



INCLUSION OF LEARNERS

with Down Syndrome in ordinary schools

1 WHAT IS DOWN SYNDROME?

- Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs at conception and can take various forms, the most common being trisomy which is a fault on the 21st chromosome.
- Children with Down syndrome can find reading, number work, physical activities and language processing challenging, but with the right support they will make progress.
- They have strong social and communication skills and learn well when given good visual aids.

2 THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD WITH DOWN SYNDROME

- To be treated, firstly, as a child who will play, learn and grow like all other children.
- To grow up into a world that welcomes and appreciates people who are different.
- To be accepted as a participating citizen in the community.

3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LEGISLATION

- The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy (SIAS) provides a framework to standardise the procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school.
- When teachers are given the opportunity to receive support to follow the SIAS process through their School Based Support Teams, they should be able to facilitate the learning of all children who may be facing challenges and barriers to learning.

4 CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME CAN BE INCLUDED IN ORDINARY SCHOOLS

Research has shown that children with Down syndrome have more potential to learn than previously thought and can benefit from attending a mainstream setting, especially in the Foundation Phase.

It has become accepted in many educational systems that when a teacher receives the right support and affirmation from the senior management of a school, a child with Down syndrome can be accommodated in the ordinary classroom.

5 HOW CAN CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME BE INCLUDED IN THE CLASSROOM?

It does need to be said that there are those children whose needs are too complex and demanding for the average classroom, but they are in the minority.

Differentiated lesson plans and some specific accommodations could be made, but when the teacher applies an **inclusive framework to the learning of all the children**, the child with Down syndrome should easily be able to work alongside the other children. Inclusive teaching methods benefit all the learners in the class.

6 WHAT WILL WORK WELL IN THE CLASSROOM FOR THE CHILD WITH DOWN SYNDROME?

- Good, clear, visual work sheets which are not too busy and too complicated to complete.
- Time to understand short, simple, spoken instructions. It is a good idea to ask them to repeat to test for understanding.
- Work with other children on a task where they can learn cooperation and social skills.
- Model the task for them, break it into smaller steps and gently and often repeat and practice.
- One task at a time which does not take too long and is at the right ability level and not too easy.
- Seated away from obvious distractions such as the door and the window, if possible.
- Show the correct answer as soon as possible and ask the child to repeat the correct answer. Do not linger over the mistake!
- Realistic goals which make sense to the child. Avoid generalized ideas, make the aim an actual skill to be acquired.
- Concrete materials when teaching counting, for example, with clear verbal instructions.
- Generous praise for any successes, no matter how small!
- Time set aside for one-on-one teaching which will become less necessary hopefully as the programme is geared to including all learners in the diverse classroom.
- Using mixed ability grouping in lessons works well and encourages peer teaching.
- Create a clearly displayed visual programme, with illustrations if necessary, so that the child knows how the activities follow on throughout the day. This is very reassuring to all children.
- Have flexible goals at all times – if the child struggles to hold a pencil, adapt the pencil or change to a simple computer programme, if that is possible.

RESOURCES

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0wDfnoek6E> “Don’t Limit me”
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scyyNg3xBuE> “Students with DS in the classroom”
- ▶ Down Syndrome South Africa www.downsyndrome.org.za see Education Support Pack
- ▶ Down Syndrome Inclusive Education: www.down-syndrome.co.za
- ▶ Department of Education: www.thutong.doe.gov.za/inclusiveeducation
- ▶ Inclusive Education South Africa www.included.org.za

Tips

- ▶ Do not get stuck with the label “Down Syndrome”. Assess the child’s strengths and challenges as you would those of any other child!
- ▶ Do not lower your expectations – you should have the same high expectations for this child as you would for any other child.

Remember

Be sensitive to each learner’s need to belong and to succeed just like other children – do not make exceptions for learners with Down Syndrome, make adaptations!

SOURCE

- ▶ Tips for Teaching Students with Down Syndrome
- ▶ Down Syndrome Aim High Resource Centre



If I can't learn in the way that you teach, teach me in the way that I can learn.

Ivar Lovaas

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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