

Inclusion Solutions

Back to School: Fall 2009

We're the DSG, and we're here to help you!

The Down Syndrome Guild of Southeast Michigan is pleased to partner with you to make the 2009-2010 school year a great one for your students with Down syndrome, their classmates, and you! We want to let you know about some resources we have available to help you:

Inclusion Solutions is a quarterly newsletter written especially for educators to assist you in your efforts to support students with Down syndrome in your classroom. Each edition will provide you with strategies you can implement with your students to help them achieve their unique potential. Each edition will be filled with articles, tips, and pointers, as well as information about upcoming seminars, book reviews, and new products that may be helpful to you in your classroom. We hope this newsletter will become an effective means of exchanging ideas between teachers, parents, aides, therapists and administrators. We welcome your comments, suggestions, and input so **Inclusion Solutions** will benefit all educators. Please send any ideas you would like to share with other teachers to us by emailing newsletter@dsgsemi.org

Educator Packet: Working Together to Educate and Include Students with Down Syndrome. DSG is making available a packet of best practices to guide educators in making the accommodations and adaptations necessary to educate and include students with Down syndrome. Included are background materials on Down

syndrome and inclusion, as well as specific information about reading, mathematics, communication, sensory integration, participation in extracurricular activities, encouraging friendships and social interactions, and positive behavior supports. Mark your calendars for the first training session, which will be held at the Doyle Center for Professional Development on October 14, 2009.

Since 1989, the Down Syndrome Guild of Southeast Michigan (DSG) has proactively advocated for individuals with Down syndrome in the Southeast Michigan area and their families by disseminating timely and informative materials, sponsoring educational conferences and training seminars, maintaining a comprehensive website on Down syndrome and supporting a wide network of parents, educators, physicians, congregations, and community members. DSG's mission is to empower individuals, educate families, enhance Michigan communities, and celebrate the extraordinary lives and accomplishments of people with Down

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**Opening a world of
opportunity for people
with Down syndrome**

Inclusion is MORE than a physical presence!

Attitude is Everything Believe that all students can participate. Value the student and their independence. Forget past failures. Focus on present potential and future success.

Build a Rapport With Others Begin by introducing yourself to others on the team. Don't forget to introduce students to the general classroom teacher. If you are a consultant, ensure that people refer to you by your name versus professional title. If you are a teacher, greet the student each day.

Speak to Others Directly Provide written documentation to the team when needed, but remember the value of a face-to-face conversation. Resist the temptation to rely solely on paraeducators to communicate your message to others or on anonymous correspondence through office mailboxes. Likewise, always speak directly to students, the paraeducator is not their communication tool.

Listen and Share. Student success is the responsibility of everyone on the team and everyone involved has valuable insights. Share stories, critical bits of information that one learns from daily contact with the student, or ideas from home. Collaborate when identifying lesson goals and modifications. Troubleshoot problems together.

Recognize Passive Involvement A seat assignment in the general classroom does not create or ensure learning. When students are isolated from peers, or the classroom tasks are completed for them (including choice-making), students are passively involved in your classroom. Students must actively participate in classroom activities, communication with teachers, and interaction with peers.

Promote Independence Independence, no matter how insignificant it may seem, builds self-esteem and preserves the student's integrity. Students learn independence by doing, not by watching others do for them. Limit "hand over hand" assistance and use as few prompts as possible when assisting students. Structure academic lessons and social activities to require minimal adult supervision or participation.



Accept Alternative Products If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a photo-essay conveys the equivalent message of a five-page paper. Remember students learn through the process of creation not simply from the product.

Explore Technology Technology enables many students to participate actively in academic lessons and communication. Don't be shy - explore closets and storage facilities for any and all equipment the school currently owns. If you're a novice to technology, play and practice first, then you will help students succeed!

Use Technology Effectively Using technology as a tool to keep students occupied does not promote learning. Likewise, communication technology used randomly fails to promote socialization. Select simple,

efficient technology EVERYONE can understand and operate. Create goals for the student to use the technology for learning and communication in the classroom.

Outline Team Members Roles and Responsibilities Who will escort the student to class? Who is responsible for obtaining a book on tape? Who is going to ask the student questions about the day's lecture? Name and itemize all tasks completed by adults, or the student's participation will decrease.

Conduct Assessments Everyday The annual IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meeting is too late to assess student learning. Remember the value of informal assessments and communication. Ask a student content-related questions everyday. Strive to understand how the student best learns and demonstrates knowledge. Adjust teaching methods or learning activities accordingly.

Visit the Classroom Understand the dynamics and the culture of a classroom, before making any recommendations for a student. Observe the student in the classroom to gain awareness of the teacher's expectations, the benefits of particular adaptations, or which adaptations need modification.

Enlist the Administrators to Participate! Seek input and support from principals and assistant principals. Their guidance creates accountability and ensures teacher communication and collaboration. Ask administrators to assist, honor and provide scheduled planning time for team members.

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Inclusion is more than a physical presence, continued

Supervise Paraeducators

Paraeducators require explicit instructions and on-going supervision to facilitate the participation of students in the classroom. Although the Paraeducator may have the most contact-hours with the student, the teachers should make content decisions for individual lessons.

Respect Paraeducators

Include Paraeducators in weekly planning meetings as well as IEP meetings. Paraeducators have valuable insights into the student and the classroom dynamics. Their participation in meetings creates a clear idea of what is expected of students and themselves.

Create and Design Universally

Design instruction and choose materials that make the learning activities accessible to all the students in your classroom. Plan and consider all differences in abilities including speaking, sight, hearing, movement, reading, writing, attention, memory, and organization skills.

Generalize and Broaden Your Efforts

When you create a new activity for a specific lesson, choose content that will apply to future students and other students in the class. Remember that a technique used for one particular class will work for a different class. Share your efforts with others and a student's participation will increase in new places.

Source: www.projectparticipate.org

Parents and Schools In Partnership

We are proud to announce that twenty (20) school districts are working cooperatively with DSG to improve the quality of education for students with Down syndrome. DSG will be a resource for districts by providing training opportunities, and educational materials for parents and educators. Each district has designated a Down Syndrome Specialist who is:

- Vitally interested in the education of students with Down syndrome;
- Trained to recognize patterns of behavior and/or learning challenges that are common and suggest interventions;
- Available to attend quarterly breakfasts to provide feedback to DSG and share ideas with other school districts;
- Willing to attend conferences and lectures about the education of students with Down syndrome (2-3 per year);
- Capable of disseminating information to other teachers within your school district;
- Willing to act as a resource for teachers who are currently teaching children with Down syndrome;and

- Able to be a contact person for DSG when important information about Down syndrome becomes available

Based on an award-winning program from Kansas City, which is being successfully implemented in other cities like Dallas and Memphis, our streamlined approach provides an efficient, effective means to meet the informational needs of your district and our parents. For more information or to find out who the Down Syndrome Specialist is in your school district, contact the DSG office at 248-646-0819 or email info@dsgsemi.org



Students with Down syndrome in the Classroom: 19 Quick Ways to Accommodate

When positioning students in the classroom:

- Consider sensory needs: vision, hearing, touch and smell.
- Seat at front/back of room.
- Seat away from noises (e.g., lights, street, hall, computers).
- Seat with back to window.
- Locate near teacher.
- Change lighting (light on desk, back to window).

Pre-Organizing Information:

- Highlight key points in the textbook. Student reads just these points.
- Have the student arrive 10 minutes early to go over the day plan.
- Provide support to preview materials before the lesson.
- Give a structured overview at the beginning of the lesson.
- Prepare summary of important information with blanks for the student to fill in while listening.
- Use pre-designed two column note blanks.
- Photocopy information ahead of time.

Giving Instructions

- Repeat and simplify instructions.
- Have a peer repeat the instructions.
- Write oral instructions down and always keep in one place.
- Ask the student to repeat directions to strengthen understanding.
- Complete the first example with the student.
- Act out/model the activity to clarify instructions.

Peer Presentations: Classroom Kit for Down Syndrome

With proper education and open dialogue, teachers can help create friendships between children with Down syndrome or other special needs, and typically developing students. One of the best ways to teach the community about appreciation of diversity is through our schools. Parents and professionals find that when classmates understand a student's disability, they may become allies in helping the student and less likely to view accommodations or individual support as unfair advantages.

DSG has a free downloadable peer presentation that classroom teachers can use to deliver current and accurate information to students. "A Peer Presentation" is a 15-20 minute classroom or grade level presentation tailored around a specific student to address any issues related to their disability that others in the class may need help to understand. Following peer presentations, there is often improvement in the way students with Down syndrome are perceived and treated.

Schools can check out a peer presentation kit from the DSG office by calling 248-646-0819. Each kit contains a video, age-appropriate books, and aids (e.g., tube socks, cotton balls) for teaching about health conditions associated with Down syndrome like hypotonia and conductive hearing loss.

In addition, support from the parents of typically-developing classmates is crucial for a successful inclusion experience. We have developed letters that your district can use to educate other parents in the classrooms of your students with Down syndrome.

Call our office at 248-646-0819 to check out a peer presentation kit!

Who We Are

Mission Statement

The mission of our 501(c)(3) is to provide support, resources and advocacy with the aim of increasing awareness and opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and their caregivers.



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Opening a world of opportunity for
people with Down syndrome

Vision Statement

The DSG will provide support, resources and advocacy for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and caregivers with the goal of increasing opportunities and awareness.

Specifically:

- * Promote the development of programs that enrich the lives of individuals with Down syndrome
- * Increase public awareness and understanding about the abilities of individuals with Down syndrome
- * Encourage inclusion of individuals with Down syndrome in our neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, recreational activities, and places of employment
- * Provide education, resources and support to parents and educators to ensure quality education which will prepare individuals with Down syndrome for further education, employment and/or independent living
- * Create a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences