

I'm Here.

by Peter H. Reynolds

Educator Activity Guide

Written by:

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The Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC)



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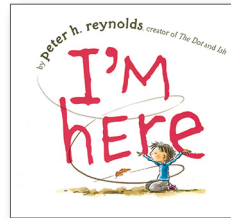
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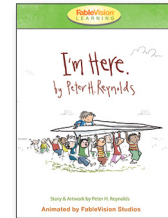
Share “I’m Here” With Your Students

To fully benefit from the activities in this guide, you’ll need to share *I’m Here* with your students. Visit this website today to learn about the book and watch the film:

www.fablevisionlearning.com/imhere



Book



Film

Praise for “I’m Here”

“Eloquent, fanciful text and illustrations that sparkle with clarity combine to perfectly portray a solitary boy’s flight of imagination... this was written with children with autism in mind but encompasses a wider subject; any child who is isolated, introverted or simply self-contained will find something of him- or herself to recognize and appreciate here... an excellent selection, replete with warmth, originality and the promise of good things to come.”

- Kirkus Reviews, STARRED Book Review

The Team Behind This Guide and “I’m Here”



Southwest
Autism
Research &
Resource
Center

This guide was written by the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC.) SARRC’s mission is to advance research and provide a lifetime of support for individuals with autism and their families.

www.autismcenter.org



This guide was designed by FableVision Learning. Along with offering the *I’m Here* book, FableVision Learning creates and publishes best-in-class tools that engage students, helping them develop essential 21st Century skills.

www.fablevisionlearning.com



Peter H. Reynolds is a *New York Times* best-selling author and illustrator. Well known for his books *I’m Here*, *The Dot*, *Ish*, and *The North Star*, Reynolds inspires readers with his uplifting messages about the importance of authentic learning, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

www.peterhreynolds.com



The *I’m Here* book is published by Simon & Schuster, Inc., a global leader in the field of general interest publishing, providing consumers worldwide with a diverse range of quality books across a wide variety of genres and formats.

www.simonandschuster.com



The *I’m Here* film was created by FableVision Studios, a company dedicated to helping all learners reach their full potential and to telling “stories that matter, stories that move.” FableVision produces award-winning websites, games, activities, animated films, and mobile apps.

www.fablevisionstudios.com

A Note from Paul & Peter H. Reynolds...

Dear Readers,

Thank you for sharing *I'm Here* with your students. The work you're doing with this story will have an impact for years to come.

We hope you enjoy this guide, and we look forward to getting your feedback on how you're using the book and film with your students. One issue that bears special attention is the issue of children's "differences." While we understand there are some people who are sensitive to the issue of focusing on children's differences, we believe it is essential for young people to explore this concept in the classroom. The reality is that to fit in with their peers, children often zero in on any personal qualities that differ from the social "norm." It's our sincere hope that this classroom guide to *I'm Here* will help children deal with the everyday unfortunate — and sometimes ugly — pressure to conform and exclude others. We're optimistic that this guide will help young people become aware of and move BEYOND differences that can alienate other children.

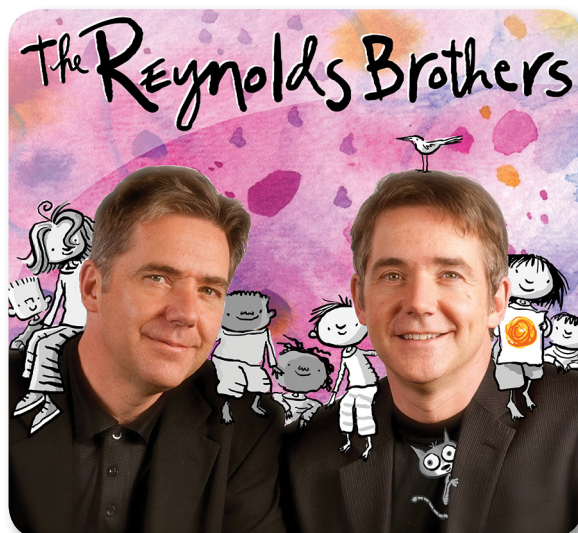
I'm Here is meant to spark honest conversations, bring to light spoken and unspoken barriers to inclusion, and move past the idea of tolerance to allow typical children to embrace and APPRECIATE the unique gifts, talents, and abilities of ALL their peers. We hope this guide provides children with valuable opportunities to engage their peers, develop and broaden communication skills, and change behaviors that may hurt others. We fully believe that the lessons learned through the book, this guide, and its extension activities will provide a transformational and enduring way to see the world — and help move it to a better place.

In closing, if you are interested in extended materials or curriculum, we highly recommend you explore SARRC's FRIEND Program. This inclusive social skills curriculum provides opportunities for students on the autism spectrum and related disorders to improve social communication skills in a natural setting, supported by peers, parents, educators, and therapists. For more information, visit: www.autismcenter.org.

We wish you and your students continued success on your journey!



Peter H. Reynolds, Author of *I'm Here*, FableVision Founder
Paul A. Reynolds, CEO of FableVision
www.fablevision.com



a family of companies



“I’m Here” – Activity

Title: Paper Airplanes

Grades: 2–5 — Est. Time: 15–20 min.

Learner Objectives:

- Students will discover something new about their classmates.
- Students will identify things they have in common with their classmates.
- Students will work together in pairs or small groups to problem solve.

Materials/Preparation:

- Lined notebook paper for each pair of students
- Pens/pencils for each pair

Attention Getter:

- Ask students:
 - > Look around and observe the many differences in the kids in the classroom.
 - > Do you think you have something in common with each person in this classroom?
- Explain to the students they will be learning about noticeable differences and things we may have in common with our peers.
- After reading the book *I’m Here* or watching the short film version, students will practice finding common things with a classmate and discuss the experience as a class.

Lesson:

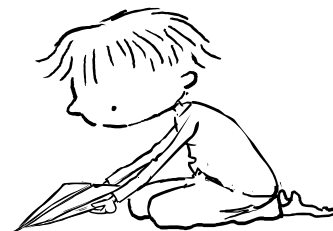
- Read *I’m Here* or watch the film. Instruct the students to pay attention to the group of kids in the story and see if they can find things the kids may have in common.
- After reading the book or watching the film, ask the students:
 - > What was different about the boy outside the group and the other kids? (Answers may vary; there is no specific answer.)

- > Why was the boy by himself? (Answers may vary.)
- > Did any kids become friends with the boy? (The girl who caught the paper airplane and found him.)
- > Why did the girl go to the boy? (Answers may vary.)
- Discuss with the students that even if someone looks or acts differently, we can still try to find things in common to talk about or do together. We can’t always judge someone based on the differences we see.

Demonstration:

- Select a student as a volunteer to be your “partner.”
- Have the students help you identify the differences between you and your partner. List the responses on one side of the chalkboard or whiteboard. (For example: He’s a student and you are a teacher, gender, hair color, eye color, the way you dress, etc.)
- Then have the students think of some things you and your partner have in common (hair color, etc.) and list them on the other side of the board.
- Point out to the students that the lists so far were made by looks only.
- Ask your partner questions to find other similarities/differences, such as “What is your favorite color?”; “How many siblings do you have?”; etc. Keep asking until you have two more things in common to write on the board.

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"I'm Here" – Activity

Title: Paper Airplanes (Continued)

Grades: 2–5 — Est. Time: 15–20 min.

Review:

- Ask the students:
 - > Did we know some things we have in common just by looking at each other?
 - > Did we find out things we have in common other than the way we look?
 - > How did it feel to learn more about someone and find things in common?

Activity:

- Pair each student with a classmate he or she is not friends with or does not know very well. (To make this activity go faster, and maybe more fun, break the kids down into groups of four.)
- Give each group time to talk about things they may have in common (i.e., same color of hair, favorite movie, same number of siblings, etc.).
- Instruct each group to take out a piece of lined notebook paper and ask them to make a paper airplane. (Another option for students who cannot make a paper airplane is to wad the paper into a ball.)
- Inside one of the folds of the airplane/ball they should write two things they discover they have in common.
- To celebrate difference, when everyone is finished, have them throw their plane/ball into the air.
- The students should pick up an airplane/ball (that is not their own) and read aloud what is written inside.
- Optional: They can guess which group they think the plane/ ball belongs to. (This will depend on the size of the class and amount of time allotted for the activity.)



Discussion:

- Discuss with the students what they have learned about their classmates and the experience of looking for things in common with someone else. For example:
 - > Was it easy or hard to find common things with different people? Why or why not?
 - > Did you think you could find something in common with everybody in the class?
 - > Do you think you could find something in common with anyone you meet after this activity?

Application:

- Encourage students to find two things they have in common with two other classmates during free time (before or after school, lunch, recess, etc.).
- Optional: Assign the students to specifically write down the two classmates' names and what they found in common to turn in one week later.

Academic Standards:

- Language Arts – Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Thinking and Reasoning – Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.
- Working With Others – Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations.
- Behavioral Studies – Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.



"I'm Here" – Activity

Title: So You Think You Know Me!

Grades: 3–5 — Est. Time: 20–30 min.

Learner Objectives:

- Students will share information about themselves with another classmate.
- Students will discover how perceptions about others may be incorrect.
- Students will conduct an interview with a classmate to learn more about him/her.
- Students will identify things they have in common with their classmates.

Materials/Preparation:

- Paper for each pair of students
- Pen/pencil for each pair of students

Attention Getter:

- Ask the students if they have ever watched an interview with a favorite singer or movie star.
- Tell them interviews are one way people can learn more about someone they are interested in.
- Ask them if they would like to interview someone or be interviewed.
- Instruct the students that their classmates are interesting people and that they will have the opportunity to take turns interviewing someone to learn more about him or her.



Lesson:

- Read *I'm Here* or show the film. Instruct the students to watch the kids in the story and think about someone in the story they would want to interview.
- After reading the book or watching the film, ask:
 - > Who would you interview in the story and why? What do you already know about the child you chose?
 - > What questions would you ask the child you chose?
- Discuss with the students that based on what little they saw of someone, they were able to make assumptions of what that person was like. Sometimes those assumptions may be correct, but sometimes they are not.

Demonstration:

- Select one student to volunteer to be interviewed. You will demonstrate for the students what the interview will be like.
- Explain that this is the way the interview will be conducted. The interviewer will say "I like _____, and I think you like _____ because _____." (Give a simple reason as to why they think the person shares this interest.) For example: "I like sports, and I think you like sports because you wear a shirt with the name of a football team on it." The person being interviewed can only answer "correct" or "incorrect."
- Demonstrate your first statement, such as "I like superheroes, and I think you like superheroes because Batman is on your backpack."
- If the student responds "incorrect," then proceed to another example and continue looking for at least one common interest.

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“I’m Here” – Activity

Title: So You Think You Know Me! (Continued)

Grades: 3–5 — Est. Time: 20–30 min.

Review:

- Although interviews don’t typically work this way, this activity is designed to encourage students to look at how they think about their peers based only on how they look and act. Ask the students:
 - > What do you think you have in common with one of the characters in the book or film?
 - > Think about what you have in common with your classmates.

Activity:

- Pair each student with a classmate he or she is not friends with or does not know very well.
- Have them choose who will be the interviewer (inquirer) and who will be interviewed (responder).
- The inquirer is to think about or write down two characteristics about themselves that they think they have in common with their partner.
- Next, the inquirer will present their information to the responder by saying, “I like _____, and I think you like _____ because _____.”
- The responder can only respond by stating if the information is “correct” or “incorrect.”
- If the response is “incorrect,” the inquirer will continue to probe further until they find at least one common interest.
- Once each pair has found a common interest, have them repeat the exercise with another partner and switch roles (i.e., inquirers will now be responders and vice versa).

Discussion:

- Discuss their experiences trying to discover some of their classmates’ interests based purely on perceptions (what they see or know about them before the activity).

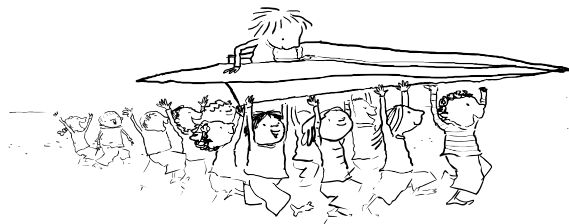
- Ask directed questions such as:
 - > How many times did you accurately guess your partner’s likes?
 - > Did you have enough information about your partner to correctly guess?
 - > Do you think our first impressions of people are always correct?
 - > What can you do to learn more about a person?

Application:

- Encourage students to practice learning more about other classmates they may not know well.
- Optional: Assign students to interview another classmate and write down two common interests they discovered.

Academic Standards:

- Language Arts – Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Thinking and Reasoning – Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument.
- Behavioral Studies – Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance and physical development affect human behavior.



“I’m Here” – Activity

Title: Describe Me

Grades: 3–5 — Est. Time: 30–45 min.

Learner Objectives:

- Students will write descriptive words about pictures of people.
- Students will discover and compare different perceptions of their peers.
- Students will discuss their experiences as a class.

Materials/Preparation:

- Pen/pencil for each student
- Paper for each student (lined notebook paper may be easiest)
- Large picture of a well-known person (who the students would know) to display for the entire class
- Pictures of people/characters (can be famous people, fictional characters or unknown people from magazines, newspapers, etc.). Have one for each student. Also use one picture of an individual with an observable disability (i.e., using sign language, in a wheelchair, walking with a cane, etc.) for each group of three to four students.

Attention Getter:

- Show a picture of someone all of the students should know, such as a singer, sports celebrity, movie star, the president, etc. Ask if anyone knows who the person is.
- Once the students identify and recognize the person in the picture, ask if anyone really knows the person (for example, if anyone played with this person at recess last week).
- Explain that sometimes we think we know a lot about a person just by what we see, but we can learn a lot more from spending time with them and getting to know them better. It’s also important to keep in mind that we don’t always see the same things in people that others see.

- Tell the students that after reading *I’m Here* or watching the short film, they will describe different people by looking at pictures, and then look at how others describe them.

Lesson:

- Read the *I’m Here* book or show the film. Instruct the students to think about how they would describe one of the kids in the story.
- After reading the book or watching the film, have the students describe the little boy in the story, and then have them describe the little girl who was kind to the little boy. Optional: List the descriptions on the board.
- Ask the students to think about how the other kids in the story may have described the little boy and little girl if asked. Optional: Compare responses with prior ones written on the board.

Demonstration:

- Direct the students’ attention to the picture used at the beginning.
- Ask the students to write three descriptive words about the person in the picture on a piece of paper.
- Ask one student to write his/her three descriptive words on the board.
- Ask a second student to write his/her three descriptive words on the board. (This will allow everyone to think about and participate in this activity. Also, the second child who writes on the board won’t be influenced by the words already written on the board.)
- Talk about any similarities or differences in what all of the students wrote about this person.
- Demonstrate with a piece of paper how it will be folded and used for the next activity.

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“I’m Here” – Activity

Title: Describe Me (Continued)

Grades: 3-5 — Est. Time: 30-45 min.

Review:

- Discuss with the students any similarities or differences in the descriptive items written on the board. Were they different from or similar to the descriptions all of the kids wrote down? Remember all of these items are describing one person, based on either the picture or what the students have seen about this person.
- Ask the students if they think the descriptions are correct. Why or why not?
- Refer back to the book or film and ask the students if they think their descriptions of the little boy and the little girl would be the same as the descriptions of the other kids in the story.

Activity:

- Arrange students into small groups of three or four. It may be easier to arrange each group so they are sitting in a circle facing each other.
- Give each student a picture of a person; explain they don’t need to know who it is, but it’s OK if they do. (Remember to include one picture of an individual with a disability in each group.)
- Instruct each student to write three words to describe the person in the picture on their paper (funny, nice, pretty, strong, etc.) and fold the paper where they wrote the words so no one can see what they wrote.
- Once everyone is finished, have each student pass their paper and the picture to the person on their left within the group.
- Each student should have a new picture and a folded piece of paper. They will now do the same exercise; write three words to describe the person in the picture and fold the paper down again.
- Continue passing and writing words until everyone in the group receives their original picture and paper back.
- One at a time, have the students unfold and read the papers to their group to discover and compare what everyone has written about the person on their picture.

Discussion:

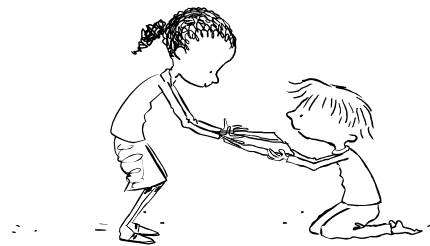
- Discuss the experience as a class. Suggested questions might be:
 - > Did everyone in your group come up with the same descriptive words?
 - > Do you think your descriptions of the person are accurate?
 - > How can you learn more about a person to see if your descriptions were right?
 - > Is it always good to make quick judgments about people based on a picture or first impression? Why or why not?

Application:

- Encourage your students to think about how they would describe the kids in their class and if their perceptions are correct.
- Instruct your students to choose someone in the class they don’t know very well and write down three things to describe that person. Then, over the next few days have them try to learn more about that person and see if their description was right or if it changes.

Academic Standards:

- Language Arts – Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
- Thinking and Reasoning – Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.
- Behavioral Studies – Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.



“I’m Here” – Conversation Starter

Title: Everyone’s the Same

Grades: 2–5 — Est. Time: 10–15 min.

Learner Objectives:

- Students will become aware of differences among their classmates and members of their community.
- Students will learn why differences are beneficial and make each person unique.

Lesson:

- Read *I’m Here* or show the film and instruct the students to look closely at all of the children in the story and see if they are all the same.

Discussion:

- This activity can be done as a whole class, or you can pair each student with a classmate he or she is not friends with or does not know very well.
- Ask students to imagine how it would be if everyone was exactly the same. For example, if everyone dressed the same, ate the same food, liked the same music, went to the same places, talked and sounded the same, thought alike, had the same feelings, etc.
- Suggested discussion questions:
 - > What do you think would happen if everyone was the same?
 - > What would happen if the players on the baseball team were the same (e.g., the game would be predictable, there would be no challenge, etc.)?
 - > What if everyone in school felt the same (good or bad feelings)?
 - > Would it be boring if all kids dressed the exact same, wore their hair the same way, had the same backpacks and ate the same lunch?
 - > Would things be boring over time?

Application:

- Have students draw two pictures:
 1. One picture with everything the same (i.e., the same house, trees, flowers, etc.)
 2. One picture with different things (different colored flowers and cars, different sized people, etc.). Have students share their drawings with the class and discuss which one is their favorite and why.

Academic Standards:

- Language Arts – Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Thinking and Reasoning – Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.
- Behavioral Studies – Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.
- Visual Arts – Understands the characteristics and merits of one’s own artwork and the artwork of others.

