the differently abled rights movement and the push to dismantle societal barriers. It is celebrated every July to commemorate the passing of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990. The ADA was a monumental civil rights victory that legally prohibited discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, schools, and transportation.

The first official "Disability Pride Day" was held in Boston in October 1990. In 2004, Chicago hosted the first official Disability Pride Parade. The celebration evolved from a single day into a month-long national event in July 2015 to mark the 25th anniversary of the ADA.

The Disability Pride Flag

- Designed by disabled advocate Ann Magill, the flag was updated in 2021 to be more digitally accessible for people with visually triggered conditions (such as seizures or migraines).
- Charcoal Gray Background: Represents mourning and rage for victims of ableist (differently abled discrimination) violence, isolation, and systemic neglect.
- The Diagonal Band: Symbolizes cutting through the societal walls and barriers that isolate disabled individuals.
- Red Stripe: Physical disabilities.
- Gold Stripe: Neurodivergence, cognitive, and intellectual disabilities.
- White Stripe: Invisible and undiagnosed disabilities.
- Blue Stripe: Psychiatric disabilities and mental health conditions.
- Green Stripe: Sensory disabilities (including blindness and deafness).

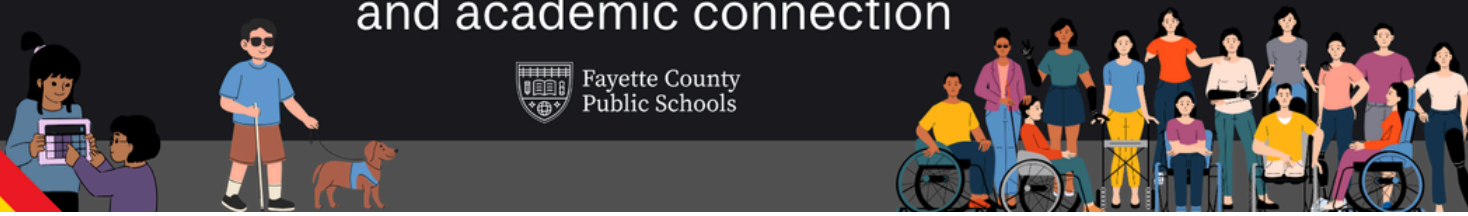


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Barriers To Belonging

Invisible Barriers

- **Physical & Environmental Layouts:** Classroom setups, field trips, and school event spaces frequently lack physical accessibility or sensory-friendly spaces, leaving students excluded from experiences with peers.
- **The "Compliance Over Inclusion" Mindset:** Schools often treat differently abled accommodation purely as a legal paperwork requirement (such as an IEP or 504 plan) rather than actively fostering a culture where disabled students naturally belong and feel valued.
- **The "Spokesperson" Burden:** Educators frequently call on visibly disabled or neurodivergent students to explain their conditions or act as the "class expert" when discussing topics related to differently abled or accessibility.

Common Misconceptions

- **"Disability is a tragedy to be cured":** This relies strictly on a medical model. Disability Pride centers on the social model, which states that people are disabled by a poorly designed society and systemic inequities, not by their bodies or minds.
- **"Accommodations give students an unfair advantage":** Accommodations do not lower expectations; they provide individual supports so differently abled students can equitably demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
- **"All disabilities are visible":** A vast majority of individuals live with chronic illnesses, psychiatric conditions, learning differences, or sensory processing disorders that are completely unnoticeable to an outside observer.

Common Microaggressions

- **"You don't look disabled" or "But you seem so normal!":** Dismisses a student's lived reality and reinforces the false idea that a differently abled must match a specific physical stereotype.
- **"She's so inspiring just for doing her homework!":** Turning everyday actions into "miraculous examples" objectifies differently abled students and treats normal competence as shocking.
- **"I'm feeling so bipolar today.":** Throwing around diagnostic terms like "bipolar," "OCD," "ADHD," or "autistic" to describe minor, everyday moods or preferences minimizes actual medical conditions.

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How to Connect with Families and Communities

Start with Inclusion, Dignity, & Belonging

- Recognize disability as a natural part of human diversity rather than something to “fix” or “overcome.”
- Understand that disabilities may be visible, invisible, temporary, chronic, physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric, or neurodivergent.
- Partner with families as experts on their child’s strengths, needs, communication styles, and support systems.
- Move beyond compliance-based thinking and focus on creating environments where every student genuinely belongs.

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Educational Resources

Focus Areas

Varied Strengths, Emotional Literacy, & Universal Belonging

Family Connection Strategies

- Invite families to share strategies, strengths, interests, or tools that help their child feel successful and included at school.
- Create classroom conversations that normalize differences in learning, communication, movement, and sensory experiences.
- Host inclusive family events with sensory-friendly options, visual schedules, quiet spaces, and accessible activities.
- Encourage family storytelling projects that celebrate students' identities, talents, and lived experiences.

Recommended Resources

- "Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You" by Sonia Sotomayor
- Resources from The Sensory Trust
- Picture books featuring disabled characters engaged in everyday life and problem-solving
- Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF): dredf.org
- The Invisible Disabilities Association (IDA): invisibledisabilities.org

Classroom & School Inclusion Tips

- Use flexible seating, visual supports, movement breaks, and multiple ways for students to participate.
- Ensure classroom visuals include children with disabilities in authentic and empowering ways.
- Avoid disability simulations (such as blindfold activities) that frame disability through pity or limitation.
- Teach students that accommodations help create fairness and access—not special treatment.

Family Event Ideas

- Inclusive Family Game Night
- Sensory-Friendly Literacy Celebration
- Universal Design STEM Night
- "Different Ways to Learn" Family Showcase

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Education Connections

Alignment with FCPS Portrait of a Graduate

- **Critical Thinker:** Studying the history of the disability rights movement—such as the 1977 Section 504 Sit-ins or the Capitol Crawl—challenges students to analyze how laws are shaped, evaluate societal power structures, and question standard definitions of "normalcy."
- **Effective Communicator:** Practicing disability-inclusive communication (such as learning about person-first vs. identity-first language) helps students articulate ideas with profound empathy and respect for human variance.
- **Empowered Learner:** When universal design for learning (UDL) is standard practice, students are given autonomous agency to consume information and express their learning in the ways that best fit their individual minds and bodies.
- **Creative Problem Solver:** Examining systemic physical or digital barriers encourages students to design innovative, universally accessible solutions that improve community life for everyone, regardless of ability.
- **Collaborative Team Member:** Building peer relationships across neurotypes and physical abilities cultivates the profound cultural competency and authentic collaboration required for a modern, diverse workforce.

KY Standards Alignment

Universal Social Studies inquiry Standards

- **Using Evidence:** Gathering relevant evidence from credible sources; in Grades 6-12, determining accuracy, context, bias, and intended use.
- **Communicating Conclusions:** Constructing explanations and/or arguments using reasoning and information; in Grades 6-12, using claims and evidence from multiple sources while acknowledging counterclaims, strengths, and limitations of the arguments.

Pride/Awareness Months

- **1.C.CV.1:** Describe basic democratic principles.
- **1.G.HI.1:** Describe how culture and experience influence the cultural landscape of places and regions within their communities and state.
- **2.C.CV.1:** Evaluate how civic virtues guide governments, societies, and communities.
- **5.C.CV.1; 8.C.CV.1:** Describe the democratic principles of equality before the law, inalienable rights, and consent of the governed...
- **HS.C.CV.3:** Analyze the impact of the efforts of individuals and reform movements on the expansion of civil rights and liberties locally, nationally and internationally.
- **HS.C.PR.2:** Explain how active citizens can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally and internationally.