



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

Lesson Plan for Grades 4 to 6

## 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 Grades 4 to Grades 6. 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](http://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

- Small rectangles of paper (about 3 in. x 4 in., but it doesn't need to be exact)
- Pencils/pens – enough for one per student
- Paper-person cut-outs
- Pencil crayons, markers, crayons, etc.
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Stickers or other decorating things (optional)

### Activity 1: First Impressions

#### ACTIVITY TIME

10 minutes

#### MATERIALS

- Small rectangles of paper (about 3 in. x 4 in., but it doesn't need to be exact) – enough for one per student
- Pencils/pens

#### PURPOSE

To show that everyone has different interests. Just because someone looks a certain way doesn't mean you know what they are like.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

You can do this activity in a big group or smaller groups. The following instructions will be for smaller groups. For the whole class, omit the groups.

- 1 Split your class into groups of eight to ten students.
- 2 Everyone gets a small piece of paper.
- 3 On that paper, have each student write down something about themselves that might be surprising or that other people might not know. This can be hobbies, interests, or anything else. They should not write their name on the paper. You could ask them to fold up their paper.

- 4 Have the people in each group gather their papers into a pile.
- 5 Each person will take a turn to pick out a paper and read what is on it.
- 6 Have the group guess who they think that statement belongs to.
- 7 OPTIONAL: Mix up the groups and repeat the activity. Each student can use their original paper with their statement.

#### THE DEBRIEF

- Were there any statements that you didn't expect would belong to certain individuals? If so, why?
- Why do you think you got some associations right or wrong?
- What is something that you can take away from this activity

### Activity 2: Inside and Outside

#### ACTIVITY TIME

20–25 minutes

#### MATERIALS

- Paper-person cut-outs – enough for each student
- Markers, pencil crayons, crayons, etc.
- Construction paper
- Pencils
- Scissors

#### PURPOSE

- To help students recognize and describe their own outer and inner qualities and recognize that who we are on the outside is only part of the story.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

##### The activity

- 1 Give each student one sheet of the paper-person cut-out.
- 2 Ask them to fold it along the joined line and cut it out (but not where it is folded). The cut-out should open like a book along the folded edge.

- 3 On the outside of the cut-out, have the students dress or decorate it to look like them – both front and back. Dress it up, give it clothes, match eye colour, skin colour, hair type, etc. Alternatively, for the outside, you could ask them to draw how the world perceives them.
- 4 When they are finished with the outside, ask them to open up the cut-out and then write or draw who they are on the inside. To encourage them to be introspective about themselves, you could ask them some of the following questions:
  - a. Are you kind, passionate, caring, ambitious?
  - b. What are some of your favourite hobbies, foods, activities, books?
  - c. What are some things that make you scared or nervous?
  - d. What is something you wish people knew about you?

### The debrief

Open the floor so your students can share their work. If they want to pass, they can pass.

- What did they put on the outside?
- What did they put on the inside?
  - o What is something you wish people knew about you?
- Did you learn anything about yourself while doing this activity?

### Questions for the group

- What do you think we can take away from an activity like this?
- Does how we look on the outside affect what we like or are like on the inside?

## Activity 3: Frankie and Pearl Video and FAQ Q&A

### ACTIVITY TIME

20–25 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Frankie and Pearl video and some way to show the **video**
- Chart paper, or black/whiteboard, or PowerPoint slide
- Markers (optional)
- Slips of paper (about three per person)
- Pen or pencil
- Construction paper (optional)
- Glue sticks (optional)

### PURPOSE

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

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Preface

You need to prepare for this activity ahead of time. After you show the Frankie and Pearl **video**, you and your class will engage in a series of Fearfully Asked Questions (FAQ) (questions they may be too afraid to ask or don't know if they can ask). These are questions children with a facial difference often hear or are asked. This will be a space where your students can safely ask and get answers to these questions.

#### Setup

Before you show the video, write the following nine questions on the board, chart paper, or a PowerPoint slide (make sure to number the questions and keep them hidden until after the video):

- 1 What is on Frankie's face?
- 2 Can Frankie wear make-up to cover it? Why doesn't Frankie wear make-up to cover it?

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- 3 Does it affect Frankie's ability to see or talk?
- 4 Can it go away? Can she have it removed, or why doesn't she have it removed? Does she need surgery to have it removed?
- 5 Is it contagious? Can I get her facial difference?
- 6 Do other people in Frankie's family have a birthmark?
- 7 How did she get her birthmark? Is it just a bruise?
- 8 Does her birthmark hurt?
- 9 What does Frankie think about her birthmark?

### The activity

- 1 After the video, post or pull up the questions.
- 2 Hand out three pieces of paper to each student.
- 3 Read out the questions.
- 4 Ask them to think about the top three questions they would like answered, and then have them write the number of each question on the pieces of paper (one number per paper). These papers should be anonymous.
- 5 Collect the slips of paper (if you want, you can sort them so you can see which question is the most popular).
- 6 Go through and use the answer sheet below to help guide your answers to the questions.

### ACTIVITY NOTES

- Remember that this Q&A time is a judgement-free zone. You may end up answering all the questions anyway!
- Feel free to throw some of the questions back at them such as number 3 and number 9 to get their thoughts and feelings. If your class has read *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, they may already be ahead of the curve and have some thoughts or ideas about these answers.
- Feel free to ask your class questions such as the following:
  - o What was this video about?
  - o Who is Frankie? What does she look like?
  - o Who is Pearl? What does she look like?
  - o What does Frankie like to do?
  - o What do you like about the characters in the video?
  - o Do the characters in the video remind you of anyone?
  - o How do you think Frankie felt when her classmates pointed out her birthmark?
  - o Do you have something in common with the characters in the video, or are there differences among you? If so, what?
  - o Would you be friends with any characters in the video? Who?
  - o 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?
- This lesson plan can lead your class to talking about the representation of facial difference in the media: particularly, how individuals with a facial difference are typically shown as the villain.

### 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.

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### 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.

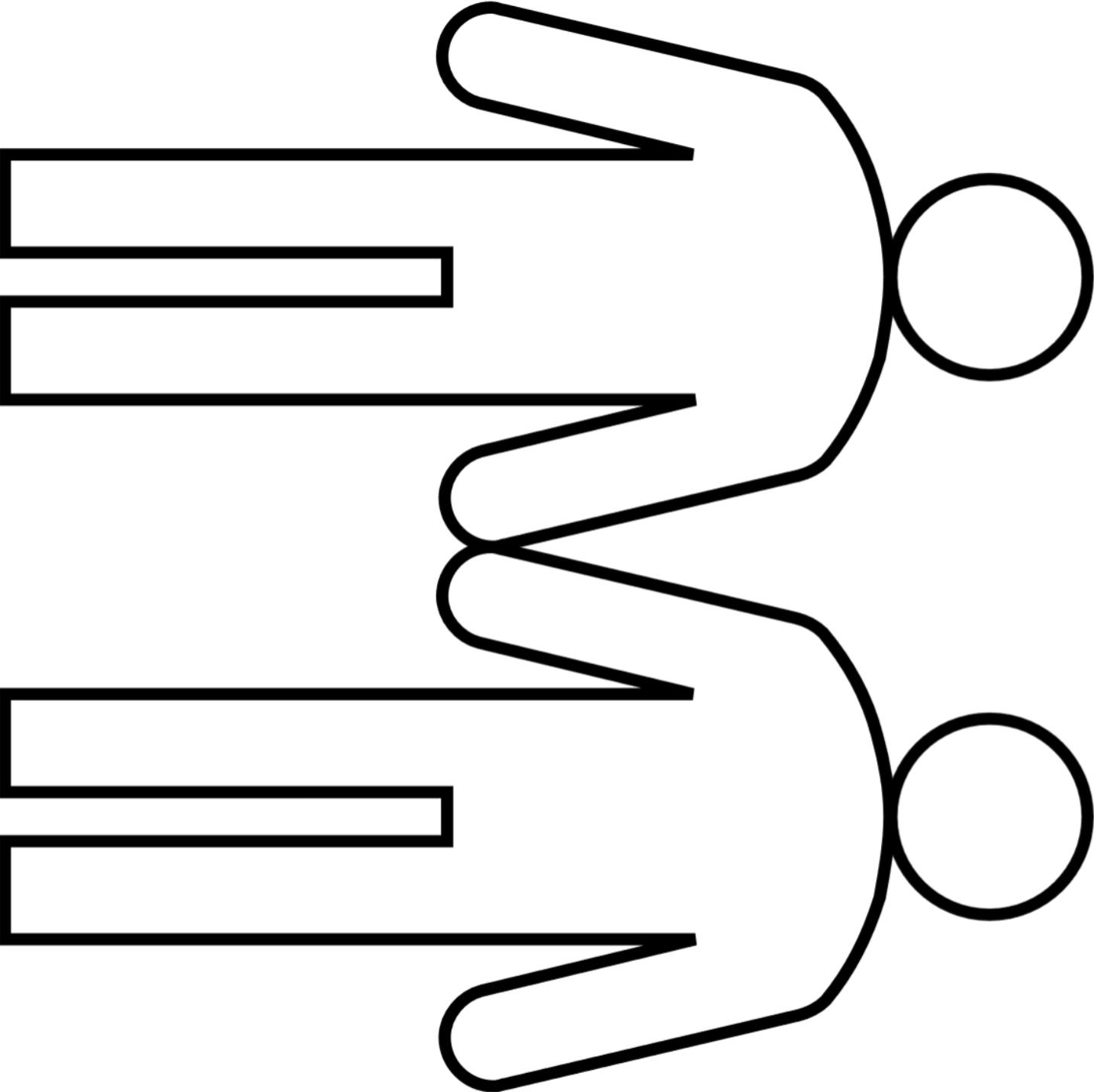
Sometimes parts of a person's facial difference may cause discomfort or pain, but this is often not the case.

### 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.





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](https://aboutface.ca)**.

51 Wolsley Street | Toronto, ON | M5T 1A4

**TF** 1.800.665.3223 | **P** 416.597.2229 | **F** 416.597.8494 | **E** [info@aboutface.ca](mailto:info@aboutface.ca) | **[aboutface.ca](https://aboutface.ca)**

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