

Perceptions of Disability: A Smile as Big as the Moon (Non-Fiction)

Est. Time: 2 Weeks Reading/45 Minutes Class

Objective

Gain a better understanding of the obstacles students with disabilities sometimes encounter when seeking extra-curricular opportunities.

Synopsis

After ten years, Mike Kersjes, a special education teacher, was showing signs of burnout. When he came across an article about NASA's space camp, he was inspired to apply for a spot at the camp for his students with disabilities. In this book, Kersjes describes the rejection and resistance he and his students experienced along their journey to attend space camp.

Activity

Read the following book and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *A Smile as Big as the Moon: A Teacher, His Class, and Their Unforgettable Journey* (2002)

Author: Michael Kersjes with Joe Layden

Publisher: St. Martin's Press • New York

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Why did special education teacher Mike Kersjes feel that his students were treated like second-class citizens?
2. What happened when the principal, Tom Keller, found out about Mike's call to the Space Center?
3. Why do you think there was so much opposition to the students going to space camp?
4. What factors helped the students succeed at space camp?
5. What awards did the students win?
6. Discuss your initial perception of the students in the book. Did your perceptions change as you continued to read? If so, how?