

Lesson Title: **Defining Accessibility**

Lesson Topic: Access and Inclusion

Curricular Integration: [Language Arts](#)

Minds On

What does accessible mean?

Barriers vs. Accessible Design

Ask the students if they have heard the word ‘accessible’ before. Start by giving them one example of a barrier and one example of accessible design that removes that barrier; such as having only stairs vs. having a ramp and/or an elevator.

Ask the students where they have noticed good examples of accessible design. In order to facilitate this discussion and increase students’ ability to think of examples, it might be helpful to have students brainstorm specific spaces where many accessible designs can be found (e.g. on public transit, in office spaces, at their school).

Working On It

After brainstorming some examples, start writing them into a t-chart. Document the students’ examples of ‘barriers’ and ‘accessible designs’ on chart paper.

Here are some examples of barriers vs. accessible design that students may give:

- stairs vs. ramps
- escalators vs. elevators
- unclear signage vs. signage using large font and braille
- gravel pathways vs. paved pathways
- narrow entrances vs. wide entrances

After the students have created a list of examples showcasing barriers and accessible solutions have them think about what the term ‘accessible’ means to them. Have the students help you come up with a class definition of the term ‘accessible’.

An example of a class definition may be “access for everyone, everywhere”, or “fewer barriers for people with many different abilities.”

This lesson focuses on physical barriers, but also works well to explore social barriers and accessible design solutions. For example, social stigma and discrimination act as barriers for many people. A design feature that helps identify welcoming and therefore more accessible spaces for the LGBTQ community is displaying a rainbow flag sticker on the front door.

Another example of a social barrier being resolved through accessible design is the poor representation of persons with disabilities by the international symbol of access vs. an awareness campaign about access using the new, more empowering symbol (see the Sticker Campaign lesson for more information);

- Social stigma vs. awareness campaigns



Reflection/Application

As a consolidation, have students think about their own school, including the playground. “ What are examples of barriers and accessible design here at our own school? Is our school accessible, why or why not? (**student t-chart**)

This could be a starting point for persuasive writing, perhaps to the principal.