

Out of My Mind

Summer Reading Assignment

Your Assignment (Worked on the first week of school in Language Arts):

1. Melody's inability to communicate is a theme throughout the book. Melody is constantly struggling to find ways to communicate with everyone around her. Put yourself in Melody's chair. Write one paragraph (7-9 sentences) from Melody's point of view that tells what it would be like to be Melody for one day. Write about your feelings and frustrations. Choose a specific event from the book to be the focus of your writing. Some examples include the portion of the novel where Melody is trying to warn her mom, when Mrs. Valencia gets Melody to roll over on her own for the first time, or Melody's first experience in the inclusion classroom.
2. Throughout the book *Out of My Mind*, by Sharon Draper, the reader sees the story from Melody's perspective. Reexamine the story through the point of view of one of the following characters: Claire, Mrs. V, Mr. Dimming, Rose, or Penny. Imagine you are that character witnessing and experiencing the events from the novel first hand. Pick an event from the novel, and write a diary or journal entry (8-10 sentences) about that event as the character you chose. Think about how the story has changed from a new character's point of view.
3. I have also attached two articles. Please read each article and determine how they are related to each other. Find at least two connections between each article and *Out of My Mind* (text-to- text, text-to- self, text-to- world).

Please type your responses and the connections on a separate sheet of paper. You will **turn your assignment in to the Classroom app**, do not share them with me on Drive.

Now you're wondering what are text connections?

Text-to- text: Explain how the ideas in one text remind you of another text (story, book, movie, song, etc.)

Text-to- self: Explain how the ideas in the text relate to your own life, ideas, and experiences.

Text-to- world: Explain how the ideas in the text relate to/connect to the larger world-past, present, and/or future.

This year the writing assignment will be worked on in class the first week of school. However, to complete this and other assignments you must have read the book thoroughly. You should take notes, jot down ideas or connections, or make slight annotations while reading the book and articles. **Notes, ideas, and annotations about the book will be due and checked in the first day of class.** Then we will work on completing the assignment based on your notes.

I am available for questions via email at mmartino@olwschool.org. I will also be offering Summer Reading help and tutoring again this summer if you are interested please let me know.

Please do not panic! You have all summer to complete this assignment; so do not feel overwhelmed. I hope you enjoy reading the novel and create deeper understandings from the text! Most importantly, have fun!

Inclusion: The Right Thing for Students by Cheryl M. Jorgensen

It's time to restructure all of our schools to become inclusive of all of our children. We have reached the tipping point where it is no longer educationally or morally defensible to continue to segregate students with disabilities. We shouldn't be striving to educate children in the least restrictive environment but rather in the most inclusive one. Inclusion is founded on social justice principles in which all students are presumed competent and welcomed as valued members of all general education classes and extracurricular activities in their local schools — participating and learning alongside their same-age peers in general education instruction based on the general curriculum, and experiencing meaningful social relationships.

We know inclusion works. In the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 2004 Congress found: "Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."

The largest study of educational outcomes of 11,000 students with disabilities, the National Longitudinal Transition Study, showed that when students with disabilities spent more time in a general education classroom they were more likely to score higher on standardized tests of reading and math; have fewer absences from school; experience fewer referrals for disruptive behavior; and achieve more positive post-school outcomes such as a paying job, not living in segregated housing, and with having a broad and supportive social network. These results were true regardless of students' disability, severity of disability, gender or socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, as the recent WNYC story states, the achievement of students without disabilities is not compromised by the presence of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Some studies even show that implementing inclusion on a school wide basis improves achievement for all students. And just as important as academic outcomes are the attitudes and values that all students learn when they are educated together.

Not only do we know inclusion works, we know how to make it work. There are resources for teachers and administrators from large, urban schools on how to implement inclusive education. You can find hundreds of books, research articles, guidelines for inclusive practice, testimonials from students with and without disabilities, teaching strategies, and strategies for designing instruction and assessment for all learners to help guide you and your teachers.

Imagine what you could do for the children in the 1,700 New York City schools if the resources you are currently spending on out-of-district placements and separate special education schools and classrooms were allocated to create well-supported inclusive classrooms. It's the right thing to do and it works for all students.

Keith's Story from teenhealth.org

CP for short — is a condition caused by injury to the parts of the brain that control our ability to use our muscles and bodies. **Cerebral** means having to do with the brain. **Palsy** means weakness or problems with using the muscles. Often the injury happens before birth. Sometimes it happens when a baby is being delivered or soon after being born. CP can be mild, moderate, or severe. I'm in college now. As a teen with CP it was easy for me to get overlooked, discouraged, or even patronized simply because I wasn't considered "normal." This became especially apparent when doctors began prescribing "special devices" to help me re-establish or maintain a "suitable range of motion." These devices were to be worn while doing everyday activities, *including* school-time activities.

Because my CP mostly affects my legs and the way I walk, I had to wear knee-high, white-plastic, custom-made leg braces at all times during my first couple of years of high school. Laced with Velcro, these braces locked my ankles and heel cords in a fixed position. Needless to say I hated those braces! They were painful, noisy — thanks to the Velcro and cheap plastic — and they seemed to broadcast that I was "crippled" (my skin crawls when I hear that word).

Fortunately, I have a very mild case of CP, and only my walk is affected. For people with more severe cases of CP, all aspects of their physical abilities — and sometimes even mental abilities — can be limited. I was fortunate that my legs were only slightly affected, which allowed me to participate in gym, school sports, and marching band. I was even bold enough to take part in school productions and plays.

As mild as my case of CP may be, there were always the high school bullies who found pleasure in bringing me down. Sometimes it felt that the only reason they were in school that day was to be my rain cloud, following me around pointing out my mistakes and flaws. My bullies were girls as well as guys. They weren't physically threatening. They were the kind who hurt with words or by forcing an embarrassing situation, constantly looking over a shoulder for supporting chuckles from friends. However, my bullies normally found themselves laughing alone, because I'd already beaten them to the punchline. I was well liked, so the joke was on them. The reality was they had a lot of catching up to do.

A bully can't compare to what you put yourself through mentally. Just entertaining the thought that you're not the same as everyone else can work against anyone, even when you know you're above the norm in so many ways. During school, I never wasted time worrying what other people thought of me. I mostly worked on staying positive and meeting my own standards and expectations.

But there were times when people really got to me — their harassing, hurtful words began to penetrate. A couple of times, I even caught myself thinking, "What if they're right?" I found this the hardest place mentally to pull myself out of. But I told myself what I knew to be true: "*You're the one who's right!* It doesn't matter what *they* think, you know you're better than them simply because you don't resort to acting like them. They are making you feel like an outcast so that their pitiful lives don't look so worthless after all."