



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1990 Volume VI: Genetics

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## You are a Unique and Special Person

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.06.02  
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The unit is intended specifically for children in special education classes, but could also be used in 5th and 6th grade science classes. I have found in my years of teaching special education that students are often teased as being “different” or “stupid” by peers and sometimes even adults, with the result that my students often come to school with a very poor self-image. Much of this poor self-image is linked to their perceptions of themselves as being different from others, with the differences somehow making them less valuable as a person. This unit is meant to expose students to the idea that all individuals have built-in differences, and that everyone is unique. This unit covers atoms and molecules; the concepts of living vs. non-living; basic cell structure; cell division; genetic code, including chromosomes, genes and DNA; Mendel’s theories; autosomal recessive diseases; and autosomal dominant diseases. Sample lessons include a fact sheet on sickle cell anemia. The main goal of the unit is for students to feel at the end that every person is both like other people and different from other people, and that many of these similarities and differences are governed by genetics. Additionally students will realize that not all differences are negative, and will be able to understand that even their peers who tease them are different from others in their own ways.

(Recommended for Special Education, grades 5-8; and Science, grades 5-6)

### **Key Words**

*Biology Human Genetics Teaching*

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