

Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program

Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee



About the Program

- Created in 2013 to provide hands-on demonstrations relating to barriers people with disabilities face every day.
- The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee Members donate their time, with assistance from public volunteers.
- The only program of this kind in Simcoe County
- Designed for Grade 5 students.
- In the fall of 2023, hosted five in-person demonstrations at Innisfil schools, with nine in 2024.



Purpose of Program

- Creates long-lasting partnerships.
- Raises awareness about different abilities that people may live with daily.
- Helps children learn about barriers and aims to change the stigmas associated with disabilities.
- Reinforces the importance of universal access and inclusion for everyone.



Wheelchair Demonstration

- Activity requires two instructors.
- Ten wheelchairs (extra wheelchairs are on site to accommodate additional students)
- Purpose: to allow students to experience what life would be like using a wheelchair for mobility.
- Students learn to turn, move forward and backward, maneuver a wheelchair through doorways, and access a washroom.

Learning Outcome: Students gain a better understanding of physical access and will be challenged to be more aware of the physical accessibility in their community.



Hearing Demonstration

- Activity requires two instructors.
- One laptop, ten headphones, connection equipment for the laptop, and an electrical outlet.
- Instructors explain how the recordings will play.
- Purpose: to demonstrate hearing loss and potential reasons for hearing impairments.
- Students will hear a recording that provides different sounds that reflect types of hearing impairments and loss.
- After the demonstration, the instructor explains hearing safety and provides examples of different types of hearing loss and suggestions for ways to prevent hearing loss.

Learning Outcome: Students will learn about ear health and hearing disabilities.



Vision Demonstration

- Activity requires two instructors.
- Ten blindfolds, two white canes, and two small orange pylons
- Students are required to wear blindfolds (or have eyes closed) for the entire demonstration.
- Purpose: to demonstrate barriers for blind and low-vision people.
- Instructor assigns a number to each student. Instructor demonstrates the proper use of a white cane and how to locate a pylon approximately 20ft in front of the students.
- Using a white cane, students will walk blindfolded, listening to the instructor's voice and instructions until they locate the orange pylon.
- Students then navigate back to their chairs and hand the cane to the next person, all while wearing blindfolds.
- Instructor assists students using voice prompts to demonstrate challenges without vision.

Learning Outcome: Students will learn how to identify someone who is blind or living with low vision, how to help a blind person who may ask for directions, and how to approach someone who is blind or has low vision.



Interactive/Sensory Demonstration

- Activity requires one or two Instructors.
- Wooden puzzles, ten pairs of gloves and blindfolds
- Simulation goggles to learn about eye conditions and diseases.
- Deaf/Blind calendar kit
- ASL (American Sign Language) learning posters
- Purpose: students learn about eye diseases and prevention, how to adapt if you lose one of your six senses, and how to communicate using ASL and adaptive ASL.
- Students are asked to put on gloves and blindfolds and try to put together wooden puzzles using other senses as a task that will give the impression of someone who may have sensory challenges.

Learning Outcome: Students will learn about various vision disabilities and eye diseases and how to care for their eyes. They will also learn about various sensory challenges and cognitive functions, including dementia, autism, and fall prevention.





Resources and Equipment

Wheelchair Demonstration :

Wheelchairs – we have thirteen

Hearing Demonstration :

Laptop, ten noise-cancelling headphones, cables and jacks to connect headphones to the laptop, and audio recording of common environmental sounds at varying levels

Vision Demonstration :

Two white canes, ten blindfolds, and objects to toss on the floor to be 'found' by cane users, such as keys

Interactive/Sensory Demonstration :

Ten wooden puzzles, ten blindfolds, gloves, Zimmerman Low Vision Simulation Kit, experience calendar tool, and ASL learning posters

2022-2026 Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee Members



**Councillor Robert
Saunders, Chair**



**Hilary Mallett,
Vice Chair**



Kim Bos



Rod Boynton



Karen Brown



**Carol Anne
Browning**



Dana Donaldson



John Gray



Christine Munro

Clerk Services Support



Kim Creamer,
Assistant Clerk to IAAC

The Staff Liaison provides support to the Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee:

- Prepares meetings, agendas, and minutes
- Corresponds with outside agencies
- Organizes annual speakers
- Assists in organizing the Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program at local schools
- Share accessibility inquiries/concerns with members

Testimonials

"Our Grade 5 students at Cookstown Central PS thoroughly enjoyed the day participating in the Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Program hosted at our school. All students were engaged and participated eagerly in each learning centre. After, we had meaningful discussions of how we can help to advocate for all learners as well as in the community. We are so glad to have participated in this program!" *Cookstown Principal*

"I thought it was really cool to learn about the different disabilities that you could have and to see what it felt like to have one. I liked the hearing one because it was cool to learn what it would be like to live without hearing. I think it was fun to see how other people are doing stuff, how they are doing different things because they face barriers". *Grade 5 Student*

"The Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee gave my students the chance to gain awareness and understanding about living with a physical disability, blindness, deafness, or sensory processing disorder in a hands-on, interactive way. They gained a sense of empathy and perspective into how our world is not easily accessible to everyone. They were very engaged in the presentation and workshop and appreciated the chance to ask questions in a safe space". *Sunnybrae School*

Supporters

Innisfil Mayor Lynn Dollin

“The Town of Innisfil is committed to ensuring all our residents and visitors have equal access to our community. A day focused on breaking down barriers reminds us to examine our community and identify whether there are obstacles that prevent people from being able to fully appreciate all that Innisfil has to offer. This important dialogue helps us to shape the future we want to see.”

Simcoe County District School Board AAC – Doug Mein, AAC Chair

“Innisfil’s Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Day Program is a great educational program for young children! I think it is very important to raise our youth to better understand the various forms of disabilities and barriers that people of all ages face in their daily lives while encouraging empathy for others. I would encourage other Accessibility Advisory Committees in Ontario to consider following Innisfil's model within their respective communities!”

Deaf/Blind Ontario Services

“DeafBlind Ontario Services is pleased to partner with the Innisfil Accessibility Advisory Committee on the “Breaking Down Barriers Awareness” initiative. It is through collaborative efforts like these awareness days that we can all build a better understanding in the community about deafblindness for everyone, regardless of their ability.”

Superior Home Health Care – Barrie, Ontario – John Tom & Suzi Jennings

“Innisfil’s Breaking Down Barriers Awareness Day Program is a fantastic educational program for young children! It is very important to raise our youth to respect the physical mobility challenges so many people face. And to teach them empathy and understanding for others. Our company is absolutely thrilled to be the Wheelchair Equipment/Technical Partner in this Program with the Town of Innisfil...and highly encourage other Accessibility Advisory Committees to call them or us...and discuss how this Program can be implemented in their area!”

**Thank you
&
Questions**