

# TAKE ACTION: FAITH'S WORLD



Whether by birth, accident, or illness, nearly 14% of the student population (seven million kids) in the United States are disabled. Faith Guilbault is one of them. Born with cerebral palsy, epilepsy and cortical vision impairment, Faith can now walk with the use of canes due to her fierce determination to be independent and weekly physical therapy sessions. Because she was born with neurological blindness, Faith attends the Maryland School for the Blind where she works one-on-one with teachers who are guiding her toward new ways to learn. Faith shares her many ways of being physically active in the world, from skydiving to traveling to New York City, where she walks the catwalk during Fashion Week with Runway of Dreams, an adaptive clothing line that enables people with physical disability to dress themselves. When thinking about these issues, **consider Articles 5, 6, 7, and 26 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**

*Article 5:*

*No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

*Article 6:*

*Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.*

*Article 7:*

*All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.*

*Article 26:*

*(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*

*(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

*(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*

## For Teachers: Research

December 1975, the United Nations proclaimed the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons ([https://bit.ly/UND\\_ADA](https://bit.ly/UND_ADA)), stating that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else. In 1990, the United States government passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ([www.ada.gov/cguide.htm](http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm)), which protects the civil rights of Americans with disabilities. Ask your students to consider why these two declarations are necessary. What is the difference between the declarations? Do disabled people have rights that are unique? Why would their rights need special protections? What precipitated the ADA being passed in 1990? Were the rights of disabled people protected prior to that?

## For Students: Reflect

Faith is a happy teenager with a full life. And yet, when she and her friends talk about living with a disability, they all agree that others view them only as objects of pity or inspiration—and they don't want either. They acknowledge that empathy is welcome—but sympathy is not. Think about the difference between empathy and sympathy. How can you treat someone with empathy without feeling sorry for them? Then consider your own "disabilities." While yours might not be as extreme as Faith's, we are all differently abled. How do you feel when you're unable to do something? How do you want others to treat you in these circumstances? How can you use these reflections to inform how you treat people with disabilities in the future?

## For All Of Us: Respond

1. Host a community or private screening of FAITH'S WORLD to raise awareness about the challenges people living with disabilities face. Email [info@bykids.org](mailto:info@bykids.org) for more information.
2. Support the Runway for Dreams Foundation in their work to empower people with disabilities through adaptive clothing. You can donate, volunteer, or attend a fundraising event or fashion show. For more information, go to: [www.runwayofdreams.org](http://www.runwayofdreams.org) to learn how clothing can make a difference. You can also follow and support them on social media. [#runwayofdreams](#) [#rethinktherunway](#)
3. Help a disabled member of your community. Explore the different areas of protection as outlined in the ADA and see where you can get involved. An organization such as Reach [www.reach.services/get-involved/volunteer-with-us](http://www.reach.services/get-involved/volunteer-with-us) helps match interested local volunteers with roles that align with their interests and skills.
4. Organize your teammates or classmates to volunteer with the Special Olympics in your community. Work with your school administrators to bring the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Program to your school. Go to [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) for more information.
5. Sign a petition or start one of your own to raise awareness and support policies and legislation that address the needs of the disabled community at [www.change.org](http://www.change.org).
6. Something as small as petitioning for representative bitmojis (<https://bit.ly/InclusiveAvatars>) can make a huge difference!

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