



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

Lesson Plan for Kindergarten to Grade 1

## 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 Kindergarten to Grade 1. 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.
  - o 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

- Enough space to stand and move around in a circle
- Floor markers or chairs or a parachute
- A ball of yarn, ribbon, or string – enough to create a web with all the students
- Frankie and Pearl video and associated questions

## Activity 1: West Wind Blows

### ACTIVITY TIME

10 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Enough space to stand and move through the circle
- Floor markers, chairs (You can also do this with a parachute.)

### PURPOSE

- To get everyone up, moving, energized, thinking, and ready for the rest of the program
- To demonstrate what we have in common

### 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.

#### Instructions for floor markers

- 1 Have everyone stand in a circle on the floor markers.
- 2 One person at a time will act as a caller. The caller will say, “The West Wind blows for ...” and then add a statement at the end. For example, “The West Wind blows for everyone who likes chocolate!” or “The West Wind blows for anyone who is wearing blue!”

- 3 Anyone who has that in common has to find a new spot in the circle.
- 4 Ensure that everyone who wants to be a caller has a chance. You can also create a list of statements to use ahead of time that are universal and relate to an experience that someone with a facial difference might encounter. Ideas include:
  - a. The West Wind blows for anyone gone to the dentist.
  - b. The West Wind blows for anyone who missed school for a doctor’s appointment.
  - c. The West Wind blows for anyone who has had a surgery.

#### Instructions for chairs

- 1 Have everyone sit in a circle.
- 2 One person at a time will act as a caller. The caller will say, “The West Wind blows for ...” and then add a statement at the end. For example, “The West Wind blows for everyone who likes chocolate!” or “The West Wind blows for anyone who is wearing blue!”
- 3 Anyone who has that in common has to find a new spot in the circle.
- 4 Ensure that everyone who wants to be a caller has a chance.

#### Instructions for parachute

- 1 Have everyone stand around the edge of the parachute and hold onto a piece of the edge. Allow some time for everyone to get their parachute sillies out.
- 2 One person at a time will act as a caller. With the parachute down, the caller will say, “The West Wind blows for ...” and then add a statement at the end. For example, “The West Wind blows for everyone who likes chocolate!” or “The West Wind blows for anyone who is wearing blue!”

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- 3 After their statement, raise the parachute. Anyone who has that in common has to find a new spot in the circle.
- 4 Ensure that everyone who wants to be a caller has a chance.

## Activity 2: Web of Connectedness

### ACTIVITY TIME

20–25 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Ball of yarn, twine, or ribbon
- Chart paper
- Markers

### PURPOSE

- To create a web that shows we all have things in common
- To reinforce the things that make us unique and also things that connect us.

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Before the activity

Provide your students with some things to think about during the activity; for example you might say, “In this activity, someone will make a statement and then pass a ball of yarn to another student who shares something in common with their statement. During this activity, I want you to notice how many people raise their hand when someone says their statement.

- Are there statements that lots of people raise their hands for?
- Are there statements that very few people raise their hands for?”

#### Or

“Before we start this activity, I want you to think about some things that make you feel the most unique.

- What does it mean to you if no one else raises their hand for your statement?

- What does it mean to you if many people raise their hands for your statement?

#### The activity

- 1 Have everyone sit in a circle with one person holding onto the end of a ball of yarn (starting with the teacher, for example).
- 2 The person with the ball of yarn makes a statement about themselves such as, “I can do a cartwheel.”
- 3 Anyone who has that in common can raise their hand.
  - a. If more than one student raises their hand, the student with the ball of yarn can choose who they will pass the ball of yarn to.
  - b. If no one agrees with that statement, have the student with the ball of yarn continue to share statements until someone raises their hand.
- 4 The student with the ball of yarn holds onto the end and passes the ball to the next person.
- 5 The following student will follow the same pattern. Make a statement, hold onto the yarn, and pass the ball end to the next person.
- 6 Once a student has a piece of the yarn, they cannot have it again.
- 7 Continue until every student has a piece of yarn. By the end, you should have a web that connects everyone.

#### Debrief questions

- Were there any statements a lot of people had in common?
- Were there any statements that only a few had in common?
- If you made a statement and no one had that in common, how did you feel?
  - o Did you feel proud, did you feel nervous?
- What does this web we created tell us?

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On a piece of chart paper, create a list of similarities that students have in common, and keep this chart in your classroom so students can reflect on it later.

## ACTIVITY NOTES

- If a student feels left out because something makes them feel different or they worry that others might not share that in common with them, reinforce that it is ok to be different and unique. These are things that make us who we are, and we should be proud of them. No two people are exactly the same.
- Reinforce that it is also ok if a lot of people relate with you! That's how we connect with others.
- Talk about being proud of being different. You can use this to talk about empowerment.

## 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 it up with some debrief questions.

- 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 Do you have anything in common/are there any differences between you and the characters in the video? If so, what?
- 8 Would you be friends with any characters in the video? If so, who?
- 9 If you could ask a question to any character in the video, who would you ask a question to, and what question would you ask?
- 10 How do you think Frankie felt when the kids pointed out her birthmark?

### 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 below 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.



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### 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).

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