

Grandpa's White Cane Classroom Program

by authors Jim Hoxie and Joanna Jones

Usually Jim talks to third grade students. He requests that the teacher read the book to the children prior to Jim and Joanna's presentation. (We give the teacher a hard back copy of "Grandpa's White Cane" before the program for the classroom. Some classes want a set of six paperback books to use in a reading group.) This greatly enhances the children's understanding regarding what the presentation is about. Third graders often use a rug or reading area for group time. (A typical size classroom is 22 to 24 students).

Note: With a much larger class the caning becomes chaotic and the students cannot hear Jim talking. The total time in the classroom is about 35 – 40 minutes.

Have the front cover of the book on Smart Board in front of class if possible.

Questions for Joanna to ask Jim: (15 minutes)

1. Joanna says, "Hi Jim, I am Joanna, I am extending my hand to you."

Jim-"Hi Joanna, great to see you this morning!" (This helps the children to understand they need to tell me who they are, as I cannot see them.)

2. Joanna and Jim will tell a brief history of their background.

Jim says, "I am a retired forester and I lost my vision later in life. I have an eye disease called glaucoma. This has caused me to gradually lose my vision. I have been legally blind for 11 years."

Joanna-"I am a retired school teacher and now write children's books."

3. Joanna will ask 3-4 students to stand up around the room and she asks Jim, "What do you see? Can you see any students standing?" (The purpose of this exercise is to help the children to understand Jim's vision. This will vary according to each person's vision).

4. Joanna says, "Jim, can you tell me what time it is?" (The children all look to the classroom clock.)

Jim demonstrates his talking watch. Then he demonstrates what other assistive devices help him. (Magnifier with a light, talking clock, talking book). With the talking book he has the cartridge of *Grandpa's White Cane* book already inserted in it and he plays about 20 seconds of the introduction). This helps the students to understand how he reads books.

5. Joanna-"How do you get your breakfast?"

Jim tells how he washes his hands first and how he gets his frosted flakes from the SAME PLACE in the cupboard each morning. He describes getting his breakfast: He puts his hand into the box of cereal to get a handful, puts his finger into the bowl to check the amount of cereal, then goes to the refrigerator and gets the milk. Then he pours the milk into the bowl until he feels the milk on his finger. The children enjoy hearing this and can relate

to getting breakfast. (He stresses how important it is to return items back to the same place so he can find them).

6. Joanna-“Can you show how you use the Tall White Cane?”

Jim will demonstrate in the front of the room how to walk with the cane. He will discuss sweeping, tapping, and the use of the senses including hearing and smelling. He will explain how the Tall White Cane helps people to recognize that he is blind (red, white and black) and it helps him to know when there are objects in front of him so he does not fall over them.

7. Joanna-“When walking on the bike path, what can people do to let you know they are nearby?”

Jim-“When you are on your bike, say passing on your left or right. If you have a horn or bell on your bike it is helpful for me if you use it.”

Joanna toots a bike horn (Jim explains to the students if he does not hear them passing him, he could step out and get hit and they could fall off their bike and get hurt, too).

Jim- (10 minutes). I will then explain that half of the students will line up behind me and follow me while caning with their eyes open (or closed if they want.)

We make several laps around the classroom. (I am talking and saying: “Can you feel the texture of the carpet, can you tell the difference on the sound of the tile, are you listening, can you feel the ping on the steel chair?”) With permission of the teacher, we go out into the hallway finding doors and listening to other students in the hallway. I am talking all of the time as we are walking with the canes. We emphasize cane safety while keeping the tips of the canes on the floor.

Jim will explain LISTENING AND SMELLING.

Example: Jim-“I think we are passing the kitchen as I can smell the Cinnabuns baking.”

(Jim has made 14 smaller white canes for the kids to practice with.)

This first group takes about 10 minutes and then we repeat this with the other group of students.)

While Jim is caning with approximately 12 students, Joanna will hand out a soft cover copy of *Grandpa’s White Cane* book to review with the students.

Points to cover: Joanna (About 10-15 minutes)

1. Hand out soft cover books and review the side bars with the students.

2. Joanna- “What can you do to help a fellow student who cannot see well or is blind?”

Joanna-“If you are standing in the hall waiting to go to the lunch room, what can you say to the blind student when the line is starting to move? REMEMBER-the blind student cannot see the line moving

ahead. Do you push him/her ahead or yell to get going?"
(Give the students a few moments to answer)

3. Joanna, "If you are standing at an intersection and the blind person is standing there, what can you do?"

Answer-Student- "I'm Sally, would you like to take my elbow to walk across the street?"

Joanna-Emphasizes importance of asking if you can help first.

As time allows you can encourage them to discuss how they can help.

GATHER THE BOOKS BACK and reuse at the next class. (Need 12 soft cover books in a class of 24 students).

Conclusion-10 minutes

After both groups have done the caning and have met with Joanna about the book, then the students will all gather together and Jim will tell them what a great group they are and how well they did with walking with the canes.

Joanna-"Do you have some questions? Raise your hands and I will call on you." (Joanna will call on the kids with raised hands, as Jim will not be able to see their raised hands).

Joanna will give a handout to the teacher, "Ways To Help People Who Have Low Vision Or are Blind," for the students to take home.

The handout is on yellow paper, as it stands out. The students are encouraged to share it with their families.

The students are always enthused about learning about the Tall White Cane and actually doing the caning. The Elementary Principal has told Jim and Joanna that this presentation during the October "White Cane Week" is a favorite program. He welcomes us back each year.

Each visually impaired person will adapt their presentations to their audience and the important areas that they want to cover. This is just an example of what we have found to work for us. It is most helpful to have an assistant who has good vision. For example: She/he can call on students with raised hands.

Best wishes to you as you educate students on the meaning of the white cane and help them to learn how they can help their classmates and members of the community.

Joanna Jones and Jim Hoxie-co-authors *Grandpa's White Cane*