

Picture Books with Neuro/Physical Diversity

(* denotes series)

General/Unnamed

All the Ways to be Smart by Davina Bell

This joyful ode to all the unique and wonderful qualities that make children who they are celebrates the myriad talents that each child brings to the world. Smart is not just ticks and crosses, smart is building boats from boxes. Painting patterns, wheeling wagons, being mermaids, riding dragons.

Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask About Having a Disability by Shane Burcaw (JPN 362.4 BUR)

Shane Burcaw was born with a rare disease called spinal muscular atrophy, which hinders his muscles' growth. As a result, his body hasn't grown bigger and stronger as he's gotten older—it's gotten smaller and weaker instead. This hasn't stopped him from doing the things he enjoys (like eating pizza and playing sports and video games) with the people he loves, but it does mean that he routinely relies on his friends and family for help with everything from brushing his teeth to rolling over in bed.

We Want to Go to School! The Fight for Disability Rights by Maryann Cocca-Leffler (JPN 323.3 COC)

There was a time in the United States when millions of children with disabilities weren't allowed to go to public school. But in 1971, seven kids and their families wanted to do something about it. They knew that every child had a right to an equal education, so they went to court to fight for that right. The case *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* led to laws ensuring children with disabilities would receive a free, appropriate public education.

Harley the Hero by Peggy Collins

Harley the service dog is on the job! He goes to school every day with Ms. Prichard to make sure she feels safe. Their students are a lot of fun, but Harley can't play with them while he's wearing his work vest. They write him lots of letters instead, and everything is perfect in the best, most quiet class in the whole school. Until the day the old stage curtains catch fire. As the fire alarm blares and chaos erupts, Harley remembers that Ms. Prichard isn't the only human in his class who gets upset by loud noises.

I Can Help by Reem Faruqi

When Ms. Underwood asks if anyone wants to help Kyle, Zahra always volunteers. She loves spending time with Kyle—he's creative and generous, and he makes the funniest jokes at lunch. But when Zahra's other classmates start teasing her for helping him, she starts making choices she regrets.

The Boy with Big, Big, Feelings by Britney Winn Lee

Meet a boy with feelings so big that they glow from his cheeks, spill out of his eyes, and jump up and down on his chest. When a loud truck drives by, he cries. When he hears a joke, he bursts with joy. When his loved ones are having a hard day, he feels their emotions as if they were his own. The boy tries to cope by stuffing down his feelings, but with a little help and artistic inspiration, the boy realizes his feelings are something to be celebrated.

Wren by Katrina Lehman

Sometimes we find what we're looking for in the most unexpected places—for Wren, this means a little corner of quiet. Wren just wants a bit of peace and quiet. What he gets is the noisiest baby sister you could ever imagine! But when Wren runs away to the country, he discovers that maybe peace and quiet isn't all he needs.

Puppy Mind by Andrew Jordan Nance

A young boy discovers his mind is like a puppy, always wandering away, into the past or the future. He sets about learning to train his puppy mind to heel to the present moment. Through remembering to breathe, the boy becomes a stronger and more caring master of his puppy mind, keeping it in the present, if only for a moment.

The Boy Who Loved Everyone by Jane Porter

Dimitri may be small, but his heart is as big and as open as a cloudless blue sky. "I love you," Dimitri tells his new classmates at preschool. "I love you," Dimitri tells the class guinea pig and the ants on the ground. "I love you," Dimitri tells the paintbrushes and the tree with heart-shaped leaves. So why doesn't anyone say "I love you" back? Could love also be expressed in unspoken ways?

Clover Kitty Goes to Kittygarten by Laura Purdie Salas

Clover Kitty does NOT want to go to kittygarten! Although she might like a friend to play with, kittygarten feels overwhelming for a sensory-sensitive kitty like Clover. And when she arrives, it is exactly as she fears: her classroom is too loud, the lights are too bright, and everyone comes too close. So Clover throws a fit...and decides to quit kittygarten. But when a classmate comes to check on her, she begins to reconsider. Maybe it's time for Clover to give kittygarten another chance.

Powwow Day by Traci Sorell

River wants so badly to dance at powwow day as she does every year. In this uplifting and contemporary picture book perfect for beginning readers, follow River's journey from feeling isolated after an illness to learning the healing power of community.

A Walk in the Words by Hudson Talbott

When Hudson Talbott was a little boy, he loved drawing, and it came naturally to him. But reading? No way! One at a time, words weren't a problem, but long sentences were a struggle. As his friends moved on to thicker books, he kept his slow reading a secret. But that got harder every year. He felt alone, lost, and afraid in a world of too many words.

Down Syndrome

Out into the Big Wide Lake by Paul Harbridge

It's Kate's first time visiting her grandparents on her own at their lakeside home. She's nervous but excited at the adventure ahead. She helps her grandfather with his grocery deliveries by boat, where she meets all the neighbors, including a very grumpy old man named Walter. And she makes best friends with her grandparents' dog, Parbuckle. Her grandmother even teaches her to pilot the boat all by herself! When her grandfather takes ill suddenly, it's up to Kate -- but can she really make all those deliveries, even to grumpy old Walter? She has to try!

Autism

A Friend for Henry by Jenn Bailey

In Classroom Six, second left down the hall, Henry has been on the lookout for a friend. A friend who shares. A friend who listens. Maybe even a friend who likes things to stay the same and all in order, as Henry does. But on a day full of too close and too loud, when nothing seems to go right, will Henry ever find a friend—or will a friend find him?

Too Sticky! by Jen Malia

Holly loves doing experiments and learning new things in science class! But when she finds out the next experiment is making slime, she's worried. Slime is made with glue, and glue is sticky. Holly has sensory issues because of her autism and doesn't like anything sticky! With help from family and her teacher, Holly receives the accommodations and encouragement she needs to give slime a try.

Benji, the Bad Day, and Me by Sally Pla

Nothing seems to be going right for Sammy today. At school, he got in trouble for kicking a fence, then the cafeteria ran out of pizza for lunch. After he walks home in the pouring rain, he finds his autistic little brother Benji is having a bad day too. On days like this, Benji has a special play-box where he goes to feel cozy and safe. Sammy doesn't have a special place, and he's convinced no one cares how he feels or even notices him. But somebody is noticing, and may just have an idea on how to help Sammy feel better.

My Life with Autism by Mari Schuh

Zen loves to draw and play video games. He also has autism. Zen is real and so are his experiences. Learn about his life in this illustrated narrative nonfiction picture book for elementary students. Zen is not defined by his condition, but he does some things differently than neurotypical people.

Caillou Meets Sophie by Kim Thompson

While playing at the park, Caillou meets Sophie, an autistic girl. She doesn't speak, doesn't like loud noises, but sees many beautiful things that other children usually don't notice. In her very own way, she communicates with Caillou. At her side, Caillou learns about autism and understands that children with autism like to have fun, just like everyone. At the end of the day, Caillou is happy he made a new friend.

Can I Play Too? by Samantha Cotterill

Two boys' fun train-track-building project takes a turn when one of the boys obviously insists on only doing things his way. Their disagreement spells disaster for the train and the friendship, until a kind teacher steps in and explains how to tell when a friend is feeling happy, frustrated, or angry. . . and how to ask for a do-over.

Dyslexia

Ben & Emma's Big Hit by Gavin Newsom

Ben loves baseball. He loves the lines of diamond-shaped field and the dome of the pitcher's mound. What Ben doesn't like is reading. Ben has dyslexia, which means letters and sounds get jumbled up in his brain, and then the words don't make sense. But when Ben starts looking at reading like he looks at baseball, he realizes that if he keeps trying, he can overcome any obstacle that comes his way.

Brilliant Bea by Shaina Rudolph

Despite her struggles with reading and writing, Beatrice is a natural and brilliant storyteller. With the help of a kind-hearted teacher, Beatrice uses an old-fashioned tape recorder so she can speak her words and then play them back, as a technique for learning in whole new way. With her new approach, Beatrice is able to show her classmates who she really has been all along.

Wheelchair Use

Yes I Can! by Kendra Barrett

Carolyn is a happy, energetic, caring first-grader who just happens to be in a wheelchair. She's excited to start her new year of school and make new friends.

Yes I Can! follows Carolyn on a typical day at home, at school, and even on a field trip! She can do almost everything the other kids can, even if sometimes she has to do it a little differently.

Poojo's Got Wheels by Charrow

What a good dog Poojo is! He's a great friend to everyone and everything (pigeons and scooters included). He's creative and clever (how many other dogs can pop a wheelie?). And he definitely is fast—look at him chasing that squirrel, or leading his doggie pals in a race through the park! There's no stopping this joyful pup, even when he's briefly faced with a flat tire. Poojo can do anything!

I Will Dance by Nancy Bo Flood

Like many young girls, Eva longs to dance. But unlike many would-be dancers, Eva has cerebral palsy. She doesn't know what dance looks like for someone who uses a wheelchair. Then Eva learns of a place that has created a class for dancers of all abilities. Her first movements in the studio are tentative, but with the encouragement of her instructor and fellow students, Eva becomes more confident. Eva knows she's found a place where she belongs. At last her dream of dancing has come true.

I See, You See by Richard Jackson

Pup is pulling, Maisie is pushing, and Jonah is looking and listening as the three of them set off on their daily dog walk. But what begins as a chore becomes an unexpected celebration of imagination as their neighborhood transforms. Maisie sees butterfly; Jonah sees a popsicle garden! Maisie sees the postman; Jonah sees a sky slide! And...is that...a tree of cats?!

Dancing with Daddy by Anitra Rowe Schulte

Elsie can't wait to go to her first father-daughter dance. She picked out the perfect dress and has been practicing swirling and swaying in her wheelchair. Elsie's heart pirouettes as she prepares for her special night. With gestures, smiles, and words from a book filled with pictures, she shares her excitement with her family. But when a winter storm comes, she wonders if she'll get the chance to spin and dance her way to a dream come true.

Best Day Ever! by Marilyn Singer

This playful puppy thinks she's having the best day ever! She's so happy to be out with her friend, she doesn't even realize that she's being a little naughty. But then he scolds her, and suddenly—Worst. Day. Ever. Will puppy be able to make amends and turn their day back around?

Limb Differences

What Happened to You? by James Catchpole

Imagine you were asked the same question again and again throughout your life and it was a question that didn't bring about the happiest of memories. Constantly seen first for his disability, Joe is fed up of only ever being asked about his leg. All he wants to do is play Pirates. But as usual, one after the other, all the children ask him the same question they always ask, "What happened to you?" Understandably Joe gets increasingly angry! Until finally the penny drops and the children realize that it's a question Joe just doesn't want to answer . . . and that Joe is playing a rather good game . . . one that they can join in with if they can stop fixating on his missing leg . . . Because children are children, after all.

Rescue & Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship by Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes

Rescue thought he'd grow up to be a Seeing Eye dog — it's the family business, after all. When he gets the news that he's better suited to being a service dog, he's worried that he's not up to the task. Then he meets Jessica, a girl whose life is turning out differently than the way she'd imagined it, too. Now Jessica needs Rescue by her side to help her accomplish everyday tasks. And it turns out that Rescue can help Jessica see after all: a way forward, together, one step at a time.

A Sky-Blue Bench by Bahram Rahman

It's Afghani schoolgirl Aria's first day back at school since her accident. She's excited, but she's also worried about sitting on the hard floor all day with her new prosthetic "helper-leg." Just as Aria feared, sitting on the floor is so uncomfortable that she can't think about learning at all. She knows that before the war changed many things in Afghanistan, schools like hers had benches for students to sit at. If she had a bench, her leg would not hurt so much. The answer is obvious: she will gather materials, talk to Kaka Najar, the carpenter in the old city, and learn to build a bench for herself.

When Charley Met Emma by Amy Webb*

When Charley goes to the playground and sees Emma, a girl with limb differences who gets around in a wheelchair, he doesn't know how to react at first. But after he and Emma start talking, he learns that different isn't bad, sad, or strange--different is just different, and different is great!

Speech Impairment

I Talk Like a River by Jordan Scott

When a boy who stutters feels isolated, alone, and incapable of communicating in the way he'd like, it takes a kindly father and a walk by the river to help him find his voice. Compassionate parents everywhere will instantly recognize a father's ability to reconnect a child with the world around him.

Visual Impairment

My City Speaks by Darren Lebeuf

A young girl, who is visually impaired, finds much to celebrate as she explores the city she loves. A young girl and her father spend a day in the city, her city, traveling to the places they go together: the playground, the community garden, the market, an outdoor concert. As they do, the girl describes what she senses in delightfully precise, poetic detail. Her city, she says, “rushes and stops, and waits and goes.” It “pitters and patters, and drips and drains.” It “echoes” and “trills,” and is both “smelly” and “sweet.” Her city also speaks, as it “dings and dongs, and rattles and roars.” And sometimes, maybe even some of the best times, it just listens.

Hearing Impairment

Can Bears Ski? by Raymond Antrabus

Little Bear feels the world around him. He feels his bed rumble when Dad Bear wakes him up in the morning. He feels the floor shake when his teacher stomps to get his attention. But something else is missing, like when his friends tell jokes that he isn't sure he understands, or when all around him Little Bear hears the question, “Can bears ski?” Then, one day, Dad Bear takes him to see an “aud-i-olo-gist,” and Little Bear learns that he has been experiencing deafness and will start wearing hearing aids. Soon he figures out what that puzzling refrain is: “Can you hear me?” Little Bear's new world is LOUD and will take some getting used to, but with the love and support of Dad Bear, he will find his way.

The Wall and the Wild by Christina Dendy

When Ana tries to take control by creating a perfect garden, she comes to realize that nature is inherently wild. In a plot of land at the edge of town, Ana grows only perfectly sized plants and perfect-looking flowers; she throws all the irregular shoots and uneven seeds over the wall into the disorderly Wild. But as her garden gets tidier, neater and more constrained, the Wild begins to grow.