



2025-26 Programming Opportunities through Mikayla's Voice

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education announces Mikayla's Voice programming for the 2025-2026 school year. **No cost to districts – Grant funded.** Mikayla's Voice offers original programming to help build a positive school culture and ensure the well-being of your staff and students, and includes all of the following:

Two Assemblies:

Two school-wide assemblies are held in which the book Our Friend Mikayla is shared.

One of the presenters is a student or young adult with a disability who also shares their personal story. Questions are encouraged for further discussion about having a friend with a disability. Each presentation concludes with an invitation for all students to serve as Mikayla's "Voice."

One Inclusive Art Project:

Participating schools choose one of the two projects in which 24 students of all abilities will work together to create a large-scale artwork to celebrate kindness and friendship in your school.

Wheels of Friendship®:

Wheels of Friendship is an original art program that incorporates wheelchair painting and tissue paper decoupage, both mediums that offer success for students of all abilities. Together the group of students choose the theme for their art and decide how best to represent kindness, inclusion and friendship in their school.

Kaya's Kaleidoscope:

Kaya's Kaleidoscope is created when students complete their own individual canvases that work together in an interactive, almost puzzle-like design. Symbolic of school communities, every canvas is as essential to the mural as each student to their school. And, in keeping with Mikayla's Voice message, mission, and style, each canvas features wheelchair tracks, tissue paper decoupage, and a yellow spot. The canvases can be arranged and rotated any way, creating an endless number of options... each as unique and beautiful as the next. The interactive exhibits allow thousands of students to engage with the art and consider its many lessons.

Artwork Unveiling and Installation:

Once complete, all student artists help unveil their collaborative artwork and share its message with the entire school community before it is permanently installed in their school. This culminating, year-end school-wide celebration also provides an opportunity to highlight individual and class projects based on the books or lessons and revisit Mikayla's Voice message and mission with all students.

Inclusion Books:

Mikayla's Voice has published four children's books written and illustrated by kids for other kids about having a friend with a disability. Mikayla was born with a brain injury, Jeffrey has Down Syndrome, Brady is challenged by autism, and Dot has a yellow spot, but these books are not about the main characters or their disabilities. They are about friendship. And kindness. Two of each book is provided for your elementary school library and/or for your middle/high school students to share with younger students in your district.

- *Our Friend Mikayla*
- *High Fives and A Big Heart*
- *Super Brady ~ Always on the Move!*
- *The Spot*

Mikayla's Bookshelf Enrichment Website:

"Mikayla's Bookshelf" includes electronic versions of all four books making it easier to share them with all classes, students, and families. The books are available in alternate formats such as read out loud and braille. The books are just the foundation upon which enrichment lessons for teachers and/or older students build upon to introduce and/or reinforce Mikayla's Voice message.

Mentor Program:

Middle and High school students will be encouraged to serve as mentors to read books to the younger students and complete several enrichment lessons from Mikayla's Voice bookshelf.

Data Collection:

Mikayla's Voice has partnered with Drs. Dever and Lindstrom as part of an ongoing program assessment for improvement and replication. Participating schools are required to complete pre and post data collection to measure the global quality of the programs and the ability to improve school culture and community. All data is reported in aggregate form and no school is identified in the data report.

Ease of Programs:

Mikayla's Voice assigns a Program Coordinator who will facilitate on site programming at schools and bring all materials and supplies. Districts assign a liaison for scheduling assemblies and art programs and to be present during art projects.

Schools interested in participating can contact:

Rita Cheskiewicz, Executive Director, at 610-730-1520 or rita@mikaylasvoice.org Sharon Jones, Program Director, at 484-854-1355 or sharon@mikaylasvoice.org

Schools accepted on a first come, first serve basis.



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