

HOW TO BE A FRIEND

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ABSTRACT

In Croatia, every twelfth child (0-19 years old) grows up with a developmental disability (CDD), one of seven adults is a person with a disability (PWD). Although the majority of citizens know, and a quarter of them often meet CDD and PWD, ignorance and discomfort are noticeable, as well as mistakes in everyday encounters despite good intentions. Every seventh 4th grade elementary school student thinks he/she can or is not sure if he/she can become deaf if he/she plays with a deaf child. More than a quarter of them would do what they assume is helping a blind person, without asking them if and what kind of help they need, and more than half of their parents would not communicate with a blind person in a situation that directly concerns them. The readiness of parents for their children to socialize with children with developmental disabilities decreases as the closeness and intensity of socializing increases. This was shown by the Creative Backbone Center research conducted on 582 respondents - 4th grade elementary school students and their parents, from 11/2022. until 04/2023. Less than a third of parents say that they know how to communicate with PWDs, but more than 90% of them claim that they have explained to their child how to do it. Only half of the children remembered that conversation. Numerous studies confirm that the chances of creating an inclusive society are greatest if the building of attitudes begins at an early stage of education when positive exposure changes negative attitudes in a short time and builds desirable attitudes. Students in the lower grades of elementary schools in Croatia are somewhat informed about PWDs through classes, but the problem is the application of the information obtained, which should be given much more attention.

Key words: difficulty, disability, primary school children, ignorance, discomfort

INTRODUCTION

About 16% of the world's population, or about 1.3 billion people, have a significant disability - according to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO, Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities, 2022). This number will grow, they add, due to the aging population. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states in Article 1 that persons with disabilities are "those persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various obstacles, may prevent their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis basically with others." (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).

Defining and measuring disability in children presents an additional challenge to the authors. Currie and Kahn (2012) point out the limitations of simpler and more concrete definitions on which the empirical work on the prevalence of disability has been based so far, as well as the shortcomings of settings for collecting statistical data - based, for example, on limitations in the ability to perform daily activities. To overcome these limitations, they add, a broader definition is needed that defines disability as a limitation and not as a health condition per se, thus emphasizing the social and technological context of the individual. In this sense, Halfon, Larson and Newacheck (2012) propose the following definition of disability in children: "An environmentally contextualized health-related limitation in a child's existing or emerging capacity to perform developmentally appropriate activities and participate, as desired, in society." (Halfon et al. 2012, p. 32)

Definitions are important, because they create a basic framework for the interpretation and experience of someone or something. They set the agreed direction for the development of any further approach to the subject of that definition, both at the individual level and at the level of the state's strategic documents. In Croatia, according to Dadić, Bačić, Župa and Vukoja (2018), one of the latest definitions in accordance with the amendments to the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette 157/13, 152/14, 39/18) permeated all previous, and reads: "PWD is a person who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various obstacles, can prevent their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". Dadić et al. also conclude that disability is a difficult topic in Croatian society, which is not yet aware that a person is much more, and capable of much more, than their disability.

The number of people covered by the definition is also important. Statistical data in Croatia, based on the Population Census of the Republic of Croatia (2021) and the Report on Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Croatia (2022), show that a significant part of the population lives with a certain difficulty or disability. More precisely, every seventh inhabitant of Croatia has some form of disability, and every twelfth child (0-19) grows up with developmental disabilities. The numbers alone, 69,953 children (from 0 to 19 years) and 554,066 adults (from 20 to 65+) speak of the importance and necessity of defining not so much the basic description of difficulties and disabilities, but the relationship of society towards this, even numerically significant group. From creating a society of equal opportunities for everyone, starting with full integration into the education system, and then into the labor market, to educating the population without difficulties/disabilities from the earliest age to adulthood, on how to relate and communicate, and live inclusion.

Inevitably, cultural norms are also important. What will be the attitude towards vulnerable groups of society, including children with difficulties and people with disabilities, largely depends on the attitudes that are passed down from generation to generation, the knowledge and skills that older generations pass on to children - primarily parents

and other family members, then employed in the educational system, but also transmitted through the exchange of opinions among peers. Attitudes towards people with disabilities, and the same applies to all minority groups, are not innate, but are learned through experience and information, but also through the prejudices and ignorance of others (Najman Hižman, Leutar, Kancijan, 2008). In research on the attitudes of young people towards people with disabilities, Leutar and Štambuk (2006) report differences in the attitudes of students and elementary school students. Elementary school students agree more with the fact that they cannot help but look at people with physical disabilities, that they try to have as short contacts as possible and end them as soon as possible, are afraid to look them straight in the eye. In the same survey, students and elementary school students do not deny that they feel embarrassed because they do not know how to behave towards people with disabilities.

Precisely because of ignorance, or the lack of information, feelings of discomfort arise. This results in a decrease in interest and willingness to communicate and establish deeper connections and friendships. Further, it leads to the creation of feelings of repulsion, negative stereotypes and even discrimination in relation to difficulty/disability, which stand in the way of creating an inclusive society with equal opportunities for all. The contact hypothesis assumes that increasing interaction between different groups can, under the right circumstances, improve intergroup relations (Harris, J. E., 2019). This is confirmed by research that shows that the most often negative and rejecting attitudes of elementary school children can be changed in a relatively short period of time through positive, direct experience with children with developmental disabilities, as well as through indirect experience through books and the like (Yuker, 1988).

During many years of informal conversations with dozens of people with disabilities and parents of children with developmental disabilities in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, about the attitude of society and individuals towards them - they continuously emphasized, as they claim, three key problems. The first is ignorance. Society does not know enough about their communication, social and other needs and possibilities, and they believe that this topic is not sufficiently represented in the education system. Another problem is non-inclusion. Society talks more about them and in their name, instead of giving them the opportunity to present themselves, and people often address accompanying persons even though they can address a person with a disability. The third most frequently emphasized impression, which they consider one of the fundamental problems, is pity. The generally accepted attitude that children with developmental difficulties, including their parents, as well as people with disabilities should be pitied, is considered the starting point for many other widespread stereotypes. Part of the answer to the challenges of inclusion could be a more extensive and concrete approach to the topic of attitudes towards children with difficulties and persons with disabilities in the early stages of education of children with typical development, but also by simultaneously providing support to their parents.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Research goal

The main goal of the research was to examine whether the above-mentioned impressions of persons with disabilities and parents of children with developmental disabilities are founded. The intention, in this regard, was to determine the frequency of contact between children and parents in Croatia with children with developmental disabilities and persons with disabilities, to examine attitudes about this social group, as well as to check if they act wrongly in everyday situations, even though they have good intentions, and whether they are ready to include a person with a disability in a direct communication.

Research methods

A descriptive method was used for the research, based on a survey and statistical data processing. The information is collected directly from individuals selected according to clearly defined criteria, which, as representative units of the population of children and adults in Croatia, enable the analysis and drawing of conclusions about the objectives of the research. The obtained results are tabulated and explained.

Research instrument

Two survey questionnaires were used as a research instrument - for students of the 4th grade of elementary school and for the parents of those students. The author of the research, Jasmina Kos, compiled the questionnaires, with expert verification by Ph.D. Natalija Lisak Šegota, associate professor at the Department of Inclusive Education and Rehabilitation, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation, University of Zagreb. The survey questionnaires contained partly the same and partly different but complementary questions for students and parents, so that the results could be linked.

The questionnaires are structured in two parts. In the first, both students and parents answered ten (10) questions that examined the frequency of contact with children with developmental disabilities (hereinafter: CDD) and people with disabilities (hereinafter: PWD), as well as attitudes towards them. Scales of three answers were offered: 1) yes, 2) not sure, 3) no, and 1) often, 2) sometimes, 3) rarely/never.

In the second unit, students answered four and parents answered five situational questions in which they were offered three or four descriptive answers. In doing so, I examined the level of readiness of 4th grade students and their parents to include CDD and PWD in communication and social situations, knowledge and coping in everyday encounters. The limitation of the research instrument is the readiness of the respondents to learn, and then express their own attitudes, including prejudices.

Method of conducting research

The research was conducted in the period from November 2022. until April 2023. on a voluntary basis and anonymously. It was held in primary schools all over Croatia. Survey questionnaires in physical form, structured on one A4 paper, were filled out by 602 respondents, but 582 correctly filled questionnaires were taken into account. The students filled out the questionnaires anonymously in classes during regular classes, after the terms "child with developmental disabilities" and "disabled person" were explained to them. Filling out the questionnaire took between 10 and 20 minutes.

Parents also filled them in at schools, during the Parents' Meeting lasting about 15 minutes, with the exception of two schools that sent the questionnaires via students to the parents who filled them out at home and then returned them to the class teachers the next day also via students. All respondents answered independently. Although respondents recorded their gender in the survey questionnaires, we did not focus on this factor in the analysis of this research.

A sample of respondents

Out of the total number (582) of correctly filled questionnaires, 316 were filled in by 4th grade elementary school students (ages 9 to 11), and 266 by their parents. The research covered nine (9) primary schools across Croatia, including the four largest cities (Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Osijek) and five smaller urban and rural towns, including two islands (Samobor, Satnica Đakovačka and Kutinska Slatina and Mali Lošinj and Bol).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will present the key results of the research, obtained by analyzing data from completed questionnaires. Out of the total of 582 respondents, 316 were 4th grade elementary school students and 266 were parents of those students.

Table 1. Knowledge of children with developmental disabilities and persons with disabilities

4TH GRADE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS	I know a child with developmental difficulties or a person with a disability.					
	STUDENTS			PARENTS		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
UKUPNO	225 (71,20)	43 (13,61)	48 (15,19)	225 (84,59)	12 (4,51)	29 (10,90)

Table 2. Frequency of encounters with children with disabilities and persons with disabilities

4TH GRADE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS	How often do you meet children with difficulties and people with disabilities?					
	STUDENTS			PARENTS		
	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY/ NEVER	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY/ NEVER
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	73 (23,10)	158 (50,00)	85 (26,90)	81 (30,45)	181 (68,05)	4 (1,5)

Tables 1 and 2 show data on the number of 4th grade elementary school students and their parents who know/are not sure/don't know children with developmental difficulties and people with disabilities and the frequency of meeting them. The research results show that most of students (71.20%) and parents (84.59%) know CDD and PWD. They are often encountered by almost every fourth student (23.10%) and almost every third parent (30.45%). This speaks in favor of the importance of the number of disabled people and people with disabilities in Croatia and the number of contacts they make in everyday situations with the rest of society.

Table 3. Pitying children with developmental disabilities and persons with disabilities

4TH GRADE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS	I feel sorry for children with developmental disabilities and people with disabilities.					
	STUDENTS			PARENTS		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	302 (95,57)	11 (3,48)	3 (0,95)	247 (92,86)	10 (3,56)	9 (3,38)

The results shown in Table 3 confirm the impressions of persons with disabilities, as well as parents of children with developmental disabilities, which were the reason for conducting the research. Most of both students (95.57%) and parents (92.86%) answered - yes, they feel sorry for children with developmental disabilities and people with disabilities.

Table 4. Level of discomfort in the vicinity or communication with children with developmental disabilities or persons with disabilities

4TH GRADE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS	I am uncomfortable being around or interacting with children with developmental disabilities or people with disabilities.					
	STUDENTS			PARENTS		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	26 (8,23)	59 (18,67)	231 (73,10)	6 (2,26)	9 (3,38)	251 (94,36)

An insight into the data in Table 4, which shows the self-assessment of feelings of embarrassment related to situations involving CDD and PWD, shows a significant difference between 4th grade elementary school students and their parents. 73.10%

of students claim that they are not uncomfortable being around children with disabilities and people with disabilities, while 94.36% of parents claim the same. Among students, compared to parents, there is a much higher percentage of those who are not sure if they are uncomfortable - students 18.67%, parents 3.38%. Every twelfth student confirmed the embarrassment. These results support the claims of other authors and earlier studies mentioned in the introduction, which say that negative and rejecting attitudes towards PWDs are more prevalent among children of primary school age, compared to the older population, which some authors explain by the lack of knowledge and experience in children compared to adults. The data from Table 5 are also related to this.

Table 5. Knowledge of 4th grade elementary school students about deaf people

4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I can become deaf because I play with a friend who is deaf.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	13 (4,11)	32 (10,13)	271 (85,76)

The data in Table 5 show that 14.24% of 4th grade elementary school students, children aged 9 to 11, believe that they may or aren't sure if they may become deaf if they play with a friend who is deaf. This is every seventh child, or according to estimates in relation to the number of students in an average class in Croatian primary schools - approximately three students per class. These data indicate a worrying level of ignorance among children in the 4th grade of elementary school, which significantly affects their willingness to include peers with developmental disabilities in their social circle.

Table 6. Inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in the social activities of students without disabilities

4TH GRADE STUDENTS	When I invite the whole class to my birthday, I will also invite a student with a developmental disability.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	229 (72,47)	68 (21,52)	19 (6,01)

This is exactly what the results of the research that can be read from Table 6 indicate. More than a quarter of the students would not or are not sure whether they would invite a student with developmental disabilities to their birthday, on the occasion when they invite the whole class, and the situation happens outside of educational environment. 6.01% of students answered directly - no, while 21.52% of students answered that they are not sure.

Table 7. Readiness of students without difficulties to socialize with blind or deaf children within the educational process

4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I would be fine if a child who can't hear or see or speak sits next to me in school.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	256 (81,01)	50 (15,82)	10 (3,17)

In the question in which we explored the willingness of students without difficulties to socialize with blind or deaf children within the educational situation, that is, within the class, a higher percentage of students expressed their willingness than in a similar situation outside the class. 81.01% of students would be okay with a child who cannot hear or see or speak sitting next to her/him in school.

Table 8. Attitude of parents of students regarding their child's friendship with a child with developmental disabilities

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I'm fine with my child having a friend with a disability.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	261 (98,12)	5 (1,88)	0 (0)

Table 9. Willingness of parents of students to include children with disabilities in social activities

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I would invite a child with a disability to my child's birthday party.		
	DA	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	256 (96,24)	10 (3,56)	0 (0)

Table 10. Willingness of parents of students for their child's cooperation with a child with a disability within the educational process

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I would be fine with a child with developmental disabilities sitting next to my child during class.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	224 (84,21)	39 (14,66)	3 (1,13)

Analysis and comparison of the data obtained from the answers of parents of 4th grade elementary school students, shown in Tables 8, 9 and 10, shows that the willingness of parents for their children to interact with children with disabilities, significantly decreases as the level of closeness and intensity of interaction increases. While 98.12% of parents of children without disabilities stated that they are okay with their child having a friend with a developmental disability, the percentage dropped slightly to 96.24% when it came to their willingness to invite a child with a disability

to their child's birthday. A significant drop was recorded in the highest measured closeness of interaction, sitting together in school, where 84.21% of parents answered that they would be fine if a child with developmental disabilities sat with their child during class. This is a drop of 13.91% in relation to the willingness of their child to have a friend with a disability.

Table 11. Self-assessment of students' parents' knowledge about people with disabilities

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I know how to communicate with people with various types of disabilities. I don't need more information.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	85 (31,95)	136 (51,13)	45 (16,92)

Table 12. Self-assessment of students' parents about passing on knowledge about PWD to their own children

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I explained to my child how to relate to children with developmental disabilities and people with various types of disabilities.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	243 (91,35)	18 (6,77)	5 (1,88)

Table 13. Self-assessment of students about talking with parents about PWD

4TH GRADE STUDENTS	I talked to my parents about people with disabilities.		
	YES	NOT SURE	NO
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	156 (49,36)	80 (25,32)	80 (25,32)

We asked parents and students complementary questions about whether they know how to communicate with people with disabilities and whether they talk to each other about it, to investigate how much and whether the topic of inclusion is present in the communication between parents and their children. The data presented in Tables 11, 12 and 13 show that less than a third of parents (31.95%) claim that they know how to communicate with people with various types of disabilities and that they do not need more information on that. At the same time, 91.35% of parents claim that they have explained to their child how to treat children with developmental disabilities and people with various types of disabilities. However, less than half of those same children remember that conversation, 49.36% of them answered affirmatively to the statement that they talked to their parents about people with disabilities.

Table 14. Situational question for parents of students about communication with a blind person

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	In a full tram, you are standing next to a blind person with a white cane accompanied by a sighted person. A blind person has his wallet sticking out of his open bag. What will you do?		
OFFERED ANSWERS	a) I will alert the accompanying person to close the blind person's bag.	b) Nothing, the blind person has an accompanying person to take care of them on this occasion.	c) I will warn a blind person that his bag is open.
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	147 (55,26)	2 (0,75)	117 (43,99)

Table 15. Situational question for parents of students about communication with a deaf person

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	You are waiting for your turn in an institution. There is a deaf person standing next to you who did not perceive that the clerk was telling her it was her turn. What will you do?		
OFFERED ANSWERS	a) I will gently push the deaf person in the direction of the office.	b) Nothing, calling customers is a clerk's job.	c) I will get the attention of the deaf person and tell her to come into the office.
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	25 (9,40)	2 (0,75)	239 (89,85)

To investigate the level of knowledge and willingness of parents of students to communicate with PWDs, we asked them specific situational questions related to blind, and deaf people.

As can be seen in Table 14, to the question: "In a full tram, you are standing next to a blind person with a white cane accompanied by a sighted person. A blind person has his wallet sticking out of his open bag. What will you do?", more than half of the parents (55.26%) circled the answer a) "I will warn the accompanying person to close the blind person's bag.", although in the answers they also had the option c) "I will warn a blind person that his bag is open." chosen by 43.99% of parents.

According to the data in Table 15, to the question: "You are waiting for your turn in some institution. There is a deaf person standing next to you who did not perceive that the clerk was telling her it was her turn. What will you do?", almost every tenth parent, 9.40% of them, would choose physical contact, gently push the deaf person in the direction of the office, without warning or attracting attention. The majority, 89.85%, would answer it c) "I will attract the attention of a person who cannot hear and tell her to come into the office."

The data from Table 14 tells us that most parents would do the wrong thing - even though they have good intentions in relation to the blind person. That is, they would choose not to include a person with a disability in communication, even though the situation directly relates to them, and they can address them. Instead, they would choose to communicate with an accompanying person.

The data from Table 15 show that a significant part of parents would act wrongly in relation to a deaf person, even though they intend to help.

Table 16. Situational question for students about the attitude towards a blind person

4TH GRADE STUDENTS	You're walking down the street. You see a blind person standing next to an intersection, and the traffic light is not working. What will you do?		
OFFERED ANSWERS	a) I will take a blind person by the hand and lead her/him across the road.	b) Nothing, I'll keep walking.	c) I will ask a blind person if she/he needs help crossing the road.
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	80 (25,32)	8 (2,53)	228 (72,15)

We also asked students a situational question, to measure their willingness to help a person with a disability, as well as the method of communication and approach they would choose. To the question: "You are walking down the street. You see a blind person standing next to an intersection, and the traffic light is not working. What will you do?", every fourth student (25.32%) answered a) "I will take the blind person by the hand and lead her/him across the road.", although one of two alternative answers was c) "I will ask the blind person if she/he needs help in crossing the road.", which chose 72.15% of students. The data show us that more than a quarter of 4th grade elementary school students wouldn't know how to act correctly, even though they have good intentions.

Table 17. Situational question to students' parents about readiness to communicate with PWDs about disability

PARENTS OF THE 4TH GRADE STUDENTS	You are in a pastry shop with your child. A person with unusual movements, a facial deformity or an amputated arm/leg is sitting at the table next to you. The child points and asks loudly why that person looks like that. What will you do?		
OFFERED ANSWERS	a) I will tell my child that it is not nice to behave like that and explain what I assume is the person's condition.	b) I will take my child to ask that person if they can tell us something more about themselves, because the child is curious.	c) I will leave the pastry shop with my child, because I don't feel comfortable in that situation.
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	253 (95,11)	13 (4,89)	0 (0)

Table 18. Situational question to students about readiness to communicate with PWDs about disability

4TH GRADE STUDENTS	You are eating cake in a pastry shop. Person sitting at the table next to you looks different than the others. She has unusual movements, does not speak clearly, her face or some part of her body does not look like others. What are you going to do?			
OFFERED ANSWERS	a) I will go to that person and ask her what I am curious about.	b) I will watch the odd person and comment on it with my friends.	c) I will leave the pastry shop because I am not comfortable around such a person.	d) I wouldn't watch the person or comment on her, even though I'm curious.
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
TOTAL	51 (16,14)	5 (1,58)	7 (2,22)	253 (80,06)

Finally, we asked both parents and students a situational question to determine the level of readiness to directly approach an unknown person with a disability and talk about disability with them. As can be seen from the data in Tables 17 and 18, in the same situation, eating in a pastry shop where a person with a visible physical disability is sitting at the next table, the students expressed greater openness towards direct contact with PWDs than their parents. 16.14% of children declared that they would go to that person and ask them what they wanted to know, compared to 4.89% of parents who would take their child to a PWD to ask them if they could tell them something more about themselves.

CONCLUSION

Are you going to initiate communication, let alone friendship, with a person who is blind or deaf, has Down syndrome, an intellectual disability, if you think or are not sure that this difficulty or disability can transfer to you by the mere fact of interacting with that person? The question seems outdated. However, it is very current. The research presented by the Creative Backbone Center showed that every seventh child between the ages of 9 and 11 in Croatia thinks they can become deaf, or is not sure if they can, if they play with a deaf friend. This information alone, even separated from the other research findings mentioned in the discussion, is sufficient to indicate the necessity and urgency of the need for the application of more elaborate and comprehensive educational content in preschool and elementary school, on communication and attitude towards children with difficulties and people with disabilities. Equally, the research showed that it is also necessary to educate their parents, because regardless of age, ignorance and the resulting discomfort and confusion are present.

Teachers from the nine elementary schools where the research was conducted, during the preparation phase, estimated that there is not enough child-friendly content on inclusion in the curricula for the lower grades of elementary schools in

Croatia. They point out that students learn about differences and know that they should be “polite”, “good” and “careful”, but they do not know what this means in practice and how to apply it in concrete daily interaction with children with developmental difficulties and people with disabilities. But there is interest for that topic. Asked within the scope of this research, 76.89% of students expressed their desire to learn more about CDD and PWDs at school. This is also supported by 92.86% of their parents.

As described earlier, many authors agree that in the early stages of education, positive exposure of children to inclusion topics, by direct or indirect introduction to children with developmental difficulties or people with disabilities - in a short period of time can remove negative attitudes, neutralize stereotypes and strengthen desirable behavioral models.

Applied, such an approach would have long-term and significant impacts on creating an inclusive society with equal opportunities for all. Because where communication ends, discrimination begins.

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