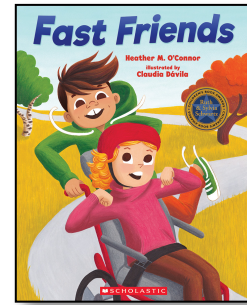


Fast Friends

Two kids with different challenges and strengths find they are just what the other needs to navigate classroom life. Tyson does everything fast — so fast he often disrupts the class — and often ends up playing all alone. Suze, the new girl, is nonverbal with special needs. Sometimes her classmates don't know what those needs are. But Tyson understands. Taking the time to interpret her cues, Tyson forms a special friendship with Suze, and teaches his classmates what it means to listen and understand others.



*Written by Heather M. O'Connor
Illustrated by Claudia Dávila*

Instructional Focus

- ▶ **Day 1:** Comprehension: Making connections
- ▶ **Day 2:** Vocabulary: Visualization
- ▶ **Day 3:** Comprehension: Critical thinking

Curriculum Connections

Language

- ▶ Identify and use listening strategies before, during, and after listening to comprehend information communicated orally and non-verbally.
- ▶ Identify the purpose and audience for speaking in formal and informal contexts, and use appropriate speaking strategies, including taking turns, understanding when to speak, and knowing how much to say, to communicate clearly and coherently.
- ▶ Use phonics knowledge and phonemic blending to read words, and phonemic segmentation to spell phonetically regular words, in isolation and various text contexts.
- ▶ Activate prior knowledge, including knowledge gained from personal and text experiences, that they can use to understand the topics of new texts.
- ▶ Make predictions using background knowledge, text features, and evidence from the text.

Foundational Literacy

- ▶ Orally blend phonemes and syllables to form spoken words and engage in grapheme-phoneme correspondence.
- ▶ Read and spell CVC, CCVC, CVCC, CCVCC, and CVCe words made of phonics patterns they have learned.
- ▶ Link the meanings and features of new words, such as linking semantic features to their existing word schemas.
- ▶ Develop strategies to determine the meaning of words in oral language and text.

Mathematics

- ▶ Compare, estimate, and determine measurements in various contexts.

Accommodations and Modifications

- ▶ Provide props and visuals to support learners in the understanding of the text.
- ▶ Use hands-on materials to support consolidation of concepts learned in the lesson.

Equity & Social Justice Considerations for Educators

In *Fast Friends*, Suze is a new student who has special needs and is non-verbal. Her needs are not understood by all of her classmates. Tyson is able to observe Suze's interactions with others and finds ways to connect with Suze and show his classmates how to make a friend. This book highlights the importance of friendship. Suze uses a variety of adaptive equipment (e.g., a wheelchair, a feeding tube, an adaptive playground) to navigate her world. Suze's desire to move fast disrupts stereotypes around persons who use adaptive equipment that they are fragile and less capable.

Consider the following questions when engaging with this text:

- ▶ How might individuals communicate in different ways?
- ▶ How are people who use adaptive equipment treated? How might we shift stereotypical narratives of individuals who use adaptive equipment?
- ▶ How might we be allies to people with disabilities?

Day 1: Comprehension: Making connections

Before Reading

- ▶ Invite learners to think about what they have in common with friends in their class by reading the list of prompts. Once each prompt has been read, ask learners to use an action if they agree with the statement. Once they are engaged in action, have them look around to notice what they have in common with their peers. Consider including additional statements based on the knowledge of the learners in order to be responsive to their interests.
 - I like to dance.
 - I like to race.
 - I like to swim.
 - I like to draw or paint.
 - I like to play hopscotch.
 - I like to sing.
- ▶ Explain that we may have things that are in common or may be different from our friends.
- ▶ Introduce *Fast Friends*. Say: "This book is about two characters, Tyson and Suze, who are discovering new things they have in common with one another. As we explore the book, we will be thinking about what they like to do that is the same."

During Reading

- ▶ Highlight moments that share how Tyson and Suze are becoming friends. Invite learners to notice the things that the characters enjoy doing together and what evidence supports this.
- ▶ Consider drawing attention to page 17. Ask learners how they think Suze might be feeling and why? Share that Lisa is not being a good friend and not considering Suze's feelings.

After Reading

- ▶ Discuss with learners some of the things Suze and Tyson enjoyed doing together. For example, they both enjoyed using the swings at the park. Ask learners what other things children enjoy doing at the park and record their ideas (e.g., playing tag, bird watching, etc.) Record their ideas.
- ▶ Invite learners to mill and move to music. When the music stops, ask them to find a partner with whom they will find something they have in common based on a category shared (e.g., favourite fruit, toy, vegetable, etc.)
- ▶ After milling and moving, review the ideas recorded and share that there are many things we have in common.

Day 2: Vocabulary: Visualization

Before Reading

Materials

- ▶ Game Cards
- ▶ Reproducible
- ▶ Elkonin Boxes
- ▶ Tokens
- ▶ Letter Tiles

During Reading

- ▶ Invite learners to think about the title of the book and ask them to describe what it means to be fast and how this is connected to the concept of making friends.
 - ▶ Have learners consider that we may use the word “fast” to describe how we meet friends but also how we do things in our everyday lives.
 - ▶ Invite learners to discuss and share the things that they do fast and list them on a chart.
-
- ▶ Highlight words in the book that describe the word “fast” (e.g., quick, speedy-quick, hurry, raced, zipped, flash).
 - ▶ Prompt learners by asking the following questions: What were the characters doing fast? What words were used to describe how the characters moved?
-

After Reading

- ▶ Display an Elkonin box and ask learners to listen to the word fast and consider the sounds they hear. Invite a learner to move a token in each box to represent the sounds they hear.
 - ▶ Have students use a kinesthetic movement to segment the sounds together. For example, students can tap the tips of their fingers or tap parts of their arms together.
 - ▶ Then invite learners to use the letter tiles, to map the letters to the sounds segmented on the Elkonin box. Model letter formation and consider offering learners dry erase markers and a white board or another writing tool to practice writing the word fast.
 - ▶ Play a game where you have cards that describe ways to move fast shared in the book and other descriptive words that describe ways to move slowly (e.g., slow, crawl, creep, etc.)
 - ▶ Invite children to demonstrate how they would move fast if they pull out a card that matches one of the words they learned in the text (e.g., raced, zipped, speedy, etc.).
- Note:** This experience can be facilitated in the outdoors or in an open space.

Day 3: Comprehension: Critical thinking

Before Reading

Materials

- ▶ Marbles
- ▶ Straw
- ▶ Pompoms

- ▶ Demonstrate the movement made by placing a marble on a paper– using a straw the educator will blow the marble across the paper and invite learners to discuss and share what happened. They may ask, “What happened when I blew the marble using the straw?”
- ▶ The educator will reinforce that the straw was used to assist the marble to move. They will also share that in the book we notice that Suze uses different things to assist her with the things she needs every day.

During Reading

- ▶ Highlight the moments in the book where Suze uses adaptive equipment to help her.
- ▶ Ask and discuss, What do you notice Suze? How does adaptive equipment help Suze?
 - Suze is able to eat faster using a feeding tube.
 - Suze moves around quickly using a wheelchair.
 - She uses an accessible swing at the park.

After Reading

- ▶ Discuss that adaptive equipment can be used to move things more quickly just like the assistive devices used by Suze.
- ▶ Ask learners if they know of or have seen any other adaptive equipment that people might use. Record ideas.
- ▶ Show learners the pom again and the straw and ask if they think using a straw helps the pompom to move faster? Invite learners to share their predictions and explain.
- ▶ Ask learners what can be done to determine if the straw is an effective tool?
- ▶ Model that we can look at how far the pompom moves with and without a straw to compare the distance. Model blowing the pompom without a straw and another pompom with a straw and invite learners to describe the distance the pompom moved.
- ▶ Provide different tools for learners to test out to see what will aid the pompom to move faster (e.g., a cardboard corner package frame, a mailing tube). Have learners compare which device facilitates the fastest movement of the pompom.

Additional Foundational Literacy Skills

- ▶ **Vocabulary:** Invite learners to explore antonyms for the word “fast”.
- ▶ **Fluency:** Provide learners with an opportunity to read decodable sentences and challenge one another to read “fast”. Use a timer to determine who reads the sentence with speed and accuracy in a minute. E.g. He ate fast (The educator will pre-select sentences based on the instructional needs of the learners.)
- ▶ **Phonics:** Play a Word Chaining Game starting with the word fast → mast → past → last → cast → vast.

Invitation for Learning

Book: Fast Friends

Question: How might you journey with a fast friend?

Materials: blocks, black and white arrows, tiles, metal rings, ribbon, transparent insert block, string, mini balloons, peg people, clipboards, pencils

- ▶ How might individuals communicate in different ways?
- ▶ How are people who use adaptive equipment treated? How might we shift stereotypical narratives of individuals who use adaptive equipment?
- ▶ How might we be allies to people with disabilities?



Playful Experiences

- ▶ Using verb phrases (e.g., jump fast; crawl fast), invite learners to move in creative ways.

Extensions

- ▶ Explore and/or design other adaptive equipment that Suze might use.
- ▶ Study and research known paralympic athletes who use adaptive equipment.
- ▶ Ask learners to note adaptive devices used by community members. When the list has a number of devices, ask learners to select an adaptation that they would like to learn more about and invite a community member to the class to share (e.g., Tamara Gordon).