



2024-25 Inclusive Programming Opportunities through Mikayla's Voice

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education announces inclusive programming for the 2024-2025 school year. **No cost to districts – Grant funded.** Mikayla's Voice offers original programming to help build a positive and equitable school culture and ensure the well-being of your staff and students, and includes all of the following:

Two Inclusion Assemblies:

Two school-wide inclusion assemblies are held in which the book *Our Friend Mikayla* is shared. One of the presenters is a student or young adult with a disability who also shares their personal story. Questions are encouraged to direct further discussion about having a friend with a disability. Each presentation concludes with an invitation for all students to serve as Mikayla's "Voice." High school students will be encouraged to serve as mentors to read books to the younger students and complete several enrichment lessons too.

One Inclusive Art Project:

Participating schools choose one of the two projects in which 24 students of all abilities will work together to create a large-scale artwork to celebrate diversity and promote equity and inclusion in your school. Most important is the time your students spend together, what they learn from and about each other, and their pride when their art is permanently displayed as a beautiful reminder that it is always possible to include everyone!

Wheels of Friendship®:

Inspired by Mikayla and her art class, Wheels of Friendship is an original art program that incorporates wheelchair painting and tissue paper decoupage, both mediums that offer success for children of all abilities. Together the group of students choose the theme for their art and decide how best to represent diversity and inclusion. When joined by students with other disabilities, they find creative ways to include their friend's unique abilities into the artwork. As they incorporate sign language, interesting textures, or braille, the artists are learning, and will ultimately teach others who view their art, about different challenges and supports.

Kaya's Kaleidoscope:

Kaya's Kaleidoscope is created when students complete their own individual canvases that work together in an interactive, almost puzzle-like design. Symbolic of school communities, every canvas is as essential to the mural as each student to their school.

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features wheelchair tracks, tissue paper decoupage, and a yellow spot. The canvases can be arranged and rotated any way, creating an endless number of options... each as unique and beautiful as the next. The interactive exhibits allow thousands of students to engage with the art and consider its many lessons: we are all individuals, each important to our school and community, connected in many ways, and definitely better together.

Artwork Unveiling and Installation:

Once complete, all artists help unveil their collaborative artwork and share its message with the entire school community before it is permanently installed in their school as a reminder to celebrate diversity and promote equity and inclusion. This culminating, year-end school-wide celebration also provides an opportunity to highlight individual and class projects based on the books or lessons and revisit Mikayla's Voice message and mission with all students.

Inclusion Books:

Mikayla's Voice has published four children's books written and illustrated by kids for other kids about having a friend with a disability. Mikayla was born with a brain injury, Jeffrey has Down syndrome, Brady is challenged by autism, and Dot has a yellow spot, but these books are not about the main characters or their disabilities. They are about friendship. And kindness. Two of each book are provided for your elementary school library and/or for your middle/high school students to share with younger students in your district.

- *Our Friend Mikayla*
- *High Fives and A Big Heart*
- *Super Brady ~ Always on the Move!*
- *The Spot*

Mikayla's Bookshelf Enrichment Website:

"Mikayla's Bookshelf" includes electronic versions of all four books making it easier to share them with all classes, students, and families. The books are just the foundation upon which enrichment lessons for teachers and/or older students build to introduce and/or reinforce Mikayla's Voice message and missions.

Mikayla's Voice has partnered with Drs. Dever and Lindstrom as part of an ongoing program assessment for improvement and replication. Participating schools are required to help with pre and post data collection to measure the global quality of the programs and the ability to improve school culture and community.

Schools interested in participating can contact:

Rita Cheskiewicz, Executive Director, at 570-690-7113 or rita@mikaylasvoice.org
Sharon Jones, Program Director, at 484-854-1355 or sharon@mikaylasvoice.org
Schools accepted on a first come, first serve basis.



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