



A Lesson from Frankie and Pearl: Facial Difference in the Classroom

Lesson Plan for Grades 1 to 3

About AboutFace

AboutFace is a national charity that supports individuals and families affected by facial difference. AboutFace's mission is to cultivate equitable opportunities for individuals with a facial difference through supportive programming, advocacy, and education.

Program Introduction

"A Lesson from Frankie and Pearl" is a lesson plan based on an animation called "Frankie and Pearl," which you can access [here](#). This program is inspired by our community's need for awareness and education about facial difference in schools and beyond. "Frankie and Pearl" tells the story of a girl with a birthmark who is navigating her first day at her new school. This story represents one character's experience living with a facial difference. It does not, however, represent the experience of all children with a facial difference.

This program plan is appropriate for Grade 1 to Grade 3. This lesson plan is appropriate for classrooms with or without a student with a facial difference. You know your students best. Please feel free to adapt the program to meet your classroom's needs.

If you found this resource because your class has a student with a **facial difference**, we encourage you to visit the AboutFace website for our teacher's resource on supporting a student with a facial difference in their classroom. We also encourage you to check in with the student and their family to consider the best way to implement this program. The student and/or a family member may also be interested in helping facilitate the activities, or they may not. For more resources on how to support a child with a facial difference in your classroom, please visit aboutface.ca and click on **Publications**.

This lesson plan fits into health curriculums. Curriculum expectations and learning outcomes are not included in this lesson plan. Please look through your province's curriculum to include specific expectations. Likewise, feel free to include your own learning outcomes/intentions. Our program objectives are outlined below. Lastly, you are welcome to change the instruction language to make it developmentally appropriate for your class.

Program Objectives

The 2020 AboutFace survey shows that 82.14% of family members of people living with a facial difference have concerns about their “child/family member being bullied/teased at school.” As well, 67.86% of family members expressed concern about a “lack of understanding of differences from teachers, school staff, recreational coaches and staff, etc.” In line with AboutFace’s mission, this program has the following aims:

- 1 Raise awareness and acceptance of facial differences in schools.
- 2 Encourage schools and teachers to include facial difference as part of conversations and lessons about diversity and inclusion.
- 3 Normalize differences (facial differences or otherwise).

Creating a Safe Space

AboutFace would like to acknowledge that by reaching out and using this resource, you are already making your classroom a safer place. Also, you will have been working to create a safe space in your classroom well before turning to this program. You may know that talking about topics related to diversity and inclusion may make people feel vulnerable and/or may trigger a variety of emotions. Lessons like this are created to challenge our personal assumptions and popular world views. You can never fully know each of your student’s life experiences, so it is important to create a safe space for your students to feel respected and valued and to act as their authentic selves without fear of being judged. A safe space offers an opportunity for students to grow, take risks, ask questions, and respectfully work through conflicts.

Here are some tips on creating a safe space before your class engages with this program:

- Remind students about your classroom rules.
- Remind your class to respect each other and their right to privacy. Sharing vulnerable information with people is a gift that needs to be respected. Remind students that any stories told in this space should not be shared outside the classroom.
- Be mindful of your language. Remember that the words you use as a teacher have power. How you talk about facial difference and the words you use matter. How you talk about this topic will directly influence how your students will speak about it in the future.
 - Aside from person-first language (see below for more), be aware of microaggressions in your language, such as “you’re really smart for someone with a facial difference” or “you have a really nice smile for someone with a cleft lip.” While these may seem like compliments, they paint individuals as others and continue to push the narrative that they are less than others.
- When a student is sharing, encourage them to use “I” statements.
- Ensure language and tone are non-judgemental when talking about different points of view.
- Respect a student’s choice not to share.
- Remind yourself and your students to keep an open mind to different points of view, challenge your thinking, and keep your biases aside.

This program is structured to help build a safe space for your students. Note that your students may be curious about the characters in the story or just about facial differences in general, and that is ok. Students should feel welcome to ask questions. Curiosity is ok because it shows students are interested and seeking understanding.

About Facial Differences

FACIAL DIFFERENCES 101

More than two million people in Canada are living with a facial difference. A person with a facial difference refers to anyone whose appearance, from the neck or above, has been affected by a congenital (from birth), acquired (after birth), or episodic (comes and goes) condition or syndrome. There are over 100 types of facial difference, ranging from complex craniofacial conditions to scarring and eczema. Examples of facial difference include cleft lip and/or palate, hemangiomas, facial palsy, vitiligo, Treacher Collins syndrome, car accidents or burns.

Facial differences affect each person differently, just like everyone's differences affect them differently. Society sometimes stereotypes or misunderstands people whose appearance seems unusual. People with a facial difference are often assumed to be developmentally impaired, unintelligent, disabled, sick, diseased, or contagious, which is frequently untrue. AboutFace encourages everyone to check in with themselves and register their assumptions and reactions in relation to individuals with a facial difference. Give yourself some grace, too; using this resource means you've been thinking about this and want to make a difference.

APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

Facial difference is the preferred term by the community. Words such as disfigurement, abnormality, anomaly, or deformity have negative connotations and infer that there is something inherently wrong with the person, or that their facial difference is bad, scary, or needs to be fixed. By using difference, we are normalizing just that: differences.

AboutFace encourages the use of person-first language. Person-first language means addressing the individual before addressing their difference. For example, "The cleft-lip kid, James" is not person-first language. "James has a cleft lip" is a person-first statement. We also encourage referring to the child by name and avoiding references to their facial difference unless pertinent to the conversation. Avoid using sensational or judgemental language when speaking about a facial difference or how it was acquired. Language like this can often trigger the student or create an idea that the person with a facial difference is to be pitied. In our animation, Frankie has a birthmark, which is the preferred term.

By modelling person-first language for your class you will make it easier for your students to adopt this language as well. If you get it wrong or one of your students gets it wrong, change what you are saying and move on. Don't worry and don't make a big deal about it. If one of your students has questions about the terms you are using, don't be afraid to give them an answer.

What You Will Need

- Human Bingo Cards (attached) – enough for one per person
- Pencils
- Markers
- Flip chart paper or a large sheet of paper – enough for one per group
- Stickers or other things for decorating the paper (optional)

Activity 1: Human Bingo

ACTIVITY TIME

10 minutes

MATERIALS

- Human Bingo Cards (attached) – enough for one per person
- Pencil or marker

PURPOSE

To get students socializing and learning new things about their classmates.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Print out or create a human bingo sheet and hand out one sheet to each student. The bingo sheet will have squares filled with statements, such as “has a pet” or “tells a funny joke.”
- 2 Give your students 10 minutes to go around to classmates to find other students whose experience fits with the statements on their bingo card, and have the students write their name in the appropriate square. They can use someone’s name only once. You can have them fill out their card all at once, or you can have them do this in a few different rounds: for example,
 - a. in round 1, they have to get a line;
 - b. in round 2, they have to form an X;
 - c. in round 3, they have to fill in their card.

ACTIVITY NOTES

- You can modify this activity based on the number of students in your class. If there are fewer students than there are squares, you can decide whether or not they can repeat names, or simply fill out as many squares as there are students.

Activity 2: Get-to-Know-You Flower

ACTIVITY TIME

20–25 minutes

MATERIALS

- Flip chart paper or big piece of paper – one for each group
- Markers
- Stickers or things to decorate the paper (optional)

PURPOSE

- To find the ways that each student is unique, and also what they have in common.

INSTRUCTIONS

The activity

- 1 Divide the class into groups of four to eight students. Each group will be given one chart paper/large piece of paper and markers.
- 2 On the paper, have each group draw a flower, with one petal for each person in the group. For example, a group of six will have six petals.
- 3 In the centre of their flower, have the group come up with one thing they all have in common. Do they all like pizza? Do they all like recess?
- 4 For each of the petals, ask each student to come up with something that is unique to them. These should not overlap with other people in their group. They can write or draw what it is. Encourage them to be introspective and not simply refer to appearance-based differences (for example, long hair, tall, green eyes, curly hair)

Lesson Plan for Grades 1 to 3

- 5 Once each group is finished, have them present their flowers.

The debrief

- What was it like to try to find something that was similar to everyone in the group? Was it easy or difficult? What strategies did you use to find this out?
- How was it when you tried to find something unique to you? Was it easy or difficult? What strategies did you use to find this out?
- Did you learn something new about someone? If so, what was it?
- How important was it to talk to and listen to the people in your group? What strategies did you use?
- What is the value in finding similarities and differences with one another?

Activity 3: Frankie and Pearl Video and Q&A

ACTIVITY TIME

20–25 minutes

MATERIALS

- Frankie and Pearl [video](#) and associated questions

PURPOSE

- To build awareness and acceptance of facial differences and normalize differences (facial differences or otherwise).

INSTRUCTIONS

Share the Frankie and Pearl [video](#) with your class, and then follow up with debrief questions, such as the following:

- 1 What was this video about?
- 2 Who is Frankie? What does she look like?
- 3 Who is Pearl? What does she look like?

- 4 What does Frankie like to do?
- 5 What do you like about the characters in the video?
- 6 Do the characters in the video remind you of anyone?
- 7 How do you think Frankie felt when her classmates pointed out her birthmark?
- 8 Do you have anything in common with, or are there any differences between, you and the characters in the video? If so, what?
- 9 Would you be friends with any characters in the video? Who?
- 10 If you could ask a question to any character in the video, who would you ask a question to, and what would you ask them?

ACTIVITY NOTES

- Reminder that Frankie’s facial difference is called a birthmark.
- It is ok for your students to notice and be curious about Frankie’s facial difference, but how they talk about it is important. If their reactions are negative, talk about all the activities you have done up to now and how each student was addressing and acknowledging the many ways we are similar and different.
- Your students might have more questions about the video than you have for them. Make sure you have enough time to answer their questions. Attached on the next page is a list of answers to frequently asked questions.

Frequently/Fearfully Asked Questions and Answers

1 What is on Frankie's face?

Frankie has what is called a birthmark. Birthmarks are marks on the skin that happen when or shortly after someone is born. They come in all shapes, sizes, colours, textures, and locations on the body or face.

Facial differences come in all types. Some can be birthmarks, like Frankie's; some are called cleft lip and palate, Treacher Collins Syndrome, or alopecia; and sometimes people acquire a facial difference from cuts, scars, or burns.

It is Frankie's choice if she shares information about her birthmark. Not everyone is comfortable talking about their facial difference, and they may choose not to answer your question. And that's ok.

2 Can Frankie wear make-up to cover it? Why doesn't Frankie wear make-up to cover it?

Some people with a facial difference like Frankie's may or may not choose to cover their facial difference with make-up. This is all personal preference! You cannot cover all facial differences with make-up, and many people with a facial difference choose not to. Some may choose to wear make-up like anyone else may wear make-up (it might depend on the day and how they are feeling).

It is Frankie's choice whether or not she wants to wear make-up. She may not want to. Frankie may like how her birthmark looks and therefore doesn't want to cover it. The same goes for other people with a facial difference. They may not choose to have cosmetic or elective surgery because they like the way they look. (There are several other reasons why someone may choose not to have surgery, this is just one). While some people may choose to mask or cover their facial difference, they don't have to. It is part of who they are, and no one should feel like they have to hide a part of themselves.

3 Does it affect Frankie's ability to see or talk?

Birthmarks affect each person differently. Frankie's birthmark does not affect her speech or sight; however, birthmarks can be a symptom of a different condition that may affect their speech or sight.

Sometimes a facial difference can affect a person's ability to see, talk, hear, or even eat and swallow. But this is not true for everyone with a facial difference. If someone's facial difference does affect their ability to do these things, they can work with doctors and specialists to help make it better for them, and yes, sometimes this can mean surgery. This also may mean that others may have to take more time to listen when someone is speaking.

Sometimes a facial difference doesn't affect any of the above. It just changes how the person looks.

4 Can it go away? Can she have it removed/ why doesn't she have it removed? Does she need surgery to have it removed?

Sometimes. Some birthmarks fade, shrink, or go away over time. This is not always the case. Some birthmarks will always be there. Sometimes birthmarks can go away with procedures such as surgery or laser therapy.

Like birthmarks, some facial differences go away, change, or become less noticeable over time or through treatment. Some surgeries are necessary, and the person can choose whether or not to have surgery, because the procedure is called elective or cosmetic.

Some reasons why a person may choose not to have cosmetic or elective surgery:

- They like the way they look.
- There can be a risk related to the anesthetic.
- There can be a risk of complications due to the surgery.
- They want to wait to make the decision.
- Surgery can leave the person with more scars.

Some reasons why a person may choose to have cosmetic or elective surgery:

- They want to change the way they look.
- The surgery may improve their quality of life.
- The surgery can set them up better for future surgeries.

Before surgery, other factors people consider can include personal choice, access to healthcare, finances, pain tolerance, age, specific conditions, medical recommendations, and more!

Most times, surgeries can't make it "all go away" or "go back to normal." At the end of the day, surgeries are risky, and doctors/healthcare professionals would want to do them only if they are necessary or quality-of-life improving.

5 Is it contagious? Can I get her facial difference?

No birthmark is contagious. You cannot get this from other people. A birthmark is something you are born with. And, in fact, no facial difference is contagious.

6 Do other people in Frankie's family have a birthmark?

It is very rare for more than one person in a family to have a birthmark. However, it does happen. Birthmarks, in general, are pretty common and can happen anywhere on the body. However, we don't know if other members of Frankie's family have birthmarks.

Like birthmarks, while it can happen, it is uncommon for more than one person in a family to have a facial difference, unless that type of facial difference is hereditary (passed down through genes). These are rare.

7 How did she get her birthmark? Is it just a bruise?

Frankie was born with her birthmark. It is not just a bruise. Over time it may fade away or get smaller, like a bruise, but it is something she was born with. Her birthmark could be from her blood vessels not forming properly, or it could be part of a tumour, or her skin in that area is just a different colour. While we know a lot about birthmarks, we don't always understand why they happen. It is Frankie's choice to share information about her birthmark with others.

If you have a mole or a birthmark on another part of your body, it's similar to that. Some people are born with a facial difference, and sometimes people have a facial difference from cuts, scars, or burns.

8 Does her birthmark hurt?

The birthmark itself doesn't hurt. The treatments can hurt, though, and it can be difficult to have to go to many doctor appointments.

Sometimes parts of a person's facial difference may cause discomfort or pain, but this is often not the case.

9 What does Frankie think about her birthmark?

People's thoughts and feelings about their facial difference change and evolve all the time, just like anyone's ideas about their appearance can evolve or change over time. Frankie's and other people's facial difference may become less important. Some may appreciate, celebrate, or grow to love their facial difference.

Friends and family members report that over time they don't notice facial differences as often as they did before.

It is important to remember that a person's facial difference is only one part of them, and it may not even be the first thing they think about when it comes to describing themselves. There are lots of layers to all of us.

Children with a facial difference like the same things as other children, and they like to play the same things as other children like to play. They have the same struggles with schoolwork or reading or math or science. Their facial difference is only one part of the puzzle that makes them who they are.

Human Bingo

Favourite colour is green	Has short hair	Has a sibling	Can do a cartwheel	Likes to play video games
Likes the same music as you	Can tell a funny joke	Favourite subject is art	Likes to play sports	Born in the same month as you
Favourite food is pizza	Has been on an airplane	Free	Has been to a different country	Has a pet
Can speak another language	Can play an instrument	Likes to tell stories	Wears earrings	Has eyes that are a different colour than yours
Has eaten a food you haven't tried yet	Has curly hair	Has lost a tooth	Loves to swim	Likes the same show or movie as you



A B O U T F A C E[®]

Who We Are

AboutFace is a national charity and our mission is to cultivate equity and opportunity for individuals with a facial difference through supportive programming, advocacy, and education.

If you would like more information or support, please contact us or visit aboutface.ca.

51 Wolseley Street | Toronto, ON | M5T 1A4

TF 1.800.665.3223 | P 416.597.2229 | F 416.597.8494 | E info@aboutface.ca | aboutface.ca

 AboutFaceCanada

 aboutface

 aboutfacecanada

 aboutface

 AboutFaceEvents