**Jennifer:** Play and playgrounds are so important for children, because play is the way that we

learn to connect with the world. At Inclusion Matters by Shane's Inspiration, we create inclusive playgrounds and provide workshops for teachers that help them to understand the importance of social inclusion.

**Katy**: Fostering social inclusion for my students is so important because that gives them the opportunity to make our classroom a safe space, and hopefully create a better and more inclusive world.

**Jennifer**: Let's do the sign for play. There's play. Who remembers swing? It's very similar.

Like swing, like play. Yep. It's kind of a front and back. OK, very good.

**Jennifer:** So our education program is called "Together, We Are Able." The design and the intent of the program is for children to have a candid discussion around disability, experience that conversation through play, and then to sum it up at the end so that all of those perceptions

and misconceptions are sort of put to rest.

**Jennifer:** What does the word disability mean to you?

**Student:** It means that they can't really do lots of things. They can't do the things that we can do as a person without disabilities.

**Jennifer:** Some of them misconceptions and assumptions that students talk about in that pre-conversation has to do with how they define disability. Well, if you're in a wheelchair,

you can't do anything. That is common. And there's no judgment—and there can be no judgment—on that with students, because that is their limited experience.

**Student:** Well, when I see somebody in a wheelchair, I kind of feel bad for them, like they can't really adapt and play with me. And I think that's really sad.

**Katy:** During the pre-visit, because students don't feel like they're being taught or talked at,

they know, "Okay, this is something that I can learn from. And here now are some tips and tools

and tricks that I can use." And then they take off running, sometimes literally.

**Jennifer:** That second step is the playground experience, and that's where we purposefully connect children together in buddy groups, and then through play, they can physically experience everything that we talked about. The introductions are super important. You come down to eye level and we make the connection. Once they've done that and all students are comfortable, then they take their buddy and everybody explores the playground, and they play.

**Jennifer:** Everybody come down low.

**Rashida:** My buddy was Parker and we both had this excitement when we first met each other.

I introduced myself, he introduced himself. And then, from that moment on I held his hand. He just did't let go.

**Katy:** I think it's really important for students in my class to understand that this is someone that you can learn from. This isn't about you helping someone. That can be part of it, certainly,

but it's also about what gifts do both buddies on both ends have to bring to each other.

**Rashida:** It makes my heart feel really warm. I just feel so good.

**Students:** We like playing with you, Nikka.

**Nikka:** Yeah.

**Students:** One, Two, Three!

**Jennifer:** And then we come back in and we do a debrief, or what we call a post-conversation.

And that really is a time for students from the typically-developing class to synthesize what they experience.

**Jennifer:** Raise your hand if you had a good time getting to know your buddy, right. Was there anything that this time with your buddy taught you?

**Student:** Don't judge a book by its cover, and everybody's different in their own way, just to make sure that everybody's being included.

**Jennifer:** I like that we have a lot more things in common than not.

**Katy:** I think it's really important to get kids talking about inclusivity at a wide level. My students are going to be going into a very diverse world. And the more that they're able to be inclusive of others, the better they're going to make the world around them.

**Student:** You want to go on the other slide now?

**Jennifer:** Talk to your principal. Come up with something small that you can start with. Maybe it's a conversation at your staff meeting. If you're a general education teacher, find a special ed teacher that would want to partner with you. Start the conversation.

**Katy:** If I could see my students come away from the fourth grade with anything, I would want them to ultimately be strong allies for others. As a teacher, nothing would make me

more proud.