

Evidence Based Research on **PLAYFAIR TEAMS**

A DISABILITY – SOCIAL JUSTICE – INCLUSION STRATEGY

(Elementary & Secondary Schools - 2012)

Gary Bunch



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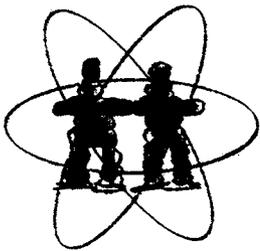
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PLAYFAIR TEAMS (Elementary)

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PlayFair Teams is a student leadership opportunity focused on Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion. Despite the focus on disability as an issue of social justice, PlayFair Teams is not a special education program. It is an all-student program designed to bring interested students together in equity to address issues of social justice and disability.

Equity is an important point as most programs for students with disabilities are based on a giver – receiver relationship between typical students and students with disabilities. So long as we depend on a relationship based in a charitable approach, equity will not be achieved. Students with disabilities will spend their school years on the fringes of school society. PlayFair Teams emphasizes that Team members are equal in contributing to the Team from their abilities and needs.

PlayFair Teams was developed by the Marsha Forest Centre of Toronto. You may have heard of Circle of Friends. That, and other strategies designed to support students with disabilities being used world-wide, come from the Marsha Forest Centre. People around the world are learning that social justice requires that we develop positive programs designed to include those with disabilities fully in society.

There is no cost involved in starting a PlayFair Team. A Teacher Advisor is needed in the same way that a teacher is needed to coach a school team, or to lead any other co-curricular program. The specific role of a PlayFair Team is to develop an activity, for instance, a presentation, which informs Team members of issues of Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion. The Team conducts its activity in the school to inform themselves, other students, and their teachers of issues of Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion. Informing others, the dynamic driving PlayFair Teams, reaches out to students and teachers in other schools, even to informing the students' families and others in their community. Reaching out is limited only by the creativity and energy of the students involved.

The Marsha Forest Centre provides guidance on initiating a PlayFair Team, a Teacher Advisor Manual, an interactive CD-ROM resource, and a cap and t-shirt uniform for each PlayFair Team member. Additional guidance is provided as needed, though the school takes ownership of the Team as it continues from year to year. A PlayFair Team website is available for Teams to communicate with each other and to share information on activities.

PlayFair Teams is in the early stages of being introduced to schools following a lengthy pilot phase. A number of Greater Toronto Area school at the elementary and secondary levels have begun Teams. Teams also have begun in Illinois, New Zealand, and Bahrain. A basic aspect of PlayFair Teams is that students can join a Team at the elementary school level and continue as a PlayFair Team member through the secondary school level. The sooner students begin to learn about Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion and the longer the learning, the better.

Does PlayFair Teams have an effect on the students involved? During our pilot phase we collected data on an elementary school audience attending a PlayFair Team presentation. Data also was collected from secondary students on their experiences as PlayFair Team members. We are pleased at the strength of student learning from both experiences. Data analysis provides evidence-based support for the value of PlayFair Teams. The data and reports from teachers and school administrators indicate that PlayFair Teams alters the relationship between typical students & their peers with disabilities, and that there is school-wide effect that goes beyond Team members.

As you are an elementary school, we have attached the analysis of the elementary student response. It seems that young students watching a skit prepared by elementary level students understand the messages underlying the skit. Their responses touched on many issues of Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion.

RESEARCH – BASED EVIDENCE ON PLAYFAIR TEAMS

The following research provides evidence on the responses of a Grade 3-4 student audience to PlayFair Teams skits on Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion. Students observed a 20-minute presentation developed by a similarly aged PlayFair Team from another school. Following the presentation students completed a 4-item evaluation form. Teachers explained to students that there would be no teacher-led discussion of the skits. The objective was to find out what students felt they had learned without interpolation by teachers.

The 4 questions were:

- After watching the skits, what do you think PlayFair Team means?
- Did you enjoy the skits? Circle Yes or No. Why?
- What do you think one main message of the skits would be?
- What is one thing that you have learned from watching the skits?

Data analysis was based on a qualitative approach to grounded material, specifically the constant comparative method, to develop categories of response.

From their responses on the 4-item evaluation form completed following the PlayFair Team presentation, it seems that the Grade 3-4 audience members learned a great deal. Analysis of comments resulted in 12 categories of response. All indicated that the audience understood the focus of message the Team was presenting, that people should accept and respect difference in others.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was that the great majority of those completing the evaluation form felt that they had learned from the

presentation. Though a few students said that they has learned little, mostly due to difficulty in hearing the presenters in the gymnasium setting, most said that they had learned something of value. Often this was expressed simply, “Yes, because it teaches us a great lesson how to play fair.” Others among the 8 to 10 year old audience were more articulate in noting what the lesson was, for example, “It teaches kids to not think of someone differently” and “I learned you shouldn’t bully others because of how they look.”

Details of responses are provided in the following pages.

Those who developed PlayFair Teams acquired valuable information on the strategy. It is clear in the responses that students as young as 8 years can teach each other important values with regard to differences as exemplified through disabilities. There was strong indication that students, after watching the presentation, felt personal responsibility to accept, respect, and include others. It was obvious that the students know that their peers with disabilities are treated unfairly. It was equally obvious that the students also know what should be done to create a positive, mutually respectful community for all.

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GRADE 3-4 RESPONSE CATEGORIES TO WATCHING PRIMARY GRADE PLAYFAIR TEAM SKITS

- **Overall Learning from the Skits**
- **Valuing Individual Equality**
- **Accepting Difference**
- **Including Others**
- **Not Bullying Others**
- **Treating Others Fairly**
- **Doing Unto Others**
- **Helping Others**
- **Being Nice and Kind**
- **Being Friendly**
- **Respecting Others**
- **Teamwork**

Notes:

1. Language and spelling are as written by the students. Where language/spelling is unclear, clarification is provided.
2. The skit may be accessed through the Marsha Forest Centre website.

OVERALL LEARNING FROM THE SKITS

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- Because (the skits) were a lttel bet (bit) funny and you learn something new.
- Yes, because it showb (showed) us bisobities (disabilities).
- It techis (teaches) a lessen.
- I liked it because it teaches you something.
- Because they teach a Lesson.
- I liked it because it teached us some lessons.
- I enjoyed the skits because it tells you something.

3/9

- I enjoyed it because it teaches us a lesoans.
- Because it teaches you a lesen.
- I enjoyed it because it tought me things.
- It teaches Kids to not think of someone differently.
- It tech me suthing (something).
- It teachis you important lisins (lessons).

4/9

- They were good skits hand (had) good massages (messages).
- I learned that we should help each other.
- I enjoyed the skits because it taught me a lesson.
- I have learned to treat everyone fairly.
- It taught me not to be a bully and help each other.
- I learned you shouldn't bully others because of how they look.

4/10

- I enjoyed it because I like the meaning of it.
- Because it taught us to be nice and kind to people who look like their diffren.
- Yes, because it teaches us a great lesson how to play fair.
- Yes, because everybody play with people who had prombles (problems).
- Yes, because it teach me to play fair.
- Yes, because we learned a lot of things.
- Because it is grate shows you how you would feel if you block (broke) your leg that way.
- I liked it because it sends a message.
- It showed how we should be fair to people who are disabled in any form. I like it dosit (doesn't) matr (matter) if Blind or have a broke leg people wel (will) be frind stel (still).

Because it teaches you whoever you are your still the sam (same).

VALUING INDIVIDUAL EQUALITY

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- I liked it because it taught (taught) us how it may feel to be bullied.
- Everyone is just as smart (smart) as everyone else but they learn in a different way.
- It doesn't matter if you're big or small you still should help them.
- To feel good about yourself even if you're different.

3/9

- I learned that everybody has feelings.
- That if you don't know people to still help them.
- That people with disabilities are normal like everyone else.
- Just because they're different doesn't mean they're stupid just try helping.
- Not to feel bad about myself just because I'm different.
- You can do many of the things people do even if you're different.
- You should be proud to be who you are.
- I think it means it doesn't matter what you look like or whatever it matters what's in you.
- Just because someone is disabled doesn't mean they're useless.

4/10

- I think the main point is that playing fair is always right.
- I learned that it doesn't matter if she/he is popular or not. It's okay to just be someone's friend just like that.
- That just get around problems with your friends if they have a disability and change the game a little.
- I have learned, when I see a person that is blind whether it's a boy or girl, I help them play, and when they fall you help, and that is what I learned from watching the skits.
- No one is different you are all the same.
- The main thing is when you're in special Ed do not feel that you're dumb you get extra help.
- I learned to stand up to bullies.
- Make people happy not sad.
- I learned that it doesn't matter who you are to do something.
- If someone is disabled they are still people like you.
- How it feels when everyone is hurt. Don't get mad easily. It really means to play fair.
- I think it means to be fair and share with people while playing and be nice.
- If you are disabled or need special classes they shouldn't be treated differently!

ACCEPTING DIFFERENCE

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- Don't goug (judge) someone because there different.
- You shuden't (shouldn't) treat others bad because their different.

3/9

- To help pzople (people) tat (that) arz different, bacuse you no that's right.

4/9

- I learned you shouldn't bully others cause of how they talk.
- Not to think of people differently jut becacaus they need more help than you.
- Even though some people are different, other people shouldn't treat them differently.

4/10

- Hple (help) people that are dfert (different).

INCLUDING OTHERS

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- People will always help if you want like your blind and you can play they will help you play.

3/9

- I think one main message it doesn't (doesn't) matter what you are will still (still) play with you and not make fun of you.
- It means to never bully someone and never leave someone out.

4/9

- It was nice of them to ask the girl (playing the blind girl) if she wanted to play with them.
- To play with someone even if they are different.
- I think the main message is always let people join you play and never exclude people from games.
- I learned that excluding people from your game is very mean.
- That people could play people that have disabilities.

4/10

- Never care if the person has a disability you should still make them feel (feel) good by playing with them.
- That even if a friend of yours has a disability to not let him or her not play the game.
- It means when people get hurt, you help them and like people are blind, you help them because they can't see and also you could help the person who's blind, you hold her and said " I will help you play."
- It means that if people are different they can play to you don't exclude them.
- It means to have fun and how (who) cares if you're a blind (blind) or have a broken leg let them play and have fun.
- Try to call others when their alone.
- Yes I enjoy the skits because it is a good thing that everyone help each other.
- Like if there's someone having fun its only fair if your having fun to.
- Let every body play blind (blind) or hurt.

NOT BULLYING OTHERS

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- I learned not being bullying others.
- Don't bully other people.
- To not bully or push people around because they have a disability.

3/9

- Not to bully.
- To never bully someone.
- Don't bully our (other) kids.
- Bullying is wrong.
- Not to bully.

4/9

- The play fair Team means to not bully others and to treat everyone fairly.
- It means to stop picising (picking) on people.
- It show kids not to pick on people can't do stuff that you can.
- Don't listen to bulllys.
- You should not make fun of each other.
- Play fair, don't bully.
- I think the play Fair Team means when you should not bully others.
- It tought (taught) me not be a bully.

4/10

- To don't bully anyone with a disability or some thing else because we are all different.
- I think it is a team that means don't bully people that have disabilities because they have feelings too and it's mean to bully.
- Don't be a bully!
- I think it meant that "don't let bullies bother you".

TREATING OTHERS FAIRLY

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- To never make fun of people that go to special ed because they are just as important as the rest of us.
- Don't tease (tease) people that have divactys (disabilities).
- Don't tease (tease) other people just because your different.
- To not make fun of different people.
- You soudent (shouldn't) be man to somebody that's different.

3/9

- Even if people look funny don't make fun of anyone.
- It doesn't (doesn't) matter if your different we wont make fun of you.
- Tell us resons (reasons) we should not make fun of kids.
- Treat others fairly. Don't make fun of people that are different.
- When people are blind or in a wheelchair don't laugh at them.
- Just because (because) someone is different don't teases (tease) them.
- To not jud (judge) anyone badly with a disability.
- Don't be mean be fair.
- To not to make fun of to help her/him.
- Don't make fun help.

4/9

- Not to make fun of other people that are different.
- I think the main message would be not to make fun of each other.
- Not to say something about people with disabilities.
- Don't make fun of others if they go to specil-ed.

4/10

- Even if somebody is in a wheelchair or has disabilities you shouldn't treat them diffent (different).
- I learned that you should never make fun of someone with a disability.
- Not to be mean to people.
- Not to laugh at people if there blind.

DOING UNTO OTHERS

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- Do unto others as you will have them do unto you.
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- Treat one another as they treat you.

3/9

- Treat others as you want to be treated.
- Treat others as you want them to treat you.
- Treat everyone the way you want them to treat you.
- Treat (treat) every but (body) the same.

4/9

- Treat others good so they would treat you good.

4/10

- Treat other people like you want to be treated.

HELPING OTHERS

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- I have learned from the skits that you have to help people when they are hurt.
- To help even though they are blind (blind) or in a wheelchair.
- I enjoyed it because it is always good to help other people.
- To help people when there (they are) hurt or broken parts of your body.
- I learned to help other people.
- Helping others.

3/9

- If people have disabilities (disabilities) help them.
- When somebody needs help you could help him.

4/9

- I think one main message of the skits is helping people.
- Helping them who are needed to be helped.
- I think it is help people .
- I learned that you should help others.
- The main message was helping people.
- Help people with disabilities.
- I learn that they should help each other.
- When someone is hurt, help or call someone.

4/10

- It means when people get hurt, you help them and like people are blind, you help them because they can't see.
- I learned about (about) this is to help people.
- Help people play when they are blind or handicapped.
- I think the main message is to help each other and make them feel good.
- I learned to help each and other person.

BEING NICE & KIND

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- Being kind.
- Be nice.
- To be nice to people and be good.
- To be nice and to help each other.

3/9

- Play fair be kind to others.
- Be kind to different people.
- It means playing fairly, being nice to others.
- I did enjoy the skit because some people were nice to others.
- To be kind to different people.
- To be nice a help different people.
- To be nice.

4/9

- To be nice to people with disabilities.
- I learned to play fair and to be nice even if there different
- Because it show how to be nice and fair.

4/10

- It taught us how to be nice and kind to people who look diffren.
- Being nice to others always.
- Don't be mein to people how (who) are blied (blind).
- Be nice to others the way want to be.
- Treat others the way you want to be treated.

BEING FRIENDLY

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- It means people play together and to be friends.
- It was (was) people play together to be friends.
- Be very friendly.
- Being friendly to others.
- Be nice and play with friends.
- I like it does (doesn't) matter Blind or have a boke (broke) let people will (will) be Friend Still (still).
- They say to be nice and play with friend.

4/10

- I enjoyed the skits because it's about friendship
- Because they showed friendship.

RESPECTING OTHERS

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- Never to boss (boss) people.
- They should respect the children.
- Respect is the biggest thing for a play.

4/10

- Be respectful to your teammates (team mates)
- Not to say stuff (stuff) about people you don't know (know).
- Respect (respect) people.
- To treat people fair whether (whether) they (they are) disabled or need special classes.

TEAMWORK

GRADE/AGE

3/8

- It showed us to work as a team.
- The message was to do team work.

3/9

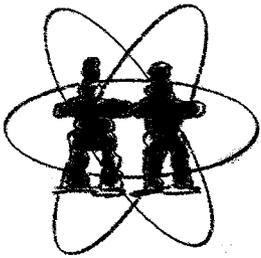
- That how it is a team work to help them feel better.

4/9

- I think the main message is working together.

4/10

- I learned that teamwork is better.
- I think it means that this team works together and shows that things must be fair.
- Because they showed team work.



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as well as supportive professional books. Additional guidance is provided as needed as the Team is organized, though the intent is that each school takes ownership of its Team as it continues from year to year. A PlayFair Team website is available for Teams to communicate with each other and to share information on activities.

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As you are a secondary school, we have attached the analysis of the secondary student response. It seems that secondary students involved in a PlayFair Team find the experience to be intense. Their responses touched on many issues of Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion.

RESEARCH – BASED EVIDENCE ON PLAYFAIR TEAMS

The following provides evidence-based research information on the responses of students in to secondary schools to experiences as members of PlayFair Teams.

The PlayFair Team in one school had worked on developing a presentation on Disability – Social Justice – Inclusion around a musical theme. The second school's Team developed a skit. The two schools had come together to share presentations.

Following the presentations the students were asked to write their reflections on the presentations. Teachers did not discuss the presentations with the students and writing reflections was a voluntary activity.

Data analysis was based on a qualitative approach to grounded material, specifically the constant comparative method, to develop categories of response.

Secondary students who were members of a PlayFair Team were powerful in their voluntary reflections on the experience. This finding held both for members who were typical students and those with disabilities. The

first response category, Overall Impact of Experience”, indicated that all students providing reflections indicated that they had gained in understanding. Though some initially approached membership in their PlayFair Team as an opportunity to do something for students with disabilities, in other words, as a giver-receiver, charitable activity, they soon learned that PlayFair Teams was different. PlayFair Teams was based on equity and shared respect and all learned from each other. As Michelle, a typical student said, “PlayFair has been an experience like no other.” Jennifer, a student with intellectual concerns, echoed the sentiment saying that PlayFair Teams “opened my eyes a lot more”.

Reflections suggest that PlayFair Teams has personal, equalizing effect. It teaches Team members about themselves and each other. A gratifying finding is that Team members became friends across the disabled-nondisabled gulf generated through most school structures and by society in general. This was no “giver-receiver” experience for the students. The Teams blended into groups that, as one student said, “Got to know, learn and grow with each other.”

It is apparent in the reflections of the PlayFair Team members that the theory behind PlayFair Teams works in practice. It is possible for students with and without disabilities to relate in equitable and mutually respectful manner toward the goal of teaching themselves and others that disability need not be the barrier that is too often built through existing school special education programs.

Contact information:

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SECONDARY STUDENT RESPONSE CATEGORIES TO THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A PLAYFAIR TEAM MEMBER

- **OVERALL IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE**
- **PERSONAL IMPACT**
- **MEETING NEW FRIENDS**
- **BECOMING A TEAM**
- **ACCEPTING ALL TEAM MEMBERS**
- **SIGNIFICANT LESSONS LEARNED**

Note: 1: An asterisk denotes a student with disability.
2. More information on PlayFair Teams may be accessed through the Marsha Forest Centre website.

OVERALL IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE

Erica *

- Because I love play fair a lot to me.
- Play fair made me feel happy. Because it makes me laugh.

Michelle

- Playfair has been an experience like no other. It was definitely nothing like I had expected. When I was first told about the nature of Playfair, my initial thought was that as the grade 12's, we would be leading the special ed students in developing a presentation. As I soon learned, the true learning experience was for me.
- With only about one month left in my high school career, it is a fantastic feeling knowing I will leave a changed person – a change for the better.

Rosemont *

- I hope to stay in the Playfair Team at Johnson again next year.

Alvaro

- The experience at Mary Ward School was encouraging and positive.

Gregory *

- I enjoyed it very much and felt good about getting involved myself.
- I enjoyed the whole experience and look forward to maybe doing it again next year.

Eleanor

- Despite the struggles and the grueling rehearsals, all in all I think we all had a blast.

Jennifer *

- I feel that taking part in this program helps me and others at the same time, and it makes me feel great.
- I want to continue with this program because it will help me and others deal with the problems we have.
(PlayFair Teams) opened my eyes a lot more. How important PlayFair Team is. Without PlayFair Team kids would not get a chance to have as close to normal life. Everyone needs Friends, and to have Relationships with teachers. On down to other kids without disabilities that is very important to all kids.

Monika

- Our lives have turned into the wonder of Play Fair. And we came to understanding that this wonder is not just about some script we were working on. This wonder has spread through our friendship and new experiences.

Daniel

- I joined the Playfair Team one year ago because I wanted to see what this group was all about and what I can do for them. At the time when I joined I wasn't thinking that this group would change me or give me any new experiences, or perspective. I thought only that I would join and do stuff and not receive anything in return – but I did.

Megan *

- By just sitting near me or putting a smile across a couple of faces taught me that these people care about us. I mean, that means way more than anything to us.

Sonia

- Things I have seen or have happened in my life made me believe in the playfair cause. I thought it would be amazing if we could break down all these barriers, make people approach things with open arms.

Crystal *

- At the end I think everybody realized that it wasn't just about a product, what we performed, but more about the process and how we got there. All the things we have learned from each other are so much more important that we expected.

PERSONAL IMPACT

Gregory *

- It felt good to do some of the things that the other students get to do.

Michelle

- I loved telling other teachers and students about how much fun I was having as a member of the Playfair team.

Eleanor

- Despite physical and mental disabilities, the special ed students are like any other teenagers. During this experience, we talked, played, laughed, and cried.
- I've learned that a little confidence in yourself goes a long way.
- The things I've learned about the process of a presentation and about myself are lessons that'll stay with me for life.

Megan *

- All my life, I was judged, put down and left out of things just because I am physically disabled, but, for once I'm not. I guess it's true. People really have no clue how powerful they really are.
- In play fair, it gave me, as well as the others, an opportunity to meet people around the school and get to know them, people that probably wouldn't give us the time of day otherwise. I have gotten to know a lot of kids and even made best friends of them.
- These specific people may not know this but they mean the world to me. None of them judge, criticize or make fun of me and, for once, I feel accepted and I'm no longer worrying about what others think of me or my friends.

Alvaro

- We have many great ideas and plans – we just need to put them into action. The fact that there are other schools out there working on the same issues and achieving successful results gives me motivation to continue.

Jennifer *

- That day at Mary Ward High school changed my whole way of thinking about people with other abilities. I did a complete 360 in life.

Monika

- To me, it has been one of the most enriching experiences in the whole life. I like finding meaning in everything I face, but being a part of the Play Fair was something absolutely distinctive.

- From an intimidated individual back then, I have turned into someone who can make a difference.
- I've discovered new people around me, and a new person within me. Now that I got to know how to make wonderful goals and ideas come true, I can say, from the depths of my heart that I've been blessed.

Sonia

- Is that possible? To me the answer to that question seemed grim but when we arrived at Mary Ward and saw all those student just as we are, working together, it changed my whole point of view. Because now I truly believe that with presentations as powerful and inspiring as the one I was blessed with being able to witness that day, anyone could become enlightened, and would understand the importance. As I do now.

Crystal *

- I think each of us learned to get to know each other as individuals rather than just judging the first thing we see.

Daniel

- When I saw and heard stories dealing with the acceptance of people with challenging needs, it made me realize that I could relate to them so much, because of things I had gone through in my own life.

MEETING NEW FRIENDS

Erica *

- I met new people, like everybody from other grades.

Michael

- What I learned while being part of the playfair team was how to be friends with everyone. The friendships I built was my favorite part of playfair.
- I want (to) show people that we care and we should be friends with everyone.

Michelle

- I'd discovered the joy of meeting new people.
- Life's greatest lessons are from the people we meet and the lifelong friends we make.

Crystal *

- During the eight months of Playfair I had a lot of fun with my peers writing our own script as well as developing new friendships. We learned to work together as a group but more importantly I think each of us learned to get to know each other as individuals rather than just judging the first thing we see.
- I think Playfair is a great way to make friends and see each other in a new light.

Alvaro

- The PlayFair Team was a group of caring, understanding students who spent time as friends and colleagues helping each other.

Eleanor

- PlayFair gave me opportunity to meet and get to know 12 different, amazing people, all of whom has taught me something.

Megan *

- In play fair, it gave me, as well as others, an opportunity to meet people around the school and get to know them, people that probably wouldn't give us the time of day otherwise. I have gotten to know a lot of kids and even made best friends with them.

Monika

- The answer came when I met my new friends, each of them full of potential I never realized. We were preparing the project together, as a group of people who initially didn't know much about each other. We laughed together. We cried together. We've spent hours talking about what we were doing and what we were going to do.

Rosemont *

- Play friar team. I had a go day at Mary ward school and was glad to be in the team and heart space (speaks) to heart (motto of the school).
- The kids are cool and my team is fun to be with.

Jennifer *

- Before I got involved with PlayFair Team I felt very alone like an outsider. I used my music to get me through (through) the days. I felt like a outsider looking in at the kids in the school. I felt like the kids looked at me like I was different and would not include me in anything or talk to me.
- After joining PlayFair Team I found myself with friends that did not label me with a disability. They oversaw (over-looked) it and (got) to know me as a normal kid.
- What a feeling. I still have kept some of these friends till today.

BECOMING A TEAM

Eleanor

- The process and steps that needed to be taken in order for our presentation to work was by no means easy, don't get me wrong we had our fun times.

Gregory *

- I and some of the other special education students began rehearsing our playfair performances with the help of a female teacher from outside the school. We enjoyed working together as our performances got better and better.

Alvaro

- Participating in the PlayFair Team at Johnson gave me the opportunity to meet other people who shared an interest in helping to improve the social situation for persons labeled with challenging needs and people left out or labeled as outcasts. We got to know, learn and grow with each other.

Monika

- The crown of the whole struggle was joining the Play Fair event. I knew exactly what it mean to feel "unfitting", even my reason might have been somewhat different than the ones held by my new friends. I really wanted to be a part of this team, to serve, to be useful. We all decided to write a real play about our school life. And truly, it was a wonderful idea.
- And perhaps the most important lesson of it all: the role my grade 12 friends and I were supposed to carry out was to serve, to encourage, to support and to maintain a caring leadership. But we ended up being encouraged, supported, thus served by others, and becoming leaders was only possible thanks to each other's care, trust, cooperation and willingness to share the talents.

Crystal*

- As a group, we not only saw each other's strengths and weaknesses but we also learned how to incorporate everybody's talents into one skit. We realized that we needed to accommodate and help each other and everything that we accomplished was not only the work of one person but the work of everybody in the group.

Sonia

- When we arrived at Mary Ward and saw all those students just as we are, working together, it changed my whole point of view.

ACCEPTING ALL TEAM MEMBERS

Michelle

- One of the greatest things about Playfair is not just reaching out to new people, it's feeling the impact on the lives of everyone involved. When the students recognized me in the hall and said hi, they would have a huge smile on their face. A smile can make a bad mood disappear.

Jennifer *

- Being a member of the PlayFair Team at Johnson helps me to make friends, because I feel accepted and a part of the group.

Megan *

- Their kindness, compassion, understanding, and the fact that they are always there for me and treat us like a normal person means the world to me and all the other kids in play fair. They respect us and care about us and don't put us down in any way. That's a really great thing to have.

Daniel

- Now that I am part of this team which means so much to me, I am going to spread this message of acceptance to the best of my abilities because we are who we are, and everyone should be accepted regardless of any differences.

Crystal *

- I personally feel that my group did an extraordinary job displaying how important acceptance is to everyone and how everybody, no matter what age or ability level, just wants to be accepted.
- I think by the end everybody realized how much impact it could have on someone by simply accepting them. The wall of isolation can be broken and this can make such a difference to a person's self-confidence and self image.

SIGNIFICANT LESSONS LEARNED

Michelle

- Despite physical and mental disabilities, the special ed students are like any other teenagers. During this experience, we talked, played, laughed, and cried.
- If there's anything worth learning, it definitely will not be found in any textbooks.

Jennifer *

- I feel that taking part in this program helps me and others at the same time, and it makes me feel great.

Eleanor

- The things I've learned about the process of a presentation and about myself are lessons that'll stay with me for life.
- I've learned that a little confidence in yourself can go a long way.

Monika

- It touched our lives with unbelievable strength, urging to make a change. Thanks to this experience, I have discovered a hidden part of myself as well.

Alvaro

- This feels like it can be the beginning of a great thing.

Megan *

- While during play fair, I learned a lot. I learned how to be more open with people; after all, people are always more than willing to talk as long as you give them the opportunity to. The most important and perhaps the hardest thing I learned was self confidence. I have to believe I can do something and know that I may have physical challenges but it doesn't mean I'm incapable of doing things, I can do anything I set my mind to.

Sonia

- When I first joined PlayFair the ideas the committee put forth to me were great. It showed a lot about the human condition here at Johnson, because everyone has this idea that high school students especially in a locale such as Rexdale have a total disregard for others, for matters of importance. But here was this group of people who thought they could make a difference by creating awareness – it was refreshing.
- The greatest feeling in the world is getting to know someone, and seeing them better their lives.

Daniel

- We shouldn't have to disguise our true selves for anyone. We are who we are.

Crystal *

- I think one of the most important things we discovered as a group was how much little things can matter and make a difference in someone's day.

