



DO-IT Show and Tell

DO-IT

by Sheryl Burgstahler, Ph.D.

In elementary school, show and tell activities provide an opportunity for both fun and learning. Typical show and tell sessions let students share their experiences and introduce children to the different perceptions, environments, and interests of their fellow classmates. DO-IT Show and Tell expands on the theories and practices of traditional show and tell activities.

DO-IT Show and Tell acquaints youngsters with people who have disabilities and way cool technology. The project helps children develop positive attitudes and perceptions of people with disabilities, develop problem-solving skills, and experience how people with disabilities use computers and perform day-to-day tasks. DO-IT collaborates with elementary teachers to bring a presenter with a disability, usually a successful college student, into a first grade classroom.

During the visit, the presenter shares information about his or her disability, sets up problem-solving activities in which the children participate, answers questions, and demonstrates his or her technology. For example, Imke Durre, a postdoctoral student at the University of Washington, brought along her computer that talks. Since Imke is blind, she does not require the use of a monitor. Instead, she uses a refreshable Braille display and speech output. The children loved to hear her computer talk. She also demonstrated how she uses a cane for mobility and brought along a child-size cane for the children to try. She showed them the alphabet in Braille and produced each child's name in Braille for them to keep. A typical DO-IT Show and Tell visit is described below.

Before the Visit

A first grade teacher in Seattle or Spokane who wants to host a DO-IT Show and Tell presentation can call 206-685-3648 (Seattle) or 509-328-9331 (Spokane) to schedule the program. The teacher and a DO-IT staff member schedule the visit. The teacher gives the DO-IT staff member the first names of all of the students in the class so that they can be produced in Braille; selects a student to act as the question selector who will call on students who have their hands raised; and selects a student to introduce the presenter. The DO-IT staff member/presenter Brailles each child's name on a small card. A sighted person writes the children's names on their cards as well.

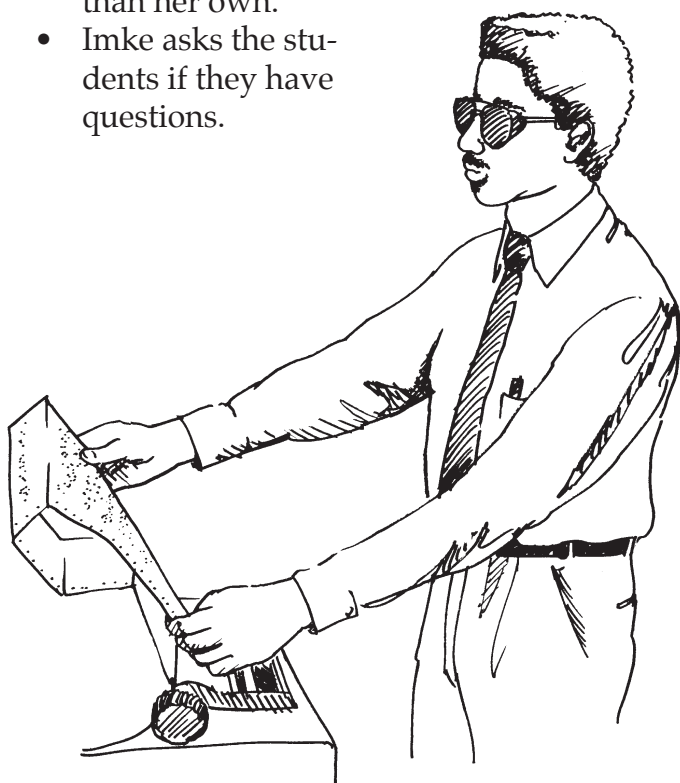
During the Visit

Below is an example of a DO-IT Show and Tell experience offered by a presenter who is blind, Imke Durre. Presentations vary depending on the interests of the children.

- The student announcer introduces the DO-IT Show and Tell presenter, Imke.
- Imke explains that she cannot see hands. She and the children problem solve about different ways to let her know they have questions. Then, the student question selector is announced.
- Imke tells the students a little bit about where she grew up, her interests, her college studies, and her career plans. She asks the students if they have any questions.
- Imke explains how blind people use Braille to read. She shows the students Braille symbols on a poster.
- Imke and the teacher pass out the cards with the children's names printed in Braille.



- The children compare their name cards with their neighbors’.
- Imke demonstrates how Braille is made using a Perkins Brailier. She Brailles the names of new children in the class or the teacher’s name.
- Imke reads the children a popular story from a book embossed in Braille.
- Imke shows the students the talking calculator and how the buttons have been Brailled so she knows what each button represents. She asks the students for numbers to type so that they can hear the calculator talk.
- Imke and the students come up with different disability-related situations and develop possible solutions. She also presents different scenarios for discussion. For example, the children may work with her to determine the best way to cross a busy street if you cannot look both ways to check for oncoming traffic.
- The children try using a child-size cane for mobility.
- Imke talks briefly about disabilities other than her own.
- Imke asks the students if they have questions.



Reports from the Field

Imke reports the following insightful and often humorous responses from Show and Tell participants.

Thought-provoking questions:

- “Can you see with your eyes closed?”
- “How does it feel to be blind?”
- “How do you go to the bathroom?”
- “How do you sit down?”
- “What do you do on a diving board?”

Interesting conversations that have occurred during Show and Tell activities:

Presenter: If I can’t see, how do you think I can read?

Answers from participants:

- “You could try to see.”
- “You could peek a little.”
- “You could get glasses.”
- “You should try harder.”

Presenter: Since I can’t drive, how do you think I get around?

First Child: “You could take a dinosaur.

Second child: No, they’re not alive anymore; they’re extinct.

Child 1: Do you have any sons or daughters?

Presenter: No.

Child 1: Why not?

Child 2: Because you’re not pregnant.

Some quotations taken from thank you notes written by the children:

- “I learned blind people can get jobs.”
- “I’ll bet you’ll be a famous blind person.”
- “I learned blind people can go to school.”
- “We learned we should be nice and we shouldn’t laugh at them.”
- “I learned that blind people can’t see.”



"I never knew there was such a thing as the Braille typewriter."
"I thought how you make periods and capital letters was cool."
"Being able to use the cane was fun."
"I think you should do it to other classes."
"I wish you were my teacher."
"I enjoyed the story *Miss Nelson is Missing*."
"We learned that blind people could read by touching those dots."
"We learned that blind people get around with a cane."
"We learned how blind people crossed the street."
"You taught me how you get around."
"I learned that you can fold your cane."
"I learned that you can live by yourself."
"I learned that blind people use Braille to read."
"I learned some people have a guide dog and some people have a walking stick."
"I really liked how you explained the pattern of Braille."
"I never thought I could learn so much about blind people."
"Thank you for teaching us what it's like to be blind."
"Your life must not be easy."
"I bet it's hard to be a blind human."
"I don't think it's funny to be blind."
"I like you and nobody's going to stop me!"

Replication of Show and Tell

DO-IT encourages schools and other organizations to replicate this successful practice. Teachers can contact local high school counselors to locate a speaker for their class. Or, they could contact Easter Seals, Community Services for the Blind, or other organizations for assistance in locating the speaker.

Resources

- Braille children's books can be purchased at Seedlings, 800-777-8552.
- Lakeshore Learning Materials makes and sells toys and products for teachers, parents and children with and without special needs. These include dolls with leg braces, hearing aids, wheelchairs, helmets, walkers, and harnessed guide dogs. They can be reached at <http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/>.
- *A Guide to Toys for Children with Special Needs* is created by the Toy Industry Foundation, the Alliance for Technology Access, and the American Foundation for the Blind. For a free guide call 800-232-5463 or visit their web site at <http://www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=62>.
- Toys R Us Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids has pictures and describes potential benefits of selected games, toys, and sports items. Call 800-732-3298 for a guide or check out <http://www.toysrus.com/>.

About DO-IT

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs such as those in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. This publication was supported by the U.S. Department of Education (FIPSE grant #P116D990138-01) and the National Science Foundation (cooperative agreement #0227995). Any questions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Government.



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