

The illustration depicts a young girl with curly brown hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt and blue jeans, sitting in a purple wheelchair. She is smiling and has her right arm raised in a fist. The wheelchair is modified with a control panel on the backrest featuring a musical note icon and a directional arrow. The background is a vibrant space scene with a blue and purple gradient, filled with stars, a crescent moon, a ringed planet, a blue planet, and a spiral galaxy. The title 'Addy's Chair to Everywhere' is written in a playful, rounded font, with 'Addy's Chair' in pink and 'to Everywhere' in yellow.

Addy's Chair to Everywhere

Debi Novotny

illustrated by
Jomike Tejido

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free spirit
PUBLISHING®



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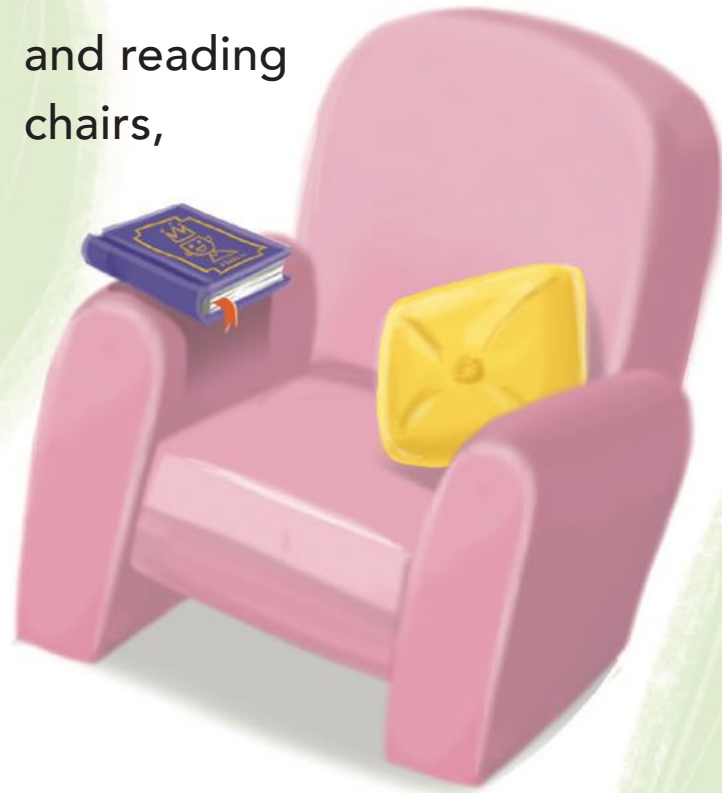
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To the Rover Rams and friends everywhere . . .
adventures await! —DN

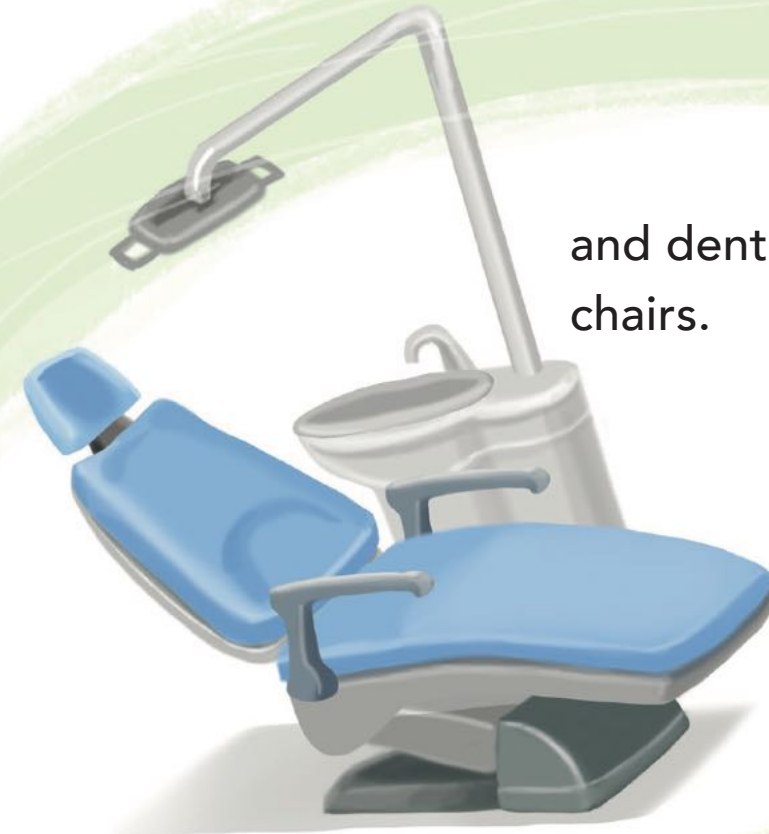
To Fuji and Sophia
Love, Pop



There are rocking chairs



and reading chairs,

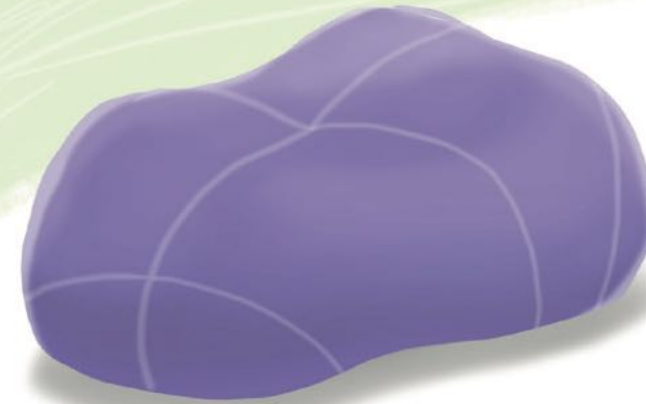


and dentist chairs.



Chairs that wobble, chairs that swivel.

Squishy chairs with room to wriggle.



Chairs of many shapes and sizes. A special chair with big surprises . . .

haircut chairs



Her chariot nears! Hail Addy, the queen!



Or maybe she captains a submarine.



A Note for Teachers and Care Providers

I wrote *Addy's Chair to Everywhere* to show what an inclusive classroom looks like and to help readers of all ages see disabled children as whole children, not as just their disability. I want readers to meet Addy and get to know her kindness, her creativity, her vibrant imagination, and her playful spirit.

Following a leg surgery and rehabilitation due to cancer, I taught for a while from a wheelchair. After some time spent healing, I moved to using a walker, then crutches, and then a cane. These experiences opened my eyes to the lack of books and resources about and featuring disabled children. And they made me even more committed to building a welcoming, adaptive, and inclusive classroom community that would help my students thrive. This story is not about being a young wheelchair user—that's not my story to tell. Rather I hope it encourages children to play, grow, and build an inclusive world.

Building an Inclusive Community

A community is a group of people in the same space or place who share common interests and goals. For children, being part of a community and feeling a sense of belonging in the group is crucial for social and emotional development. It helps them feel comfortable to take risks and be their full, wonderful selves. In *Addy's Chair to Everywhere*, Addy and the other children in her class create a magical world where individual strengths are encouraged, friendship bonds are created through a common love for imagination and play, and everyone belongs.

You can grow a sense of community in your group by giving children freedom to express themselves, both verbally and nonverbally, and by providing opportunities for children to learn from and understand how they each experience the world.



What this inclusive environment and strong community looks like depends on your classroom and your students. Here's one example from my own classroom: when a partially blind student came to the carpet for storytime, her classmates would hold their hands above their heads so she could feel her way to an empty spot on the rug. It became a game that brought giggles to everyone. I also borrowed goggles from a school for the blind so children could see what their classmate was experiencing as her vision declined, helping develop empathy and social awareness for all.

Here are four ideas for building community and fostering inclusive play using real-life scenarios and hands-on activities.

TIP #1: Let Children Arrange the Space

Let children take ownership of their environment: Invite them to help arrange the furniture and toys in the classroom, in a play area, at home, or in their room. In my kindergarten classroom, there were tables, chairs, and play centers set up around the room where important work took place.

But I also wanted to enlist children's help in creating a space that truly worked for everyone. I placed the small, moveable furniture pieces in the center of the room and told my students that they could decide where the furniture went. Then I watched as magic happened. The children discussed where the furniture pieces would work best for everyone in the group. They enjoyed making big decisions in this real-life situation while practicing important life skills within their community of learners: namely teamwork, responsibility, cooperation, ownership, and friendship.

