

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

AboutFace developed these tips with assistance from children, parents and educators to help you create a comfortable and supportive environment in your classroom for the child with a facial difference.

1. Educate yourself

When you know that you will be receiving a child with a facial difference to your class, educate yourself with information on the child's condition before your first meeting.

2. Talk to the parents in advance

It is critical to set up a meeting with the parents prior to meeting the child. This will allow you the opportunity to ask direct questions related to the child's condition, academic history, and other special needs without reservation.

3. Meet the child one-on-one

Meeting the child individually will go a long way to helping the child get comfortable with you as the new teacher and encourage a rapport early in the relationship. Don't hesitate to ask the student what they think they need from you.

4. Never single out the child

It is very important to remember that a child with a facial difference often does not need special attention. Unless it is relevant to other aspects of learning (visual impairment or hearing), don't single out the child on where they sit (front of the class versus back of the class) let them choose or be part of your rotation schedule. Treat them as you would every child with the same expectations and opportunities. If they have any preferences, let them tell you.

5. Keep an eye out for "silent" teasing or bullying

Teasing and bullying can occur in front of teachers without them picking up on cues. Keep a sharp eye on non-verbal forms of teasing, such as staring, isolation or physical harassment, i.e. blocking, bumping, pushing, etc. Occasionally encourage discussions on teasing in the classroom in a general way to increase awareness and non-tolerance.

6. Modeling a positive attitude for the class and the school

As the teacher of a child with a facial difference, you have the opportunity to model positive attitudes towards facial differences in your school. Others, who will model your behaviour, will pick up your level of comfort and acceptance.

You can find more tips and resources in the Facing Differences Program Guide.