***Everybody Counts! Curriculum Guide***

**Third Grade Program – Cognitively Impaired – Level 1**

# Objectives

1. To increase students understanding of people who are cognitively impaired, including their feelings, goals, and frustrations. And to reduce anxieties which may be present during encounters with people who are cognitively impaired.
2. To allow students an opportunity to realize the great range of cognitive impairments and the possible involvement of any of the senses.
3. To represent and reinforce the idea that all people have the same social needs and feelings.
4. To help clarify the use of appropriate terminology to describe people with cognitive impairments.

# Materials (supplied to you, on the day of the program, by the pta)

1. Deck of cards
2. Men’s button down the front shirt (5 or 6)
3. Socks (5-6 pairs to be worn on hands for activities)
4. Cloth bag of common objects
5. Copies of Super Test for each child
6. 20 pennies in a plastic bowl or can
7. Books (classroom texts to use in Group 2 activity such as. dictionaries)

# Suggested Time Allowance

10-15 minutes Introduction, Simulation Activity, Causes, Range of Disability

30 minutes 3 group activities, 10 minutes per group

5-10 minutes Summary, Conclusion

*50 minutes Total Time*

Introduction

(Can use your own words or read out loud, the material below)

Today we are going to talk about people who have a harder time learning things.

This is called a cognitive impairment.

* *Does anyone know what cognitive means? (It deals with learning things, knowing things, remembering things.)*
* *Cognitive functioning comes from the brain. If someone has a cognitive impairment, their brain doesn’t work like most people’s brains.*

This does not mean that they can’t learn things. It just might take them longer or they may need extra help, so family, friends and teachers must be patient.

**How does a person become cognately impaired?**

People or children, with cognitive impairments, could have been born that way. Their brain may have been injured before or just after they were born. People can also be cognately impaired because of genetics. A grown person can also become cognitively impaired if they are in a bad accident that hurts their brain. People who learn more slowly are working very hard. They would love to be able to do everything that students in this class can do. They did not CHOOSE to be cognitively impaired. They can learn lots of things, all through their lives. Let’s try to get an idea of how a person who is cognitively impaired may feel.

***Simulation Activity—Too Many Directions***

**Spelling Test (done as a whole class)**

**Tell the children, “Get ready for a spelling test. Listen very carefully and follow my directions.”**

Give the following directions rather quickly, **and do not pause to allow the children time to stay with you. Do not pause between spelling words.**

“Please take out a pencil and a sheet of notebook paper. Put your name, last name, first on the right side of the top line. Put the date one line down from your name on the left side and the subject two lines below the date. Write the following spelling words: house, over open, round, kitten, soap, and paint.”

After dictating the spelling words, pause briefly (only 4-5 seconds). Ask if everyone is finished. Ignore any complaints from the children and act as though everyone should be finished. Ask if they were all paying attention. Children will protest and complain. Ask them why they were having a problem. They will complain that you talked too fast. Point out that children who are cognitively impaired often feel as they do now. Ask if they feel confused? Tell them that they could be successful if you gave them one step at a time. Slowly repeat the directions and 2 or 3 of the spelling words. Ask the children how they would have felt if you had made fun of them for being slow. It is very important to talk with the children about this activity so they understand the purpose.

Explain that some children may be confused by directions that seem simple to most children. Example: Get you coat and soccer ball and meet me on the playground. Children may need one step at a time directions or some help. It requires patience and understanding to help a friend who learns more slowly.

***Range of Disability***

Ask the children if they think that people who are cognitively impaired are all pretty much the same. Explain that people who are cognitively impaired are very different from one another just as we are all different from one another. They learn at different rates. Some people have a few problems learning and need just a little extra help. Other people need help with almost everything they do. However, most people can learn to read, write and do arithmetic. They can learn to take care of themselves and earn a living when they are adults.

Introduction to Activities

Stop and think about how you learn. The basic material for learning comes from your five senses --sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. Learning and thinking are the result of information taken in by the senses and processed by the brain. Failure to receive good information causes many problems for children who are cognitively impaired. Every person is affected differently. We are going to do some activities to help you understand how much harder it is to learn if your senses are not as sharp. We will do another activity to help you understand how a person who is cognitively impaired feels when a task is too hard, or just the opposite, when people treat the person as though he/she doesn’t understand anything.

**Divide the class into three groups. Explain to the children that they will all have an opportunity to experience all three activities. Allow about 10 minutes for each group and then rotate.**

Impairment of sense of Touch

**GROUP 1: Identifying Objects**

Difficulties with the sense of touch cause many problems for some people who are cognitively impaired. Explain to the children that many activities that they take for granted require a good sense of touch. We understand so much of our world though this sense. We are able to automatically identify objects just by touching them. We know if things are warm or cool, hard or soft, rough or smooth. All of this information is important for us every day.

Sit in a circle with the children. Give each child a pair of heavy socks to put on their hands.

Pass around a bag filled with familiar objects and ask each child to reach in the bag and try to identify an object without looking at it. A pillowcase works well as a bag. Fill the bag with 10-12 items such as a comb, toy car, pencil, pen, spoon, cup, small plastic flower, etc. Stress that this is not an impossible task but it is more difficult when their sense of touch is impaired.

Give the students the opportunity to attempt to turn pages in a book. Discuss the difficulty of turning just one page at a time. Ask students to count out five pennies from a bowl or can. Ask them to hand 3 pennies to someone else in the circle. Discuss some of the problems associated with poor sense of touch and money (Examples: dropping lunch money, problems in stores, embarrassments)

* How would you feel if you reached in your desk to get your pencil or crayon and couldn’t feel the difference?
* What if you had to work very hard just be able to tell which item you were picking up?
* How would you feel if others laughed when you made a mistake?
* Think about how important the sense of touch is to everything you do. You can tell if you are walking on grass or the sidewalk. How can you tell? It feels different to you if the soccer field is dry and full of ruts and dips or if it is a nice even grassy field. How does it effect the way you run? What happens if you think the ground is smooth and it is full of ruts? How would you feel if people laughed when you fell?
* How could you help a person who has trouble with sense of touch? Could you take the time to help him?

**GROUP 2: Shirt Activity**

The sense of touch is important for everyday activities such as dressing. We rely on our fingers to feel the buttons and the button holes in our clothing. We button our clothes without even thinking about it. What would happen if we really had to concentrate to know the size of the button and to get it through the buttonhole? Pass out a man’s button front shirt to each child. Each child should wear a pair of heavy socks over their hands. Have the children stand in a circle. Tell them you want to see who can put on the shirt, button it and take it off in the least amount of time. If there are not enough shirts, divide the children into pairs. They can work as a team and both must finish to “win”. It may be necessary to remind children to do this quietly as most children get excited and noisy. While they are doing the activity, make them feel pressured by telling them to hurry. Keep pushing them to go faster. Usually, the harder they try, the harder time they have. You can give them a time limit.

After the activity ask the children:

* How would you feel if it took this much effort to get dressed every day?
* How would you feel if people laughed at you?
* Think about the way you would feel if no one would wait for you to get your coat on at recess.

Remind the children that everyone has feelings. When you are trying your best, it is never fair for others to laugh or make fun of you.

Learning Problems and “Babying”

**GROUP 3: Learning Problems**

Briefly review the spelling test activity that caused them a problem when the directions were given too quickly. Explain to the children that another learning problem may be that it just takes a person longer to learn something. They may need more time and a great deal of review to learn a subject. It will take a child who is cognitively impaired much longer to learn to read. That is one reason some children who are cognitively impaired are in separate resource rooms for part of the day. Their teacher will go much slower and take more time when teaching the alphabet sounds and reading. The child will be learning every day, but their progress will be slower. It is frustrating for some children when they can’t learn as fast as they want to.

Explain to the children that you are going to play a memory game with a deck of cards. Ask if they have every played the game “Memory”. Most children will be familiar with the game.

Sit in a circle or at a table with the children. It will be easier for you to remember which cards to request if you use only 2 suits, such as all clubs and hearts or all spades and diamonds, etc. Lay out the cards face up, in several rows with 4 or 5 cards in each row.

As soon as the cards are laid out, tell the children to look at them and then immediately turn each card face down. (Do this quickly; do not hesitate more than 2 or 3 seconds after telling the children to look at the cards.) After the cards are face down, talk to the children for a minute about how important a good memory is. Tell them they are certainly old enough to remember numbers on cards. This short delay makes it more difficult for the children to remember card placement.

Go around the circle, one child at a time and ask them to find a certain card – 2 of hearts, jack of clubs, etc. Do this quickly and appear shocked that the children do not remember. Children are only allowed one opportunity to turn over a card, when you request one.

Do this activity quickly and appear annoyed. After several chances, stop the game and ask the children if you gave them a fair chance. What would they need to play successfully? (Cues – more time, second chances, fewer cards, etc).

Tell them you really want to be their friend and would like to play fairly. Turn over about half of the cards. Let them take a few minutes to study the cards and then turn them back over. Play the game for a few minutes at a relaxed pace and with a friendly attitude.

Take time to talk to the children about what just happened. They really are able to play the game, It could be fun. They just needed more time and fewer cards.

Children who learn more slowly can do many things and can be good friends. They may just need more time to learn and remember things. Review feelings with the children. Would they have been upset if you had told the whole class that they couldn’t remember anything? If everyone laughed, how would they feel? Were they trying to remember? Were you fair?

Try to help the children understand that the game is not impossible. They can learn and remember, but they needed more time. Sometimes that is the way a person who is cognitively impaired feels. They can learn it, it just takes more time. Please respect their efforts.

**“Babying Others”**

Sometimes people react just the opposite way towards a person who is cognitively impaired. They assume that the person is like a baby in every way. They treat the person as though they don’t understand anything. They praise them for very minor, silly, accomplishments and make them feel that they can’t really learn anything. People who are cognitively impaired can learn many things throughout their lives and can do many useful things. They can learn to read and write and do math. They can get a job and live independently. Some people who are cognitively impaired do require help with everything they do, but most can do many things. How would it feel to be treated like a baby when you know you can do more?

Pass out the “Super Test”. Tell the children not to go ahead without your help. Read the directions very slowly. Tell them to make a *nice mark* on the right picture. Use the tone of voice that would be used to encourage a six month old baby to shake a rattle or play peek-a-boo. You must act as though the group is so very slow that just about anything accomplished is wonderful.

Give the following directions:

1. Put a nice big mark on the picture of the scary animal.  
 2. Put a nice big mark on the biggest circle of all.  
 3. Put a nice big mark on something you eat.

Wonderful, Wonderful! You did it! (This enthusiasm must be expressed in a ridiculous, syrupy tone.)

Ask the children how they would feel if their teacher acted as though this was the very best they could possibly do. Would they be embarrassed if she held it up for the class to see and kept saying how wonderful it was? How would you feel when all the kids laughed at you and called you a *baby*?

Remind the group that a person may need more time and need more help, but does not need to be treated as though they can’t do anything. Ask them to give examples of ways they could make a child feel good without treating them like a baby. (Cues: praise true examples of success, play games that their friend likes and understands, ask about things they like to do, be patient when a friend makes a mistake, etc.)

Summary

Think about what you have learned about people with a cognitive impairment. Cognitive impairment is a nice word to use. Sometimes people use words that are unkind and hurtful to people with a cognitive impairment. We have to remember that people with disabilities have the same kind of feelings that people without disabilities have. Ask the children: “Have your feelings ever been hurt by what people have said about you? Have you ever called someone a name that was not so nice?”(Remind kids not to use specific names) Let the children respond openly. However you feel when someone calls you a mean name, is the same way another child would feel if you said it to them. Remember, we should treat others the way we wish to be treated. Every single person has things they are really good at and things that are difficult for them. It is not nice to treat someone poorly or call them bad names just because they are struggling or it takes them a little longer to learn.

When you meet a person with a cognitive impairment, look for the things they CAN do rather than focusing on the things that they CAN’T do. Don’t treat them like a baby. Open your mind and heart to the way they learn, grow, and play. You might find out that you have way more in common than you would have thought. You may also find out that they may have a thing or two to teach you.

