# OUR SHARED STORY:
## *DISABILITY COMMUNITIES AND BELONGING IN INDIANAPOLIS*



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIANAPOLIS

**Intermediary Grades Lesson Plan**




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# Nothing About Us Without Us: The Story of Disability Rights

## Lesson Plan by Dr. Courtney Jarrett

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# Introduction

Disability History in the Indiana Classroom

The history of Indiana is often defined by its milestones in industry, agriculture, and sports, yet one of its most transformative social narratives, the struggle for disability rights, remained "invisible" in classrooms for decades. These lesson plans for the primary, intermediary, and secondary grades seeks to rectify that silence by positioning Indianapolis not just as a state capital, but as a primary battleground for civil rights. By tracing the evolution from the "medical model" of the early 20th century to the modern "social model" of inclusion, these lessons challenge students to see the physical and legal landscape of their capital city through the lens of activism.

In the primary grades curriculum, students begin their journey by becoming accessibility detectives, learning how the built environment of Indianapolis was intentionally reshaped by Hoosier families who refused to accept the isolation of their children. Moving into the intermediary grades, the focus shifts to the mechanics of conflict and resolution. Students evaluate how organizations like The Arc of Indiana and accessABILITY acted as bridge-builders, transforming a societal clash over institutionalization into a sustainable framework for community living.

Finally, at the secondary grade level, the narrative is integrated into the broader tapestry of United States history. High schoolers engage in historiography, using the Indiana Disability History Project to analyze how the political shifts of the 1980s and the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mirrored the efforts of other marginalized groups to assert their civic rights.

Together, these lessons move beyond awareness and into the realm of critical historical inquiry. They highlight figures like Alice Wong and the thousands of unnamed advocates who turned the steps of the Indiana State House into a stage for justice. By investigating primary sources and evaluating the efficacy of social policy, students across all grade levels will discover that the ramps, braille signs, and inclusive parks of Indianapolis are more than modern conveniences; they are the hard-won victories of a movement that continues to redefine what it means to be a Hoosier.

# The Fight for Inclusion

*Evaluating Solutions to Disability Conflicts in Indiana*

## Lesson Overview

| Estimated Time: | Materials: |
| --- | --- |
| 120 Minutes | Primary source access, worksheets, media |

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

**How did the conflict between institutionalization and community living lead to the rise of disability advocacy organizations in Indiana, and how effective were their solutions?**

Students will analyze the twentieth-century conflict between the "Medical Model" (institutionalization) and the "Social Model" (civil rights) of disability. They will evaluate how organizations like The Arc of Indiana and Indiana Disability Rights used political advocacy and legal action to solve the issue of segregation and lack of access in Indianapolis.

# Indiana Academic Standards

**Based on the 2023 Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies*

*Grade 7 Social Studies*:

**7.H.14** Identify and explain recent conflicts and political issues between nations or cultural groups and evaluate the solutions that different organizations have utilized to address these conflicts.

# Lesson Sequence

**Step 1—The Opening: Defining the Conflict (20 minutes)**

**Activity:** Define "Conflict" not as a war, but as a clash of ideologies.

**The Clash:** On the board, compare Institutionalization (separation from society) versus Community Living (inclusion).

**Discussion:** Why would a cultural group (the disability community) feel they were in conflict with the state government in the mid-1900s?

**Step 2—Research: The Players and the Problems (30 minutes)**

a. Students work in small groups to research three specific entities that addressed the conflict:
    i. The Arc of Indiana (grassroots parent advocacy)
    ii. Indiana Disability Rights (legal and protection system)
    iii. Self-advocates of Indiana (leadership by the cultural group)
b. Groups must identify the problem each group faced and the strategy they used (e.g., lawsuits, lobbying, public awareness).

**Step 3—Evaluation: Did the Solution Work? (40 minutes)**

a. Activity: Students look at "Before and After" data for Indianapolis.
    i. Before: Central State Hospital records.
    ii. After: The ADA impact on IndyGo transit and city infrastructure.
b. Critique: Students must discuss what problems still exist (e.g., employment gaps or transit deserts).

NAME _____ DATE _____

# The "Solution" Rubric

**Directions:** *Rate the effectiveness of the solution provided by your assigned organization using the scale below. Provide evidence from the organizations or the Indiana Disability History Project to justify your score.*

Organization/Solution being evaluated: _____

(Example: the Americans with Disabilities Act, the closing of Central State Hospital, or the Arc of Indiana's lobbying efforts)

| Criteria | Rating 1–5 | Evidence/Reasoning from History<br><br>(Example: "I gave this a 5 because the ADA mandated that all IndyGo buses must have lifts, which allowed people to get to work.") |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Impact: How effectively did this solution remove barriers for the disability community in Indiana? | | |
| 2. Sustainability: Is this solution still working today, or was it a temporary fix? | | |
| 3. Equity: Did this solution help the entire cultural group, or only a small portion? | | |
| 4. Agency: To what extent did people with disabilities have a "voice" in creating this solution? | | |

**Scoring Guide for the Rubric:**

5 (Excellent): The solution completely resolved the conflict and is still used as a model today.

4 (Good): The solution solved the major problem but left some smaller issues unaddressed.

3 (Satisfactory): The solution helped, but it took a long time or only helped a specific group.

2 (Fair): The solution was a "Band-Aid" fix that didn't address the root cause of the conflict.

1 (Poor): The solution failed to change the lives of people in the community significantly.

**Final Analysis Question**

Based on your total scores, do you believe the organization chose the best possible strategy to address the conflict? If you were a leader in Indianapolis during this time, what is one thing you would have changed about this solution to make it more effective?

**Tip:** Encourage students to debate their scores. For instance, one student might give the ADA a "5" for impact, while another might give it a "3" because they found an interview where a Hoosier activist explains that physical ramps exist, but social attitudes still haven't changed.

NAME _____ DATE _____

# Conflict Analysis Matrix

**Directions:** *Students use the Indiana Disability History Project to find one interview transcript. They identify the specific political or social conflict discussed and which groups were on opposite sides.*

| Issues | Groups Involved | Primary Source Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

NAME _____ DATE _____

# The Global Connection

**Directions:** *Think about accessibility on a global level. How does the struggle for disability rights in Indiana resemble other civil rights conflicts we have studied this year? Make a list below of some of those conflicts and write a sentence with each about how they compare.*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

NAME _____ DATE _____

# A Memo to the Indiana General Assembly

**Directions:** *Imagine you are a representative of accessABILITY (Indianapolis's Center for Independent Living). Write a 3-paragraph memo proposing a solution to a modern-day barrier in Indianapolis (e.g., sidewalk repair or digital accessibility).*

# Further Resources

**Encyclopedia of Indianapolis**

Central State Hospital

https://indyencyclopedia.org/central-state-hospital/

Noble Inc.

https://indyencyclopedia.org/noble-inc/

Bradford Woods

https://indyencyclopedia.org/bradford-woods/

Indiana School for the Blind

https://indyencyclopedia.org/indiana-school-for-the-blind-and-visually-impaired/

CICOA

https://indyencyclopedia.org/cicoa-aging-and-in-home-solutions-inc/

IndyGo

https://indyencyclopedia.org/indygo/

Bosma Enterprises

https://indyencyclopedia.org/bosma-enterprises/

**Other**

Conceptualizing Disability

https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/disability-models

Medical vs Social Models of Disability

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWGv8FcrqRs

Medical and Social Models of Disability

https://odpc.ucsf.edu/content/medical-and-social-models-of-disability

Arc of Indiana

https://www.arcind.org/

Indiana Disability Rights

https://www.in.gov/idr/

Self Advocates of Indiana

https://saind.org/

IndyGo Access

https://www.indygo.net/access/

accessAbility

https://www.abilityindiana.org/

Alice Wong

https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/author/alwong199/

Indiana History Disability Project

https://www.indianadisabilityhistory.org/index.php

# Notes