Dear Educator,

The Down Syndrome Association offers the enclosed materials as examples of some of the educational resources available to you.

Teaching a child with Down syndrome is not only challenging but also very rewarding. As you work with your student, you may find that you need additional resources. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us. We can be reached via email at dsamn@dsamn.org or by phone at 800-511-3696.

We applaud your efforts on behalf of our children and wish you good luck in your school year!

The Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota
Table of Contents

- Mission Statement and Services of the Down Syndrome Association of MN
- What is Down Syndrome?
  - Dispelling Common Myths
- Language Guide
- Teaching Children with Down Syndrome
- Curriculum Adaptation
  - Modifying Curriculum and Providing Student Supports
- Encouraging Friendships
- Behavior: “Stubborn is as Stubborn Does”
- Full Circle on Inclusion - A Teacher’s Perspective
- Resources
  - Recommended Books and Resources for Educators
  - Contact Information
DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA

Our Mission:
It is the mission of the Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota to provide information, resources and support to individuals with Down syndrome, their families and their communities.

Our Programs & Services:
- Down Comforter information packets for parents of infants with Down syndrome
- Down Comforter information packets for expectant parents who have had a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome
- Grandparent Information packets
- Teacher Resource Packets
- Parent-to-parent connection
- Parent support groups
- Special Times, our bi-monthly newsletter
- Voices & Choices, newsletter written by and for people with Down syndrome
- General meetings held twice a year (education and medical issues)
- Resource Lending Library
- Social activities throughout the year (i.e., Fish Fry, Picnic, Buddy Walk, Pancake Breakfast, Holiday Party)
- Regional Conferences every other year
- Annual Conferences for youth and adults with Down syndrome
- Annual Conferences for grandparents
- Resources and referral information through our local and 800 numbers
- Speakers for groups interested in Down syndrome
- Web site with our bulletin board at: www.dsamn.org

Local Phone #: 1-651-603-0720
Outside Metro: 1-800-511-3696
Email: dsamn@dsamn.org

Revised 10/16/06
What is Down Syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs in 1 of every 800-1,000 live births. It affects people of all ages, races and economic levels and is the most frequently occurring chromosomal variation. More than 350,000 people have Down syndrome in the United States alone.

The most common form of Down syndrome, Trisomy 21, occurs when there are three instead of two number 21 chromosomes in every cell of the body. Instead of 46 chromosomes, a person with Trisomy 21 has 47. This extra genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome.

Common Myths

Although information about Down syndrome is increasingly more accurate, there are still a few misconceptionsthat the general public may have about this condition.

*Babies with Down syndrome are born only to older mothers.*

False. The average age of a mother giving birth to a baby with Down syndrome is 28. 80% are under 35. However, the incidence does increase with maternal age.

*People with Down syndrome are severely retarded.*

False. Most people with Down syndrome have some degree of mental retardation. However, it usually falls into the mild to moderate range and is not indicative of the many strengths and talents each individual possesses.

*People with Down syndrome are always happy.*

False. People with Down syndrome have feelings, just like everyone else does. They respond to positive expressions of friendship, and they are hurt and upset by inconsiderate behavior.

*Children with Down syndrome are such angels.*

False. Most parents would disagree with this statement. Like all children, children with Down syndrome have good days and bad days. They are individuals with their own unique personalities and talents.
Language

Is it Downs, Down's or Down?

The correct terminology is Down syndrome. There is no apostrophe and there is no capital "s" in syndrome. The syndrome is named after the physician, Dr. John Langdon Down, who identified the common characteristics as a syndrome in 1866.

A child with this condition is a child with Down syndrome, not a Down's child or a Down's kid in the classroom. Parents will greatly appreciate your sensitivity when you address their child as "person first" and not merely as a syndrome.

Using “people first” language sends a conscientious message to others the people with disabilities are just that: people with a disability. This is not about political correctness; it is about avoiding using words and expressions that are hurtful and offensive to others. Remember, the emphasis should always be on the person first, not the disability.
Curriculum Adaptation

Simplify, Supplement, Alter

We at the Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota believe that creative collaboration between all team members is the best strategy for success. Each child possesses a unique potential and when the parents, teachers, assistants, specialists, school administrators all work in the best interest of the child, your student will have a productive year.

There is no magic formula for adapting your classroom curriculum for your students with Down syndrome. Each student’s needs will be unique. The process is simple but it does require that all team members work collaboratively.

Subtle adaptations - Subtle accommodations to daily work will assist your student without drawing attention to the adaptation. For instance, textbooks with the same cover but different contents will minimize the variation.

Same timetable/same subject - Materials and methods may vary but if all students work on the same subject matter at the same time, a student’s sense of competence will increase.

Allow adequate response time. Most students with disabilities will need time to process the material. Visual accommodations work best for your students with Down syndrome. Visual schedules may help compensate for memory difficulties.
Information Series:

Teaching Students with Down Syndrome

By Carol Johnson, B.Ed.

I AM A CHILD WHO IS A STUDENT AND I HAVE DOWN SYNDROME

I am a child and you may want to know:

- About my inherited traits
- About my family
- About my abilities
- About my dreams and desires

I am a child with Down syndrome and you need to know:

- About my Down syndrome
- About my medical needs
- About my physical condition
- About my view of the world

I am a student and you need to know:

- I learn when I am taught properly
- I learn who I am by being friends with others
- I may need help sometimes but I don’t need help all of the time
- I will need time to process and to practice new things
- I will work as hard as I can when I am motivated
- I am not stubborn
- I take pride in my work and my achievements

I am a student with Down Syndrome and you need to know:

- I like to be treated with respect
- I may not be able to tell you how I feel or why I feel but I know what I am feeling
- I will be capable adult if you treat my as a capable student
- I have dreams, aspirations, perceptions and fears, just as everyone else
- Please do not judge everything I can and cannot do based upon my Down syndrome.

******
Students with Down syndrome are capable learners who will progress with appropriate supports and opportunities.

Factors that can influence a student’s educational success

- Attitude is the most important factor related to the success of a student with Down syndrome. If you think a student will succeed, he will. When children are treated like valued learners, they learn. Everyone at school is part of the inclusive learning environment; educators need to be willing to work as part of a team and be open to trying different methods of teaching and learning. Inclusion, like life, is a process and can be “messy” at times; don’t be afraid to ask for help. Often peers have great ideas.

Medical Concerns

- When a student joins your classroom, read the cumulative file and talk to the parents about the student’s medical history. Determine if there are any precautions or supports needed. If a student is taking medication, find out what it is and how it works. Some students have chronic health needs, others will have occasional needs and most will be as health as any other student in your school. Health problems may appear differently in students with Down syndrome. For example, undiagnosed sleep apnea or celiac disease may cause irritable or resistant behavior or reduced attention span. Behaviors may have a medical/health basis rather than a cognitive or personality basis; health issues should be ruled out before attempting a behavioral approach.

Vision and Hearing

- Ensure that the student is seated where she can see and hear what is going on.
- Watch for infection or irritation of ears and eyes.
- If a student is resistant to wearing glasses, hearing aids or fm devises, reinforce for short periods of time throughout the day with a goal of full day use.
- If a student uses an augmentative communication system, ensure that you know how to system works and teach peers about that system.
- If a student signs, learn basic signs and teach them to the class.
- Some students may have a hearing loss or may develop one. Watch for changes in behavior or learning and let the parents know.

Frequent upper respiratory infections

- Frequent infections are common and they often impact learning.
- A student may be absent more frequently or at increased risk of catching some “bugs.”
- Parents may send their child to school with a cold rather than missing more school.
Heart Conditions

- Forty per cent of children with Down syndrome have congenital heart problems which have been repaired. Most students will be able to participate in all activities without restrictions.
- If a student has had recent surgery or is going to have surgery, teach about the condition and all peers to learn how to be helpful to the student.

Teaching Concepts

- Use verbal cues: songs, rhymes, mantras, key words and repetitive phrases.
- Use visual supports: visual schedules, photos, organizational charts, mnemonics, personal spellers, color codes, manipulatives, subject tabs, and diagrams.
- Chunk concepts and materials together.
- Provide activities that relate to the ability and learning style of the student. This means reducing the level, length and/or difficulty of the task.
- Ask questions that the student understands; use fewer words and speak slowly.
- Select reading materials and other resources at the student’s level of comprehension. Have the teacher-librarian locate materials to supplement the topics being taught. Have parents or peers create materials. Design, purchase or borrow alternative materials.
- Use the same accommodations for testing as used in teaching.
- Use concrete materials based on real life experiences as “bridges” to more abstract learning activities.
- Assign appropriate homework and reinforce completion as with peers.
- Use rubrics to evaluate individualized learning goals and expectations.
- Keep the student in the classroom if you are unsure of what to teach. She may surprise you.
- Expect students to take tests; vary the content, assessment method and time.

Teaching routines

- Establish routines and teach the student how to follow the routine; allow practice time and review often.
- Break tasks into small steps and define each step.
- Teach sequencing – first, second, third or first, middle, last.
- Practice skills in different settings with different people.

*****
Building relationships

- Expect students to assist each other through reading aloud, co-writing a response, locating a section or text, checking work, helping to get started or working as part of a group.
- Ensure all students have an opportunity to talk to each other and you during the day.
- Expect and model respectful behavior.
- Talk about, study and present information on Down syndrome.

Preventing problems

- Plan for transitions both within a subject area and between classes.
- Use “offices” (cardboard tri-folds) to limit visual distractions.
- Use headphones to limit auditory distractions.
- Teach the student how to work “through” distractions and noise rather than sending the student out.
- Give warnings about transitions.
- A student may need extra time to respond... WAIT (at least 5 sec.) then repeat the same instruction.
- While waiting, do not give other instructions.
- Look at what you want the student to do when giving directions.
- Pair a preferred activity with a non-preferred activity.
- Allow for repeated practice during the school day and at home.
- Be positive and reinforce students for specific tasks; many students will work for positive recognition and affirmation from you.

Communication Difficulties

- Communication consists of receptive knowledge, what is “inside” the student’s head, and expressive skills, how the student “tells.” Many students will know far more than they can express. The goal of any communication program is to teach the student to communicate in whatever way works and to teach others how to engage in meaningful interactions.
- If a student cannot tell you something, ask him to show you what is being discussed.
- Use pictures, symbols or signs to communicate.
- Teach peers how to use whatever communication system the student is using. If he signs, teach signing; if he uses a picture exchange system, teach it.
- Ask the student to “slow down” and/or “try again” if you cannot understand him.
- A student’s communication challenges will not limit their ability to become whole word readers.
- Comprehension scores may not be true indicators of what a student understands from reading, as expressive skills may not be strong enough to communicate the reading content.
- Model appropriate communications strategies.
- Use simple question forms i.e. Who, What, Where, and allow a few seconds longer for a response.
**Sensory/Motor Difficulties**

Some students have difficulty processing information from many sources at once, doing more than one thing at a time or responding quickly in some situations. They may shut down, become excited or act out when their senses are not working together properly. Some students look “stubborn” when they are experiencing sensory or motor planning difficulties.

- Focus on one sense at a time or completing one task at a time i.e. listening and taking notes at the same time.
- Look at the student to give directions, look away while he is processing the request.
- Noise, light and activity may be distracting. Provide seating and quiet spaces that any student may use.
- If a student reacts to some textures, acknowledge the sensitivity. Take a break, try again or find an alternative.
- A student may not be able to sit on the floor without back support; use a chair, pillow or prop.
- Uneven surfaces may be difficult to navigate; allow the student to practice walking on these surfaces.
- Teach calming or alerting strategies based on the student’s needs.
- Ensure the student is seated at a desk that is the right size; with their feet supported, elbows at a 45-degree angle from the desktop and the back supported.
- Encourage the student to sit with legs front. Sitting in the “V” position or with legs crossed on the thighs loosens the hip joints.
- Use adapted supports for zippers (add a pull), pencils (larger barrels, add grips), scissors or other fine motor activities.

**Socialization**

We learn how to be part of our world and community by living, learning and laughing with others. Students need to spend time together to learn how to live together now and in the future. Academics are one part of why students attend school. Learning how to be human is the unwritten curriculum that permeates everyone’s learning. Inclusive learning experiences teach people how to respect and learn from each other. By being included every day in a classroom, a student with Down syndrome learns what it means to be a full member of a school community and visa versa.

- Expect all students and staff to treat each other with respect.
- Teach everyone how to “get along” with each other using modeling, coaching, stories, real life situations and practice sessions.
- Teach names of peers and staff using photos.
- Model respectful behavior and use people-first language i.e. a student with Down syndrome” rather than a “Down syndrome student” or a “Downs student.”
Teach about Down syndrome: invite guest speakers or read books that include a person with Down syndrome.

Create opportunities in the class or school that ensure everyone works towards a common goal. The jobs may be different but the goal is the same.

Teach students to work together in groups, as peer tutors or to collaborate on projects; include various learning styles and expectations within the group.

Teach and support friendship skills within the classroom. Use recess and breaks to practice these skills.

Facilitate cooperative games and social games that build relationships.

Teach about feelings and emotions; give suggestions for what to do when you feel a certain way.

Teach how to make choices; give opportunities for making choices and reinforce “good” choice making.

Use peers to provide support or give you ideas when you are unsure. They often know a great deal about the student.

********

Recommended Books and Resources


**Recommended Children's Books**


**Educational Websites of Interest**

[www.cdss.ca](http://www.cdss.ca)
Comprehensive site with links to groups across Canada. Order books online. E-mail questions to our information line for research and response by qualified staff.


[www.inclusion.com](http://www.inclusion.com)
Site dedicated to inclusive practices.

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/sid/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/sid/)
Practical information for teachers of students with special needs, including case studies and links.

[www.seriweb.com](http://www.seriweb.com)
Large site that covers a wide range of information related to disability and inclusion.

[www.downsed.org](http://www.downsed.org)
Large U.K. site with educational links.

Extensive information on this US site.
www.kidstogether.org
An energetic and informative American site that focuses on inclusive practices.

www.disabilitysolutions.org
Educational material that can be downloaded for free.

www.mothersfromhell2.org
An American advocacy site with “attitude”; great ideas for parents dealing with resistant school systems.

www.knowyourrights.ca
A Canadian site related to advocating for your child within the school system.

www.daviesandjohnson.com
Site dedicated to adapted lesson units to support Canadian curriculum content from elementary to high school.

www.dsrfl.org
Comprehensive Canadian research and resource site.

www.trisomie.qc.ca
French language site.

http://nclid.unco.edu/newnclid/Resources.php
A fun site with great responses to comments that arise when planning for a student.

www.inclusive-education.ca
An excellent site for information related to inclusion, advocacy, testing and rights issues.

www.inclusionseries.com
Site dedicated to inclusion issues with material for educators and parents.

RESEARCH ARTICLES OF INTEREST

- Building on Similarity: A Whole Class Use for Simplified Learning Materials
  By: Jonathan Rix
  Westminster Studies in Education, V.27, #1, Apr.2004
  To purchase article, go to: http://journalsonline.tandf.co.uk/app/home/main.asp

- This article examines how the teaching strategies for students with Down syndrome may be useful for other people within the educational system. The author states that there is considerable evidence that people with Down syndrome do better with the use of simplified learning materials (SLM), which focuses on shorter, simpler, sentence structures.

- The Education of Individuals with Down Syndrome: A Review of Educational Provision and Outcomes in the United Kingdom.
  Professor Sue Buckley
To download this report, go to:
www.downsed.org/research/projects/reports/2000/education

A 1999 report of research conducted by the Down Syndrome Educational Trust in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth over a fifteen year period, found no educational benefits of special school education. On all measures, the students with Down syndrome educated in mainstream schools were either equal or significantly ahead of their special school peers with Down syndrome.

  Angela Bryce, John MacDonald, Sue Buckley
  Source: British Journal of Educational Psychology (2002), 72, p.513-529
  For copies of the study, contact: sue.buckley@downsed.org
  This study examines how children with Down syndrome learn to read and found that they had relatively advanced single word reading ability, compared with their other cognitive skills. The results indicated that most children with Down syndrome are capable of learning to read single words but there was not evidence to support the hypothesis that learning to read will enhance language and memory development in children with Down syndrome.
Individual Education Plan (IEP) Accommodation Checklist

STUDENT: ______________________________ D.O.B ______________________

DATE: __________________________

COMPLETED BY: ____________________________

Please indicate which of the following accommodations are needed for this student. Review what you know about the student and plan the accommodations that should take place throughout the school day as well as in specific classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pacing and motor activity</th>
<th>Time management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Allow more time on assignments</td>
<td>___ Use visual schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Allow activity breaks</td>
<td>___ Use a calendar or journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Don’t use timed activities</td>
<td>___ Clarify for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Allow short breaks between activities</td>
<td>___ Teach study skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Ignore minor movement</td>
<td>___ Have student repeat directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Allow student to stand and work</td>
<td>___ Establish timelines for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use physical adaptations</td>
<td>___ Plan for generalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other</td>
<td>___ Connect skills to student’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Give transition warning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Socialization Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned seating</td>
<td>___ Peer tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ In classroom</td>
<td>___ Create socialization opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ on bus</td>
<td>___ Use cooperative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ In lunchroom</td>
<td>___ Vary groupings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ other</td>
<td>___ Teach social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Ensure proper seating (feet on floor and elbows at desk top height)</td>
<td>___ Create social supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce distractions:</td>
<td>___ Teach about differences/disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Visual</td>
<td>___ Allow opportunities to help other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Auditory</td>
<td>___ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Spatial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use a study carrel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use clip board, wedges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ for note taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use a head set or ear phones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Tape text or other materials</td>
<td>___ Use written back up to oral directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Pre-teach materials</td>
<td>___ Change difficulty level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use highlight tape or highlight materials</td>
<td>___ Change assignment length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use manipulatives</td>
<td>___ Reduce paper/pencil work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Give extra cues or prompts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Other                                                         |                         |
|                                                              |                         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use supplementary materials</th>
<th>Allow student to produce work in best output modality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Provide note-taking support</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use large print</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use pictures</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Allow student to tape assignment</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Adapt tasks based upon student mastery</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Clarify expectations for work</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use rubrics</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Reduce language level</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Avoid penalizing for some errors</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use specialized equipment</strong></td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Calculator</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Computer</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Tape recorder</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Handwriting</strong></th>
<th><strong>Math</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Use worksheets that require less graphics</td>
<td>___ Allow the use of calculator, number line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Do not return work to be recopied by student</td>
<td>___ Group similar problems together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use fill in questions rather than longer responses</td>
<td>___ Provide less problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Provide a note-taker or copies for student</td>
<td>___ Use graph paper to write problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Ignore sloppy work</td>
<td>___ Provide “math facts” sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Ignore poor penmanship</td>
<td>___ Scan for reading level of materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Provide a model for writing information (web)</td>
<td>___ Break story problems into small steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Omit assignments that require copying</td>
<td>___ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Motivation and Reinforcement</strong></th>
<th><strong>Transition Supports (check when needed)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Verbal from whom: _______________</td>
<td>___ Following routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Non-verbal (Visual)</td>
<td>___ Managing changes in activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Social / Interactional</td>
<td>___ Managing changes with staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Create a valued task/job</td>
<td>___ Managing changes of grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Offer choices</td>
<td>___ Managing changes of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Home</strong></th>
<th><strong>Level of support</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Have a second set of materials at home</td>
<td>___ Peer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Use a home-school communication program</td>
<td>___ 1:1 with an adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Have parents preview or review material</td>
<td>___ Some of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Suggest a tutor</td>
<td>___ All of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Link learning activities to family routines</td>
<td>___ Extra staff in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other</td>
<td>___ In-school resource staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Program specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Psychology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MODIFYING CURRICULUM AND PROVIDING STUDENT SUPPORTS

The process is simple, yet requires the creativity and commitment to team members working collaboratively.

When first including a student with disabilities in the classroom it is not uncommon for teachers to ask "How can this student participate in this lesson?" Answering that question requires two steps:

- Determining if a student needs modifications and/or additional supports to participate in a lesson.
- If needed, deciding which modifications and/or supports are appropriate for a student during a lesson.

The process is simple, yet requires the creativity and commitment of team members working collaboratively. This two-question process for developing curriculum modifications and student supports has been created to help teachers make decisions regarding what, where, when, and how to modify curriculum for students with disabilities. This process was formulated after talking to educators across the state who work in inclusive schools. It is not a tool that provides quick answers; rather it is designed to guide a team's thinking as they create effective solutions.

**QUESTION ONE:**

**Can the student participate in this lesson in the same way as other students?**

Tracy uses an augmentative communication system to complete all written assignments in her high school history class. Tracy types answers to questions, and writes the essays and reports that are assigned by the teacher. In the beginning of the year, Tracy's history work was modified by her team. She was assigned fewer questions to answer, shorter essays to write, and very simple topics for her reports. Eventually Tracy's team realized that these modifications were unnecessary. Just because Tracy uses an augmentative method of communication doesn't mean she needs the support of curriculum modification. Tracy is very capable of doing the work!

When a student with disabilities first enters a regular class(es), the team may believe there will be very few parts of the day that will not need to be modified. However, after several weeks, it is common for teams to report just the opposite. Educators are often surprised by a student's ability to participate in many regular classroom and school activities without modifications or additional supports.

Question 1, "Can the student participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students?" is the first step in the process of developing curriculum modifications and supports. It is essential to always start with this question first. There are many times throughout the day when students with disabilities can be doing the same thing as
students without disabilities, with no modifications or individual supports needed. Teams sometimes forget to ask this question because it has been assumed that disability always means different.

When asking the first question, the answer will quite often be "yes," the student can participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students. In that case, no modifications or individual supports are necessary for that particular lesson, activity, or part of the day. When the answer is "yes," there is no need to continue to the next question. The team should feel pleased that the student is participating in the same way as all other students.

Examples:

- Ty does not require any modifications during a music appreciation lesson in seventh grade.
- Katy, a tenth grade student, participates in a presentation on the Arctic timber wolf in the same way as all her classmates.
- Margaret, a second grader whose academic work is often modified, does not need any modifications during recess or while eating in the cafeteria.
- Bernard, a fifth grade student with severe disabilities, can participate in a creative painting lesson in art class with no modifications.
- Anya listens to a reading of Julius Caesar in her twelfth grade English class.

If however, after asking the first question, the team finds that the answer in “no,” the process continues. Teams should move on to the second question and use it to determine appropriate modifications and supports.

QUESTION TWO:

*Which of the following (one or more) supports and/or modifications are necessary for the student's full participation in this lesson?*

After answering “no” to question 1, the team should move on to ask Question 2. Please note that this question in not “Can the student participate?” but instead, “What is needed so the student can participate?” Participation is assumed and teams need only decide what supports and/or modifications are required for the student to do so.

The second question is one that good teachers ask themselves daily for all students in their classes. All students can learn, but not all students learn the same things in exactly the same way. This second question acknowledges the uniqueness of each student, but assumes ability and competence. By asking what the student needs to participate in a lesson, the team is asking a question that ensures full participation for all.

While this question appears quite simple, it is, in fact, a question with many and varied answers. Asking this question ultimately enables the team to determine what the student requires to fully participate in a lesson – provision of individual supports, modifications
of material, and/or modifications of the expectations. By simply adapting one or more of these variables, each student is able to participate and be equally challenged. While it would seem simpler if it was possible to have a set of “math class modifications” or “music class modifications” that worked for all students, this is not the case. Good education means looking at each student individually.

When team members determine that modification or support is necessary, they then need to determine the type of modification and/or support needed. Although the options are plentiful, three basic categories have been created to help teams plan most efficiently:

- Providing the student with supports.
- Providing the student with modified materials.
- Providing the student with modified expectations.

Chart 4, *Curriculum Modification and Student Supports*, gives an overview of these options, while the following paragraphs provide a description of the modifications and supports.

**DOES THE STUDENT REQUIRE THE ADDITION OF SUPPORTS?**

_Hannah loves Biology and has developed an exhibit on the anatomy of a frog for the annual high school science fair. Although her teachers and peers recognize her interest in science, it is sometimes difficult for Hannah to work by herself during Biology labs. Hannah needs assistance getting materials, setting up her experiments, and recording her results. At first the team thought it would be necessary to assign a classroom assistant to support Hannah. Instead, they discussed the issue with Hannah and her friends and asked them their opinions on how best to provide this support. The students were adamant – they could support Hannah during Biology and if they needed and additional help they would be sure to tell the team._

As teams begin the process of answering Question 2, they can ask themselves, "Does the student require the addition of supports in order to successfully participate in this lesson?" Often, a student with disabilities who is unable to participate in a lesson independently can successfully participate in the lesson if provided with additional support. Support in this context does not refer to the equipment or technological supports a student uses on an ongoing basis (for example, a wheelchair or a hearing aid) but the support of another person - peer or adult. This person(s) might be a peer, a teacher, a classroom assistant, a related service provider, or another member of the school staff.

As shown on Chart 4, the utilization of peer support should outweigh the utilization of adult support. Peers are a very natural source of support for all students, and inclusion is most successful in classrooms that recognize the ways in which all students learn from one another. Keep in mind that peer support is not the same as peer tutoring. If there is a class-wide or school-wide system for peer tutoring, then certainly students with
disabilities can be involved as both tutors and recipients. Teams should be cautious of the student with disabilities always being on the receiving end of peer supports.

Regardless of whom the support comes from, it is important that support be provided to the student because of need, not out of habit. It is sometimes easy to fall into a pattern of providing adult or peer support all day long, even at those times when support isn't necessary. The support needs of a student change throughout the day and throughout the year. Although the utilization of support is important, teams should constantly assess the appropriateness of the type and the amount of support that is given. "Aid and fade" has become a strong practice in many New Hampshire schools.

**Examples of peer support:**

- Emily’s friend Kara pushes her wheelchair on the playground at recess.
- Roberta, a ninth grader, writes down the Algebra homework assignment for her classmate Molly.
- Frank’s best friend supports him when he’s using facilitated communication at the football team’s party.
- Cooperative learning group members help Paul study for the sixth grade spelling test.
- Shawna, a Kindergarten student, asks whomever is sitting next to her in the cafeteria to open her milk.
- The twelfth grade Economics class is studying the world monetary system and Juan’s friend highlights the textbook for him.

**Examples of adult support:**

- The classroom assistant records what Christopher says during journal writing time.
- A speech pathologist joins Maria in the cafeteria to help her teach the other high school students how to use her communication board.
- The occupational therapist attends Physical Education classes with Nancy and assists her during volleyball and aerobics.
- The third grade teacher gives Lenny a secret cue when he begins to speak loudly.
- The librarian provides support to Luther and two other tenth grade students as the work in the town library after school.

**DOES THE STUDENT REQUIRE THE MODIFICATION OF MATERIALS?**

*In Scott's sixth grade class, all students are expected to write, illustrate, and publish books for the school library. Scott has wonderful ideas for stories, but has difficulty writing sentences and drawing pictures. At first, Scott's team decided that he could listen to his classmates' stories instead of writing his own. But one of his friends said, "That's not fair. He should be able to write a book, too." The team reconvened. They agreed that*
Scott could cut out magazine pictures for his illustrations, and that he could dictate a story to his friend who would write it down. They also agreed to develop a computer writing program so that Scott could learn to write on his own. Scott published eight books that year!

Another way to answer Question 2 is by looking at the ways in which materials can be modified so that the student can fully participate in the lesson. It is important to be sure that all materials used and all modifications made are age-appropriate. Also, remember that the regular classroom curriculum and activities are the starting point whenever adapting materials.

There are three ways to change the materials being used:

- The addition of materials.
- The adaptation of materials.
- The substitution of materials.

As clearly illustrated in Chart 4, in most instances, the addition and/or adaptation of materials is preferable to the substitution of materials.

**CHART 4**

**Curriculum Modification and Student Supports**

1. Can the students participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students?
   If YES – stop here. If NO – go on to question #2.
2. Which of the following supports and/or modifications (one or more) are necessary for the student’s full participation in this lesson?

   - Does the student have all the necessary supports (e.g., technology, medical)?
   - Does the student have a way to communicate all day long?
Are all modifications and materials age-appropriate?
Are modifications made taking into consideration the concept of comparable challenge?
Does the student have opportunities to give as well as receive support?
Are all modifications made keeping in mind the highest expectations?
Has the student been given all of the necessary instructional opportunities to gain core skills (reading, math and writing)?

The addition of materials

Additional materials can be combined with existing materials to better enable the student to be actively involved with the lesson. The student still receives the same materials as his or her classmates, but receives additional materials as well. For example, a student solving subtraction problems in a math textbook might need the addition of math manipulatives. The student still uses the same math book and works on the same math problems, but has the assistance of additional materials to complete the work. In most cases, any additional materials provided for a student can be found in that student's classroom.

Examples:

- All students in Stacy’s eighth grade English class receive a copy of The Scarlet Letter. Stacy also receives a cassette tape of the book.
- Randy is assigned the same problems as the other students in his Business Math class, but is given a calculator to assist him in doing the work.
- Stephanie is responsible for learning all of the second grade spelling words each week. In addition to the list, her teacher gives her index cards with one spelling word printed on each to help her study.
- Jeb’s lines in the eleventh grade play are recorded by a friend. During the performance, Jeb activates a switch to say his lines at the appropriate time.
- Like other Kindergarten students, Jean must put her name on all her work. Rather than write it, she stamps her name on each paper, with help from a classmate.

The adaptation of materials:

Existing materials can also be adapted. Teams might decide to alter the materials being used to ensure that learning is meaningful. Using the same math example, a team might change the directions of the math assignment and tell a student to add together the digits on the page rather than subtract them. The student is given the same materials as everyone else, but is asked to do something slightly different with them.

Examples:

- All written materials are enlarges on the photocopier for Peter, a ninth grade student.
When reading assignments are given, the teacher highlights key points in the text for Sharon, a fifth grade student.

The directions on the first grade worksheet ask students to match each letter to the picture that states with that sound. Albert’s teacher has changed the directions on his paper to read, “Circle all the letters that are found in your name.”

Eddie, who has physical disabilities, participated in skiing with adapted poles.

The substitution of materials:

A third option involves replacing the curriculum materials with other materials. The replacement materials are part of the regular classroom, but are not what most students are using to complete the assignment. For example, the teacher might assign a different page in the math book for the student, or even give him or her a different worksheet to complete. However, materials native to a special education curriculum (e.g., hand washing skills, safety word flashcards) should not be substituted for the regular math assignment. Instead, regular curriculum, age-appropriate, challenging materials should be used. Obviously, the addition or adaptation of materials should precede the substitution of materials, though this option, used sparingly, can be part of the successful education of a student with disabilities.

Examples:

- The Ninth grade class is taking an algebra test. The teacher gives Denise a test with subtraction problems.
- The seventh graders are writing poems and illustrating them. Anthony uses magazine pictures instead of drawings.
- Fourth grade students are given a worksheet to identify the parts of a plant. Pam used a real plant to identify the stem, petals, and leaves.
- Students in second grade are assigned a page in their math workbooks. Jeff uses math manipulatives to work on his math goals.

DOES THE STUDENT REQUIRE THE MODIFICATION OF EXPECTATIONS?

Shannon is in fourth grade. At this time she does not yet read. Everyday after lunch, the classroom teacher asks all children to choose a book and read silently some place in the room. Shannon joins her friends sitting on the rug and listens to a friend read aloud. For most students in the classroom, the purpose of this activity is to practice reading skills and to enjoy books. For Shannon, the purpose of this activity is slightly different. Like her classmates, she is enjoying books, but instead of reading skills, Shannon works on gross motor goals related to sitting independently. She is a part of the regular class activity, but working on different goals.

As with the preceding two categories, modifying the expectations for students is a natural instinct of most teachers. Actually, all of the modification and support suggestions
discussed thus far are simply extensions of what teachers do daily in their classrooms - provide support and guidance, alter materials and assignments, and adapt expectations and requirements. This last category is focused on classroom expectations. Expectations can be modified in three ways:

- Modification of *quantity*.
- Modification of the *demonstration of learning*.
- Modification of *priority goals*.

**Modification of quantity**:

One way to modify the expectations of a particular lesson is to change the quantity of work expected from a student. A teacher may decide to give a student more or less work to do than what is expected of most other students in the class. While there may be a tendency to think only of assigning less work to students with disabilities, it is critical to also consider assigning students additional work to do - more work than what most students are doing. Remember, the presence of a disability does not supersede the presence of gifts and abilities.

**Examples:**

- Rather than read independently for the full 30 minutes of sixth grade silent reading, André spends 20 minutes looking at a book and then is read to by a friend for the last 10 minutes.
- Rather than write a 10-page research paper, Georgia writes a three-page research paper.
- José is assigned six books to read a month. The rest of the class is assigned four.

**Modification of the demonstration of learning:**

Another way to modify expectations is to modify the ways in which a student demonstrates knowledge and learning. Typically, students demonstrate learning by taking written tests, writing reports, preparing projects, or composing portfolios of their work. Regardless of the method that teachers request, teams can change the way a specific student demonstrates learning. All students do not learn in the same way, therefore it would be unwise to expect them to provide evidence of learning in the same way.

**Examples:**

- Instead of a written report, Jesse, a fourth grader, makes a diorama about the country he has studied.
- Ben creates a photo exhibit of family pictures rather than write an autobiography in eleventh grade Sociology.
- When the Kindergarten teacher names the color, Kim points to the color named, rather than saying it aloud.
Rather than a written scientific description of each experiment in her journal, Sasha is responsible for taking instant photographs of each step of the ninth grade class experiments.

**Modification of priority goals:**

Finally, a lesson can be modified by changing the priority goals on which the student is working. It is quite possible and very natural for people to do the same thing but expect slightly different outcomes. For example, one person may go to the beach to work on building a sand castle, another person might go to work on a tan, but both people go to the beach. It is possible that the person trying to get tan will spend part of his or her time building a sand castle, and probably the person building the sand castle will become tan, but the priority for being at the beach is different for each person. The same thing can happen in the classroom.

There are many components of a single lesson, and often students who are learning together can be working on different goals. Although many of the outcomes for students involved in an activity will be the same, it is sometimes helpful for teachers to identify the most important goal for a specific student in a specific activity. The term "priority goal" is used. For example, a student who needs to practice communicating with peers may be working in the school store. All students benefit from the experience of working together as a team, making decisions, and being held responsible for a relatively large amount of money. For many of the students, the priority goal of this activity is to learn about financial profits and losses. However, for one student, the priority goal might be different - the goal might be to practice communicating with peers as they come to the store to purchase something. All students are involved in the same activity, all students benefit from the overall experience, but students may be working on different priority goals.

Priority goals can be varied, but a few specific goal areas are worthy of mention. Communication, motor, and social skills are often areas of need - and ultimately areas of focus - for many students with disabilities. Nearly every activity has built into it a component requiring the use of communication skills, motor skills, and/or social skills. As in the classroom store example, the content of what students are learning may be academic in nature (profits and losses), but all students are using communication, motor, and social skills throughout the activity. It is wise to take advantage of opportunities to teach these important skills as it makes sense for students to learn skills in natural settings.

A strong word of caution is important here. Although students with disabilities may be involved in a lesson and working primarily on motor skills, for example, the regular curriculum goals should not be ignored. The content of the regular curriculum is important for all students, and too often it is incorrectly assumed that students with disabilities "aren't getting anything out of it." It cannot be assumed that someone is not benefiting from an experience. Shifting the priority goal for a student during a specific
activity can create the potential for rich learning, but it is essential not to hold a focus so narrow that the priority goal becomes the only goal.

Examples:

- In first grade, Ann-Marie cuts four different kinds of butterflies out of paper. She certainly is learning about butterflies, but the priority goal is using scissors.
- Giovanni works with his tenth grade cooperative learning group to predict the outcome of the Presidential election. He is responsible for interviewing five people. While it is important for Giovanni to learn about the election process, the priority goal is communication skills.
- Josh's fifth grade class has a spelling bee on Fridays. Although he is responsible for leaning several spelling words, the priority goals are standing independently in line and waiting his turn.

Appendix 1: Suggestions for Subject Adaptation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Plan</th>
<th>What Other Students Are Expected to Learn</th>
<th>Knowledge for Student with Down syndrome</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Demonstration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story writing</td>
<td>Write a story about a special event</td>
<td>To recognize beginning, middle and end of a story</td>
<td>Use beginning, middle, and boxes</td>
<td>Tell their story to the class using boxes/pictures to cus student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel study</td>
<td>Read and summarize one chapter of novel</td>
<td>Answer 5 “what” questions on assigned chapter</td>
<td>Listen to taped chapter 3 times</td>
<td>Answer questions by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Highlight pertinent text</td>
<td>- multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Draw main character</td>
<td>- fill-in-the-blank test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete fill-in-the-blank worksheets</td>
<td>- oral test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Answers at the top</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Memorize 18 theme spelling words for a Friday test</td>
<td>Choose 7 one-syllable theme spelling words for a Friday test</td>
<td>Comprehension check</td>
<td>Take spelling test using:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raised letters</td>
<td>- shorties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sand box</td>
<td>- letter tiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Games like Bingo and Hangman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Add words to personal dictionary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Photosynthesis</td>
<td>Learn how plants grow, why they need sun and water and why plants die</td>
<td>Hands-on: plant a seed</td>
<td>Oral report on the comparison study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Picture summaries of growth</td>
<td>Fill-in-the-blank test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison study: one plant gets water and sun but the other does not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Research Project</td>
<td>Choose a mammal and 5 sub topics to research and report on</td>
<td>Choose a mammal and 3 sub topics to report on</td>
<td>Brainstorm 10 questions with the student</td>
<td>Display project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sort into categories</td>
<td>Oral or video tape presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare 3-step (ab) cards for each category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information search in library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare a scrapbook/poster of collection info.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Map of neighborhood with home, school, store and sports</td>
<td>Photo album of “where I go” and “what I do” in my community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How To Encourage Friendships for Children With Disabilities

Research shows that friendships give people with disabilities social, emotional, and practical supports and integrate them into community life. People who have disabilities also bring certain gifts, such as acceptance, spontaneity, trust, simple enjoyment of life's pleasures, honesty, and several other contributions to their friends.

To facilitate friendships, you must be open to helping children develop friendships, by being flexible and persevering. Orient yourself toward the child's strengths and allow the child to make his or her own choices, because the ability to make good choices develops independence.

With younger children, you might have to teach the child how to interact with his or her peers in play. You will also need to educate peers. Start by discussing the child's disability with playmates. Ask for questions. This encourages tolerance and understanding of individual differences. If the child has a communication disability, help potential playmates learn ways to communicate with the child with a disability.

Studies indicate that group size influences the social play of children with disabilities. Small groups of two or three children often play better than larger groups with a child with a disability. Another tip is to vary the children in the group. More sophisticated children will be role models and have better communication skills. Less sophisticated children allow the child with a disability to display leadership and problem solving skills.

Play activity also factors in connections. Some toys (balls or board games) promote play with other children. Other toys (such as books or crayons) encourage solitary play. Organize materials to promote children's interaction and have them in a defined area with sufficient space to play.

With older children, research shows that peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and disability awareness training help children with and without disabilities to socialize, play, and just hang out together. Some successful strategies are:

**One-to-one matching:** Here, in a formal volunteer program (such as Best Buddies or Natural Ties), one person is matched with a similar-aged peer who has a disability. Some long-lasting friendships have emerged from these kinds of matches. You can find Best Buddies on the Internet at http://www.bestbuddies.org/

**Existing or formal networks:** In the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS), the child and family are asked to look closely at their environment and plan for a better life by examining the child's current relationships and coming up with ways to expand and improve those connections. A related method is Group Action Planning, which brings together family, friends, and community members to regularly problem solve for and with the child with a disability. For those who have few or no relationships, "Circle of Friends" is a method where peers are invited to make a commitment to a child with a disability. Often, this is done in the school setting and can be part of an existing or a new club. Promoted to students as an extracurricular activity, this "friendship club" should allow members to choose the relationship they want to develop and make sure the child with a disability is regarded as a peer at all times.

**Community activities:** Mimy places in the community actively encourage people with disabilities to participate in their programs. These include the YMCA, Boy and Girl Scouts of America, 4-H (which offers more than agricultural projects only), parks and recreation programs, community theater groups, and volunteer organizations.
Consciousness raising advocacy: This approach, where one person or a group goes into the community to discuss disability issues, often leads to friendships.

Winning Strategies:

- Find opportunities to bring children together. A key trait of friendship is close proximity and frequent opportunities to socialize.
- Highlight the child's strengths and gifts.
- Have the physical environment accessible to the child with a disability.
- Encourage independence. Follow the child’s lead.
- Collaborate with general education teachers.
- Present information on disabilities to others to promote understanding.
- Teach social skills. Talk to the child about how to make and keep friends.
- Expect people to accept the child.
- Have the child attend the neighborhood school.
- While planning the child’s school goals, include community activities and developing relationships.
- Give the child time to spend with friends.
- Invite community members to participate in the family’s life
- Prepare the child to answer questions other may ask, such as “Why do you use a hearing aid?”
- Consider how the child can make the best possible first impression in terms of clothes, hair style, or greeting.
- If the child has communication difficulties, offer meaningful comments to emphasize his or her similarities to other children.
- Be open to different types of relationships.
- Encourage the child to make friends with others who have empathy, those who can “stand in the shoes” of another.
- Get information of Circle of Friends, Group Action Planning, or other person-centered future planning approaches.
- Realize that true friendship needs some basis for exchange (reciprocity).

For additional information see the following:

*Friendships and Community Connections Between People With and Without Developmental Disabilities* published by Paul H. Brookes,

And


Copyright 1996
Content edit 2000
Successful Inclusive Schooling Practices

Council for Exceptional Children, 1995

• Diversity if valued and celebrated
• The principal plays an active and supportive leadership role. In order to ensure that an appropriate inclusive education occurs, principals and other general education administrators must be help accountable for the progress of all students, including those with disabilities.
• All students work toward realistic educational outcomes based on high standards.
• These outcomes are not just academic. They also include social, behavioral and independence goals.
• Everyone feels accepted and supported by their peers and other members of the school community.
• There is an array of services, including the supports necessary for students with disabilities to access extracurricular activities.
• Flexible groupings, authentic and meaningful learning experiences and developmentally appropriate curricula are accessible to all students. Scheduling of the student’s classes must be based on the student’s needs and not on the basis of which teachers are willing to accommodate a student with disabilities.
• Research-based instructional strategies are used and natural support networks are fostered for students and staff.
• Staff have collaborative roles and teachers work together in and out of the classroom. To achieve meaningful collaborations, staff must be given high quality training and sufficient planning time.
• There are adequate accountability measures to ensure that all individuals fulfill their responsibilities.
• There is access to necessary technology and physical modifications and accommodations.
• Parents and caregivers are embraced as equal partners. One way for parents to implement this partnership is to become involved in developing their school’s annual improvement plan.
It is interesting, to me, how many people talk about their child’s stubborn behavior as if it was part and parcel with having Down syndrome. It isn’t. There are many people who are stubborn who do not have Down syndrome. In fact, in some situations being stubborn is seen as a positive trait. I have heard people say that the reason they came out as winners in a situation was because..... “I was stubborn and no one was going to push me around”. “They thought I would cave, but I was too stubborn to give up easily”.

So, what is this stubborn behavior that we see with students who have Down syndrome and how could we think about it? I see stubborn behavior as a direct result of lacking the skills and/or language to negotiate a position. Often, we will take a stance on something we care about and, right or wrong, stick to that stance until we understand or agree with another’s view. A student with Down syndrome will continue to do things in a specific way because it is safe, it is known and it has worked in the past. When we try to change their behavior, when we try to introduce new things, we threaten their “safe place.” Some of us are open to change and will accept change far better than others, this is the same with students with Down syndrome. Some of us are able to argue our side of the issue, some of us can be persuasive and bring people to our view and not have to change - the other person changes.

Students with Down syndrome cannot do this as well. He/she lacks the language, the cognitive flexibility needed in verbal discourse and the larger world view to win many verbal arguments. So....he/she looks stubborn.

Think about it. If you were in a situation where you did not understand what was going on around you and people were trying to get you to do something you were unsure of, what would you do? You would resist, you would stay doing what you know, you would be seen as stubborn. What if you did not have the language skills to share your views, what if the other party did not understand you or did not care about what you had to say? Then, you were punished or censured because you were seen as stubborn. How would this affect your level of cooperation the next time? How would you respond to these people who “made you do something you did not understand nor even agree with?” You may become even more stubborn or resistive. And, they, in turn would see this as “non compliance” or as a “problem.”

They would respond in a way that assumes that your stubbornness is something that exists on its own; apart from you having a different view of the same situation or apart from you being unable to communicate your point of view successfully. How can we change the pattern? By letting go of the myth of stubbornness and seeing stubborn behavior as resistance.

Resistance to something new, resistance to something that is not understood, resistance to having others being in control, resistance to someone they may not trust or understand. The only way to help anyone become less resistant is to help them to feel safe enough to try something new or different.
When a child is young, s/he will not respond very well to changes; s/he will withdraw. As s/he grows older, s/he will use the strategies that have worked in the past withdrawing, not looking, pouting, sitting, throwing herself down (stubborn looking behaviors).

The more stubborn a student looks, the more useful this behavior has been in the past; using this repertoire of strategies has allowed the student to remain in his/her safe place. Adults are part of the problem. We have taught the child what s/he needs to do so we will stop pushing or so we will leave them as they want to be. Then, sometimes, we become angry.

As we become angry, the child resists further as s/he does not understand what is happening and is often upset with the situation as well. How many of us respond to anger if we are nervous about a situation? How many of us would become less "stubborn" if someone demands that we do something that we are not sure about?

When faced with a student who appears to be stubborn, think about the following:

1. Although this makes sense to you, it must not make sense to this student. How can you help the student gain a better understanding of what it is you are wanting? Remember, saying that it is “good” for them is not helpful. Can you show, act out, the positive outcome of the request? Can they try it in small steps? Can you find a way to make it clearer, less threatening? What kind of language are you using?

2. Is there a way to help the student use other means to say “no”, “wait”, “this is scary”, “you want me to do what?” other than the behavior that is being seen? Until a student has some way of communicating with others, the resistance will look like stubborn behavior. If you were in a situation where you did not understand what was going on around you and people were trying to get you to do something you were unsure of, what would you do? You would resist, you would stay doing what you know, you would be seen as stubborn.

3. Follow the old adage..............................................“Win them over with honey” any human being will respond to positives over coercion. Always enter a new situation using something that the student likes Tom other situations, go Tom what the student already knows and build on it. Pair a new experience with something that is already successful and liked by the student. Use play, songs, games etc. to help a student deal with new experiences. Watching another student have a success may not work as some students do not learn Tom watching others as they may not understand that they too could have that success.

4. You need to have a trusting relationship with anyone before they will try something new just because you told them to do it. Some students take a long time to reach that level of trust. You cannot be the “punisher” and build a trusting relationship with a student. You cannot coerce some behaviors and reinforce others; this inconsistency will stress a student; the student may never feel safe enough with you to let go of those behaviors that help him/her to feel safe.

5. When you feel yourself becoming angry, stop, laugh, walk, relax, count, etc. Release the tension in the situation and then try again maybe in a different way. Sometimes a student will come around just because you have calmed down and re-entered the relationship in a way that is not threatening to the student.
Some of the best people are just stubborn enough to hang in there when many others have given upon a child. So, join them. Be stubborn about a child’s ability to learn and help him or her to feel safe enough to venture into new territory with you by his or her side.

My definition of inclusion is simply that students with disabilities should be integrated into general education classrooms whether or not they can meet traditional standards of the curriculum and should be full members of those classrooms.

I remember the first time I ever heard the term Inclusion. Though I am a first grade teacher in a public school, school was not where I first learned this term. I first heard it from my sister Dru. Her son, Taylor, was born with Down syndrome 12 years ago. From that point, Dru began educating herself about Down syndrome, and channeling that information to our extended families. She now works for the National Down Syndrome Congress located in Atlanta, GA. She refers to herself as Taylor’s CEO, a position to which she has given her utmost.

Before Taylor entered kindergarten several years ago, Dru started using the term Inclusion. Through interacting with Taylor as he has grown and a series of lengthy conversations on the subject, I realize my philosophy on Inclusion has come full circle. I saw it first from a teacher’s standpoint, then from an empathic sister’s standpoint, then back to an (enlightened and educated) teacher’s standpoint. The culmination of my changing views was a trip to Phoenix, AZ to attend the National Down Syndrome Congress Convention. I was able to get to know many youth and adults with Down syndrome, and attended a workshop on Inclusion.

When my sister first started mentioning Inclusion, I (the teacher) had arched my back, rebelled, and defended teachers in general with thoughts such as, “How can you expect a teacher with 25 students to teach a student with special needs too? That one student would take up too much of my time! I’m not trained to teach special education! How would I grade him and be fair to everyone involved?”

After a while of watching my precious nephew grow, seeing his sense of humor and individuality, and seeing how he learns, my view of Inclusion changed. This time I saw it through the eyes of a sister and an aunt. I saw the difference it made to Taylor to change his placement from a “handicapped” class (kids with Down syndrome labeled severe to moderate, and kids with cerebral palsy, paraplegia and quadriplegia) to an inclusive setting. Children with Down syndrome learn an incredible amount through modeling from their peers. Think about it-on that basis alone there is a strong argument for Inclusion. But there are other benefits as well; I will never forget the day Dru called with excitement in her voice to tell me that Taylor had been invited to his first “real” birthday party. He had been totally included in the party planning by a friend who is a typical kid. Milestones such as this are so important. Studies show that occupational success or failure is tied to the acquisition of social skills.

This brought me full-circle to the view of an enlightened and educated teacher. I am excited about the challenges and possibilities of inclusion and willing to try it in my first grade classroom. I have learned much about collaborating with other teachers how to make a mutual partnership successful, through trust, respect, time management, and space and role boundaries. I look forward to the challenge of implementing these skills. By having a working knowledge of co-teaching methods, a creative, trained teacher should be able to assess the situation and the needs of the student and use an appropriate teaching method.

I was especially motivated by a workshop presentation I attended at the NDSC Convention in Arizona. Pathway to a higher I.Q. (Inclusion Quotient): Teaching Salient Achievable Information, was presented by Christine Hockel, a sixteen-year-old with Down syndrome, her mom Judie Hockel, and two education professionals. The first step in the IEP process for the Hockel family is
finding the Teachable Salient Achievable Points. This requires the classroom teacher or someone familiar with the curriculum to edit down the course content to the information or objectives that Christi most needs to learn.

The workshop discussed strategies such as communication, accommodations, modifications and adaptations to successfully carry out inclusion. Often, some of the vocabulary would be pre-taught. In the Biology class, for example, the special education teacher compiled a study guide with important vocabulary that the typical students probably already understood, such as “biodegradable” and “taxonomy.” The special education teacher used her expertise to come up with creative ways to teach the study guide vocabulary, and in some cases bound the study guide for reuse. To learn “biodegradable” the two students with Down syndrome visited the teacher’s compost pile and a recycling center where they helped sort the recyclables. To teach taxonomy the teacher made up sign language. For ten legged creatures, they signed with 10 wiggly fingers. Eight legged creatures became 8 wiggly fingers plus the sign symbol for “A” for Arachnids. Six legged creatures were 6 wiggly fingers plus the sign symbol for “I” for Insects.

If there were a lesson that Christi did not need the special ed. teacher would use that time to teach something more meaningful to Christy. For example, the time might be used to preview a video that would be part of the next day’s lesson with her typical peers. Previewing the tape had the advantage of being able to start and stop the tape for discussion, and to review critical vocabulary. All of these require excellent teacher planning, communication, and coordination, but it is well worth it.

The issues of grades and the fairness of assigning those grades no longer seem like the “Big Hairy Monster” I once perceived it to be. Once you have your IEP and your Teachable Salient Achievable Points, the grade can be assigned with a “modified” notation. Inclusion is an evolving process which requires communication, planning, coordination, and sometimes trial and error from everyone involved, from the administration to the custodian. I’m ready to sink my teeth into it.

“When your heart is in your dream, no request is too extreme..."
—Jiminy Cricket
Resources
Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota
656 Transfer Road
St. Paul, MN 55114
800-511-3696; 651-603-0720
www.dsamn.org
dsamn@dsamn.org
National Down Syndrome Society
www.ndss.org
National Down Syndrome Congress
www.ndsccenter.org

We are deeply appreciative of the following organizations for portions of this text:
Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati
National Down Syndrome Society
Down Syndrome InfoSource, Inc.
PREP Program
Canadian Down Syndrome Society
**Recommended Books and Resources for Educators**

*Teaching Math to People with Down Syndrome and Other Hands-On Learners (Basic Survival Skills)* by DeAnna Horstmeier, Woodbine House


*Teaching Reading To Children with Down Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* by Patricia Logan Oelwein, Woodbine House


*Fine Motor Skills in Children with Down Syndrome,* Maryanne Bruni, Woodbine House

*Down Syndrome Issues and Information,* Sue Buckley, The Down Syndrome Educational Trust

*Inclusion: 450 Strategies for Success,* Peggy Hammeken, Peytral Publications

*Visual Strategies for Improving Communication,* Linda Hodgdon, QuirkRoberts Publishing

*Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome,* Libby Kumin, Woodbine House

*The Down Syndrome Nutrition Handbook,* Joan Medlen, Woodbine House

*Handwriting without Tears Teacher's Guide,* Jan Olsen, [www.hwtears.com](http://www.hwtears.com)

*Effective Teaching Strategies for Successful Inclusion - A Focus on Down Syndrome,* Barbara Tien, The PREP Program

*Gross Motors Skills in Children with Down Syndrome,* Patricia Winders, Woodbine House