



# Addy and Uno: The Efficacy of an Off-Broadway Musical in Enhancing Sensitivity Toward Peers With Disabilities

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## ABSTRACT

Forty-four students completed qualitative surveys following *Addy & Uno, An Off-Broadway Puppet Musical*, which teaches about disabilities, empathy and kindness. The show also seeks to promote a stop bullying platform in the schools. Following the musical intervention, the participants expressed favorable opinions and found the puppets, actors, themes and storylines to be highly appealing and educational. Following the Musical, the students showed increased knowledge about disabilities and bullying.

## INTRODUCTION

Students with disabilities are not only a more frequent target of negative attitudes in the classroom, but are less accepted, have fewer friends, socialize less often, and report more loneliness than their typical peers. Unfortunately, simply including children with disabilities in the classroom does not ensure that typical children will increase their interest, positive attitudes, and intentions towards individuals with disabilities.

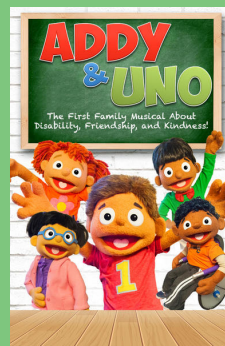
High quality interventions that effectively educate typical children about disabilities and encourage children to befriend individuals with disabilities are paramount to enhancing the cognitive attitudes, behavioral intentions and socialization of typical children towards their peers with disabilities. Conversely, if programs are not developed to promote acceptance and social integration, then children with disabilities will be less accepted by their typically developing peers in the classroom (Favazza, Phillepson, & Kumar, 2000). Aligned with the Pilot Musical and based on the *Realabilities Comic Book Series Curriculum*, *Addy & Uno, An Off-Broadway Puppet Musical* to educate typical children about disabilities and to promote a stop bullying platform in and out of the schools. *Addy & Uno* is a 50-minute puppet musical, which features five characters with disabilities (Autism, ADHD, physical, visual and hearing disabilities), who harness their special strengths associated with their disabilities to save their school from bullies.

## PARTICIPANTS

Forty-four 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (21 females, 20 males, and three students who did not identify their gender) filled out a qualitative survey to assess the appeal and efficacy of the musical following the viewing. All of the students attended a Jewish Day School in Manhattan, NY.

## PROCEDURE

Participants were recruited from a Jewish Day School in Manhattan, New York. After watching a The fourth teachers at the Jewish Day School administered qualitative surveys. In addition to demographic information, students were asked the following about the show: 1) What they enjoyed most, 2) What they would change, 3) What they learned, 4) How they may feel different post-show, 5) How to define "disability," 6) How to define "bullying," 7) What the characters should do next in the show and 8) If they would see the show again. Two researchers independently reviewed the qualitative responses and determined the key emerging themes.



## RESULTS

Regarding enjoyment, they enjoyed the disability and stop-bullying lessons from the show and appreciated that the bullies learned their lesson. Moreover, they relished the likeness between the puppets and actors and enjoyed the music. In terms of what to change, many students said they wouldn't change anything, while others preferred that actors used puppets and that sports would be included. Regarding what they learned, the participants said they learned to: treat people equally; to be nice to everyone and to peers with disabilities, to not bully, and to see that everyone has different abilities. Regarding if the show made them feel different, many students remarked that the show made them feel grateful for all they have and can do and expanded their knowledge of disabilities and of how to treat others. The participants defined "disability" as something you can't do or as a part of your body that doesn't work well and "bullying" as being mean, disrespectful, picking on someone, teasing or treating someone badly.

In terms of their favorite character, the majority of students selected Uno with autism (17; 38%), and others selected RJ with a physical disability (6; 13.6%), Melody with a visual disability (6; 13.6%), Addy with ADHD (3; .06%), the female bully (3; .06%), the male math snake (2;.04%) and female math snake (1;.02%) as their favorite characters.

Regarding next steps, the students recommended that the characters make a band, take a school trip, play sports, participate in more competitions, help more people with disabilities and teach more bullies to be nice. Finally, 24 (54%) students said they would see the show again because it has beautiful lessons, is fun, and has great music and 15 (34%) said they would not see the show again, since they live far away or since they already saw it.

## DISCUSSION

Additionally, these findings do support the efficacy of an Extended Contact Model, wherein typical children successfully learn about the realities of hypothetical peers with disabilities through story-telling and role-playing/drama (Campbell et al., 2003). Students not only found the puppets, actors and themes highly appealing, but they learned a significant amount about disabilities, bullying, empathy and kindness through this storytelling and drama medium. The researchers look forward to extending this storytelling media via Virtual Reality and gaming.

**REAL ABILITIES**