Young children are naturally curious. They ask a lot of questions. A child who looks or acts in a way that differs from the majority will be noticed by other children, even if those other children don’t make open comments. However, curiosity about someone new or different can disappear over time as the children build relationships with one another. Children do have the capacity to learn and understand that a child that has adaptive equipment (like leg braces or eye glasses) is able to do much of what most other children can do, even if it’s done differently.

Here are some reminders about how you can help children recognize both similarities and differences, and assign positive attitudes of respect and neighborliness when they do.

• The most important thing to do is to model comfort and acceptance. Children pay close attention to adult emotions, like nervousness and/or fear.

• Anticipate children’s questions.

• Gather information from family members.

• Find out what each child can do and emphasize that with other children.

• Respect family privacy if they are not open to offering information about their child.

• Keep your explanations simple.

• Assist children with disabilities if they need help navigating or joining activities.

• Assign buddies or partners when needed.

Things to Remember:

• It is healthy and natural to notice differences.

• It’s okay to be curious, but not okay to be mean.

• Being different doesn’t mean being bad or wrong.

• Children can learn to be “neighborly” to everyone.

🎶🎶 In some ways we are different, but in so many ways we are the same. 🎵🎵