

3.21
Canada's
Down Syndrome
Magazine

Fall 2020
ISSUE #4

The
ABCs
of Starting a
Reading Club

**School
in the
Time of
COVID**

*You and
Your
School:*
Starting the
year off right

*Uniquely
Me:* The
Individualized
Education Plan

INCLUSION:
An Interview with
Shelley Moore

*Back
to
School*





3.21
Canada's
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Magazine

is a joint publication of



**Down Syndrome
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Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of 3.21: Canada's Down Syndrome Magazine!

With most students having been away from the classroom since March, "back to school" has taken on a whole new meaning this fall. The schools to which pupils will be returning will be very different from the ones they left last spring, transformed by COVID-19 protocols.

This fourth issue of 3.21 is packed with information to prepare students with Down syndrome and their families for the unique school year to come. You will hear educators, parents, inclusion advocates, and adults with Down syndrome share their perspectives on how to maximize learning success – throughout the lifespan.

In the words of Shelley Moore, who is featured within these pages, let's all work together this year to take another step towards "acknowledging all the ways that kids are diverse, which includes not just disability, but culture, gender, race, language, all the things that make us who we are."

We would love to hear from you! Drop us a line at 321Magazine@gmail.com with your thoughts, story ideas and opinions.

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INCLUSION:

An Interview with Shelley Moore



3.21 Magazine had the opportunity this summer to sit down with inclusive education advocate Shelley Moore to get her thoughts on what real inclusion looks like, why it matters, and where we're at with inclusion in Canada.

● **3.21 Magazine:** Tell us about Shelley Moore.

● **Shelley Moore:** Hi everyone! I'm Shelly Moore. I am a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia. My research is in inclusive education. I'm specifically looking at secondary schools, because that's often where inclusion needs more support. More precisely, my research is looking at the question: How do we include students with intellectual disabilities in secondary school academic classrooms? The inclusion movement is near and dear to my heart because I struggled in school growing up. I am a researcher, but also a teacher, consultant, speaker and advocate – my role changes every day.



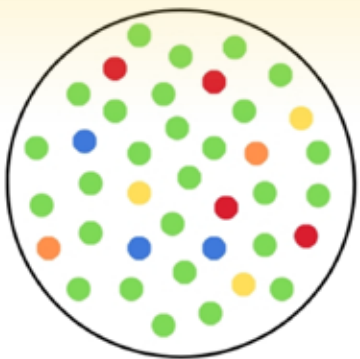
3.21: When did the importance of true inclusion first strike you, and why does it matter?

SM: My perspective and my understanding of inclusion has shifted so much over my career. I remember when I went to school, I really struggled. I only felt successful in one year: eighth grade. Ironically, that year, I went to an alternate school. Because of that experience, when I first started my career, I didn't believe in inclusion. I thought, "My needs didn't get met in my neighbourhood school; my needs were met when I was in a school that was specific for my needs."

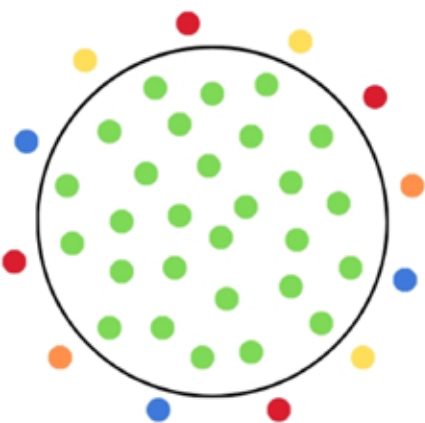
For my first job, I worked in a grade four or five classroom in New York; I was the support teacher in an inclusive classroom in which about half the kids had a learning disability or struggled with behaviour challenges. The students in my class didn't have significant intellectual disabilities, but they were negotiating a lot of things, including poverty. That was when I started to better understand inclusion, because I saw the community that formed in this classroom. It became their lifeline to each other. Not just for the kids with disabilities, but the kids without: they were mentors and they were friends. In the Bronx, the kids looked out for each other. I had never felt a sense of community like I did when I worked in that school.

In my next job, I was working in Richmond, just south of Vancouver. I was a support teacher in a high school, grades eight to twelve. Here, I was working with kids with intellectual disabilities including Down syndrome and autism. I had 18 on my caseload and we were totally self-contained in the corner of the school. No one even knew we were there, and it felt like we were in prison. I would go to staff meetings and people didn't even know who I was, let alone who my kids were. We had our own entrance to the school; we had special buses and to me, it didn't feel right. It seemed to me that I could meet their needs in this program, but in this building, we might as well not have been there.

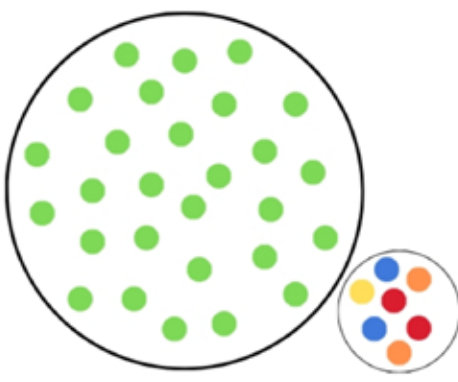
Eventually, we started to get the kids more included in elective classes; we still weren't even touching academics. The kids in the school had all grown up together in an inclusive elementary environment, and so when the kids with disabilities started to be included again, it was like an incredible reunion. All of a sudden, these kids were coming back together in grade eight and nine. I can't even describe for you the excitement they had. It made me realize how much they need each other.



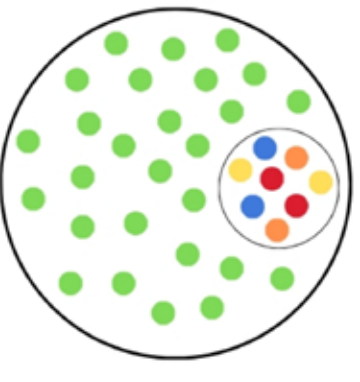
inclusion



exclusion



segregation



integration

3.21: Let's get into the buzzwords. How would you define and distinguish between exclusion, segregation, integration, and inclusion?

SM: Those words describe the history of inclusion, how we got to where we are today. It's a continuum that doesn't necessarily just apply to disability; you could apply this historical timeline to many marginalized populations.

With regards to disability, where we started historically was with total exclusion – not only from school, but from family and community. We often associate that with the institutionalization movement. Over time, however, self-advocates and their families fought back against institutionalization. Eventually it got to where individuals with disabilities were in their communities, but they were going to separate schools because it was assumed that they needed something different. That's segregation, which people at the time thought was better than exclusion, but wasn't, really.

At that point you had kids in different schools and parents said, "Hey, I have kids with and without disabilities; why am I taking them to different schools?" So, another shift began from segregating kids with disabilities to having them come to their neighbourhood school together with their siblings and peers. The difficulty with this shift, however, is that students with disabilities often ended up coming to the same building, but a separate part of that building, or in a classroom, but doing separate work and activities from their peers. This is where a lot of schools are right now, which is integration.

The next step in advocacy came from teachers who said, "Well, just physically existing and sharing space in a classroom, that's actually not enough." It's often going to result in behaviour problems because the kids aren't connected and engaged. What we really need is inclusion.

If kids don't feel like they belong, they're going to communicate in whatever way makes sense for them that it's not working. And if a kid needs support to communicate that something isn't working, it often gets misinterpreted as challenging behaviour. The problem is, people look at that behaviour and say, "Oh, inclusion's not working for that kid. We have to go back to segregation." In reality, it is not that inclusion is not working; it's that we're not there yet. So, a lot of the shifts that are happening in schools right now are about how we move from a container where kids are physically together, to facilitating authentic community. How do we create a space where people feel like they belong, where they choose to be there, where we have a voluntary place for kids to engage with each other? This is inclusion.

The latest evolution is the realization that it's not just people with disabilities who need that feeling of belonging despite

difference, because every person is different. Teaching to diversity is another shift in understanding inclusion, by changing our question from, "How do we include people who are different?" to, "How do we teach to difference?" It starts by acknowledging all the ways that kids are diverse, which includes not just disability, but culture, gender, race, language, all the things that make us who we are.

3.21: Picture a child with Down syndrome in a fully inclusive scenario. How does the school ensure the unique learning and social needs of that child are being met?

SM: My thoughts on this have changed. As I went to school and became a special educator, I was taught to make my plan for kids without disabilities, and then modify that plan for individuals with disabilities. Now the problem with that is that it's a retrofit approach. And if you retrofit anything, whether it's a building or a plan or supper, it's going to take more resources; that is, more time, more funding and more people to do that work. So what I've really learned, especially in doing this in high school, is that if we're going to include kids who have intellectual disabilities, or anyone else for that matter, we can't look at any of their needs as an aftereffect.

If your approach is to make a regular plan and then retrofit it, you're going to be retrofitting it for 28 out of 30 kids. That's why people think there's a really high workload with inclusion, but it's not the diversity that's the problem; it's the plan that's the problem. So when I think of how I'm going to meet the needs of the child in my classroom with Down syndrome, I am going to think to myself, okay, how am I going to make a plan that includes the needs of my student with Down syndrome from the start, so that I don't have to adapt and modify it for them afterwards?

Assume from the start that you're working with diverse people, and the child with Down syndrome is going to be one of those people. So rather than thinking, "I have to do this extra work for one kid," I'm thinking, first, who are my kids? What are their strengths? What are their interests? What are their needs? I need to do that first, and then I make a plan that addresses that range. And so when I think of successful inclusion, it's about how are we supporting teachers to design from a range from the beginning, as opposed to supporting teachers to adapt and modify for all of the individual kids who aren't successful from the start?

It's based on strengths. Regardless if they have a disability or not, everyone's going to have strengths. Everyone can do something. So, when I'm thinking about planning and using the curriculum, I'm thinking about that: What can everybody

do? And then, how do I add on complexity? That is so much easier than starting from the most complex version of the lesson, and then trying to go backwards and simplify after the fact.

The metaphor that I use is the baked potato. This is what inclusion means to me: If I'm in a classroom, I ask myself, "What can everybody do?" Whether it's math or English or social studies or physics, it doesn't matter. What can everybody do? That's my potato. I want everyone to be able to eat a potato at the end of this day, at the end of this class or the end of this year. Okay. Now, some people will be okay with the potato, right? Other people will need more toppings. So I'm going to teach everybody all the topping options. I'm going to show them what butter is. I'm going to show them what green onions are. I'm not going to make little green onion groups. I'm going to teach what green onions are to everybody. And what we're really realizing is, even when we think people are only going to eat the potato, if it's taught in a way that everyone has access to complexity, kids will put on more toppings than we think. The kid who you would never imagine would eat green onions, will be piling them all on top. That is the beauty of design. We end up meeting the needs of kids who we would never have imagined needed a support.

3.21: Are there benefits to having children with developmental disabilities learning and interacting with one another? If so, how would you facilitate that without sacrificing inclusion?

SM: The group that you're describing is called a community of identity, where people of like identity come together. These spaces are very safe. These spaces have very high senses of belonging. So, for example, I'm gay. I have gay friends and we hang out sometimes. The problem is not the community. The problem is the criteria for the community.

As a queer person, if someone who wasn't queer said, "All you queer people go hang out," and that's the only place that I was allowed to go and the only relationships I was allowed to have, that is totally different than me hanging out with queer people that I choose. And it's not the only community that I feel support and belonging in.

Absolutely, kids need a sense of identity and a collective sense of community with other people with disabilities. I am a huge advocate for that. How I suggest we do it, though, is not at the expense of inclusion and diversity. It's at the expense of segregation, which is when someone else decides when and how it happens.

How we did that in our school was to introduce a class that was listed as an elective. It was designed for kids with disabilities, and it provided explicit support around life skills, community

skills, literacy, etc. It wasn't a mandated course that they had to take. Did most of them take it? Yes. But it wasn't because they had a disability. A lot of them were in there because that's where their best friends were. It's about creating these spaces where people can be empowered to envision what that space looks like for themselves, rather than assuming this is the only space where students will be successful and dictating it without any other options.

3.21: Where do inclusive plans sometimes go off the rails?

SM: I said something on Twitter recently that got me in a bit of trouble. I said, "There's no amount of funding that can make someone believe that inclusion is worthwhile." What I meant to say by that was, there's no amount of funding that can make someone not an ableist. Because I realized that ableism is a discrimination; it's an attitude. Inclusion is a practice. Inclusion is what you do. And so, a huge barrier to inclusion is ableist attitudes and people not presuming competence, which means people come up with reasons why inclusion can't happen because they think kids aren't capable.

We're going through this whole thing with racism right now, right? We don't even realize that the structures in place are historically racist. And we can learn from this movement by identifying historically ableist structures that have also existed for a long time. These structures are so engrained that we can't even see that it's a problem. Kids are existing in a system that's designed to discriminate. How it's often expressed is, "There's not enough money. There's not enough supports." And I'm like, "Yeah, except that the funding that we advocate for is being used in a system that's supporting discrimination."

So that's the number one barrier to inclusion, the ableist infrastructure of education. Number two, I would say the non-optimal use of resources. And I would say number three is leadership. If leadership doesn't believe, no one's going to believe. Whether that's school or district leadership, they make the decisions about how resources are used. If you have a leader who believes, you will have inclusion. And that's why we see schools that are really inclusive and across the street another school that isn't, or districts that are really inclusive and another one that isn't: it comes down to leadership. And it's very hard because many leaders don't have experience with disability.

3.21: Bridging the gap between theory and practice, how does someone get started in increasing the places where individuals feel included?

SM: Ultimately, a lot of it comes down to the teacher's plan. And just as you can't force kids to belong, you can't force teachers into this either. All we can do is create conditions

for people to engage. So, we have to actually enact the same inclusive principles with educators that we do with our kids. We create conditions for teachers to engage in the work, which means they're released, which means they have time to collaborate, which means that they have not necessarily just another EA in the classroom or another iPad, but a complete infrastructure for collaboration.

It's very much a process. We have to work with schools and teachers over time. It can't just be a one or two-hour workshop. It's an inquiry model. Where are you now? What's your next step? What are you going to try next? We're modeling the practice of learning with teachers in the same way we would with students. What are you doing already? What can you do? What do you want to try next? When are you going to try it? What supports do you need to try that? And the biggest impact that I've seen in shifts from theory to practice is in school districts that have that infrastructure of collaborative professional development.

3.21: What impacts has COVID-19 had on inclusivity, and are you worried about the long-term ramifications?

SM: COVID has been interesting because I've seen some really positive things and I've seen some really not-so-positive things. I'm always an advocate for looking to your kids who need the most support first. What happened with COVID was, because there was such a fast and massive shift to home

learning, disabilities were left till last. We forgot that if you can figure it out for kids with disabilities, everyone else will be fine.

Teachers quickly learned, if you're just going to sit in front of a screen for six hours and talk at kids, it's not going to work. They had to develop some really critical inclusive practices, like choice, and like targeted mini lessons and options for showing what you know. All these important practices that you must do if your kids are going to be engaged, teachers were forced to do it by necessity. As a result, I saw some incredible practices, because teachers were just like, "If I don't do this, my kids aren't going to sign on." Some of the planning that I saw and how it addressed diversity was brilliant. And so I'm hoping that when all this starts to get back to normal a little bit, those practices will be maintained, because even if kids are all in one room there still needs to be choice, and there still needs to be more than one way to show what you know, and there still needs to be targeted mini-lessons, not 90-minutes of lecturing. All those practices are going to help kids with intellectual disabilities when they come back to their classrooms.

We've also been reminded that school is not the only place where we learn. So how do we capitalize on learning in every place? Let's make all places purposeful. Let's make baking purposeful; let's make video games purposeful. Let's make walking down the road purposeful, because there is such a misunderstanding that school's the only place where learning counts. If we truly believe that learning happens everywhere



and we're honouring the learning that happens in homes, that's also aligned to reconciliation efforts, which is also a really important part of this inclusive conversation. Learning does not just count in this building that kids are forced to go to. We can honour the knowledge and learning that every family has.

● **3.21: Finally, the big picture. Do you see classroom inclusion improving in Canada?**

● **SM:** Yes. Well, here's the thing. Now that I've had the opportunity to travel around the world, I think Canada is situated further along the inclusion journey than many places. And within Canada, there are certain provinces that are further along than others. And within provinces, certain districts are further along. And within districts, certain schools are further along in the journey than others.

I think there are examples of true inclusion everywhere I've gone. The problem I see with inclusion being a destination is that I don't think it is. I think it's, "How do we get better at this all the time?" Because even when you get there, it's going to evolve again into something else. When I work with schools, I'm trying to determine where they are today, and then help them commit to the next step. Now that we know better, let's do better.

What often happens is we think, "We can't be inclusive because..." and then you have this long list of reasons that often are tied to resources. Instead, we must commit to getting better all the time, regardless of resources. You can have two schools in the same district, in the same city, across the street from each other, with the same resources, and one is exceptionally inclusive and one isn't. It really comes down to where are you now, and how do you get better? Because we can all do better.

Bottom line: Do I believe that it's getting better? Yes. Do we have a long way to go? Yes.

Shelley Moore is a highly sought-after teacher, researcher, consultant and storyteller and she has worked with school districts and community organizations throughout both Canada and the United States. Her research and work have been featured at national and international conferences and is constructed based on theory and effective practices of inclusion, special education, curriculum and teacher professional development. Find out more about Shelley on her website fivemooreminutes.com or follow her on Twitter [@tweetsomemoore](https://twitter.com/tweetsomemoore).



THE DOWN SYNDROME RESOURCE FOUNDATION PRESENTS



Independent Housing Models
for People with Down Syndrome
DSRF.org/HomeSweetHome



BACK TO SCHOOL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

by Hina Mahmood, M. OT

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to adjust to a highly unusual new normal where many of our everyday routines have shifted into survival mode. While many of us are equipped with tools and strategies to deal with these changes, it is a well-known fact that individuals with Down syndrome can find such transitions very challenging. The loss of routine and structure can be a source of anxiety and fear, often resulting in challenging behaviours.

The return to school transition can be a stressful situation at the best of times, and with new COVID-19 safety guidelines in place, school is going to look very different come fall of 2020. One of the best ways to help with this transition is to prepare your child with Down syndrome for what is going to happen. Although there will be some aspects of the school routine

that will remain the same, many changes will be in place, and providing your child with the opportunity to get used to these changes will help with the transition in September. Keep in mind that it is very difficult for individuals with Down syndrome to mentally picture or anticipate what a future event might look like, so frontloading them with information can help ease their anxieties and allow them to have more successful outcomes.

Here are a few ways that you can help with this transition:

School Visit

If possible, ask your child's principal and teachers to schedule a visit to the school before it officially reopens. This way your child can familiarize themselves with their environment again, see their teacher and get used to the layout of the school. They may feel reassured to know that some things have not

changed. If an in-person visit is not feasible, you can arrange a meeting (virtual or face-to-face) with the principal or teacher to discuss changes in the school environment and how you can best prepare your child. If this is also not practical, you can ask the teacher to take some photos or videos of key places in the school and create a visual tour to share with your child on a frequent basis. Individuals with Down syndrome are strong visual learners, so incorporate pictures and videos where you can.

Social Stories

Another way to prepare your child for a return to school is through the use of social stories – individualized short stories that are used to teach expectations around new social situations that your child may find stressful or confusing. You can create a story using pictures from your child's school to pre-teach them the new school routine and help them adjust to new rules or expectations. The Down Syndrome Resource Foundation has a sample social story that can be used as a template to customize one for your child. Visit <http://DSRF.org/LearnAtHome> to download a copy. Once you have created a social story that is tailored to your child's circumstances, read it with them often and talk about the return to school in a positive tone, pointing out all the good things that will await your child despite the changes brought on because of COVID.

Start At Home

For kids with Down syndrome, it is likely to take longer to adjust to the new social distancing rules in school. If possible, rather than waiting for the return to school to teach these new rules, you can start by practising at home. Contact your child's school to get a list of the new protective measures that will be in place. Teachers can take photos of places in the school where new measures have been implemented, such as one-way hallways and new classroom layouts. Help them practice handwashing, cleaning surfaces and wearing a mask if that's going to be a requirement at school. For resources on mask adherence and visuals for hand washing, please visit The Down Syndrome Resource Foundation's website at <http://DSRF.org/LearnAtHome>.

Advocacy and Education

It is also important to advocate for your child's learning needs. Many school officials may be unaware of the fact that children with Down syndrome benefit greatly from the structured learning environment of school and that video instruction is a challenge for them, creating significant demands on executive functioning skills such as attention, planning and memory. In addition, the lack of peer interaction can have an adverse effect on the development of their social-emotional skills. Many children rely on school-based networks for friendship and may not have access to these connections elsewhere, especially if they are not in an inclusive classroom setting.

You may find that despite all these advanced preparations your child may still refuse to go back to school. This can be due to a variety of reasons including fear of the unknown, anxiety surrounding new classmates or teachers, and a general difficulty with adjusting to a new routine. Some strategies to help your child work through this reluctance can include the following:

1. Provide your child with the opportunity to communicate their fears. Using visual supports and supported communication techniques can be helpful. Your child's speech language pathologist can provide some guidance on this goal as well.
2. Talk to your child's teacher and support staff regarding their refusal to return to school. If everyone is aware and on the same page it can make it easier to collaborate on strategies.
3. Create a social story about anxiety and return to school and read the book together as part of your child's evening routine. You can then help them deal with any worries by suggesting how to cope with them in the future.
4. Provide rewards and praise for any progress or attempt made to complete school-related tasks such as packing their backpack, making their lunch, putting on their school clothes, or walking to their school.
5. Help your child stick to a routine at home and make learning playful by incorporating it into everyday activities like cooking, family reading time, or while playing games.
6. Help your child identify strategies to regulate, reduce and monitor emotions, and reduce stress. Deep breathing and mindfulness skills can be a great way for children to manage their anxiety independently. You can collaborate on this goal with your child's speech language pathologist or occupational therapist.

At the end of the day, it is important to remember that transitions are a challenge for individuals with Down syndrome, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only further complicated the process. However, with the appropriate preparation and a continued collaborative effort, students with Down syndrome can successfully return to school and resume their learning. Here's to a fun, fruitful, and safe school year!

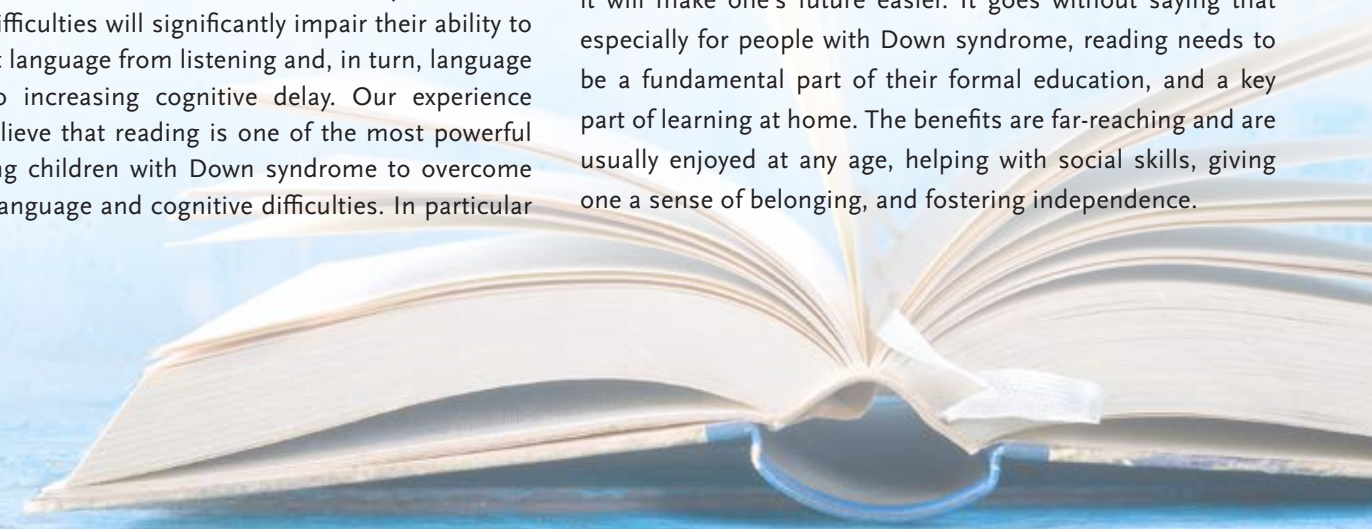
The ABCs of Starting a Reading Club

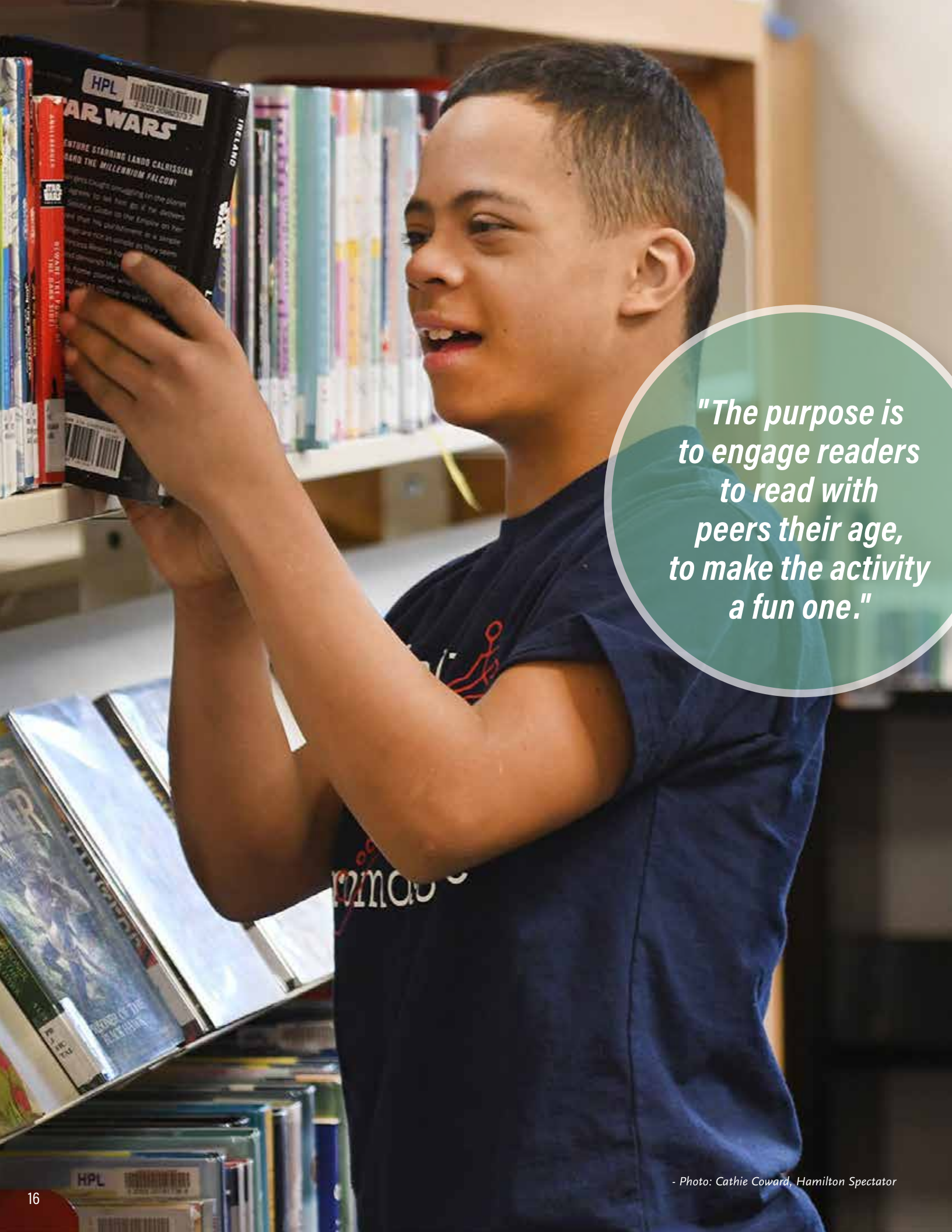
by Kristen Halpen

Professor Sue Buckley, founder of Down Syndrome Education International and a leading expert in education and development for young people with Down syndrome, began research examining early reading instruction for children with Down syndrome in 1980. Then, research demonstrated that children with Down syndrome had specific difficulties in learning from listening due mainly to hearing, auditory processing and verbal short-term memory difficulties. In her research, Buckley discovered that, "These difficulties will significantly impair their ability to learn their first language from listening and, in turn, language delay leads to increasing cognitive delay. Our experience leads us to believe that reading is one of the most powerful ways of helping children with Down syndrome to overcome their speech, language and cognitive difficulties. In particular

it develops their grammar and speech production abilities at the optimal time in brain development. However, many professionals working in early intervention services are still not aware of the importance of early reading activities, so many parents and children do not receive the help and advice that they need at the preschool stage."

Reading is a key to belonging in the world. Generally speaking, it will make one's future easier. It goes without saying that especially for people with Down syndrome, reading needs to be a fundamental part of their formal education, and a key part of learning at home. The benefits are far-reaching and are usually enjoyed at any age, helping with social skills, giving one a sense of belonging, and fostering independence.





"The purpose is to engage readers to read with peers their age, to make the activity a fun one."

According to the Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton's (DSAH) website: "Reading is a fundamental skill that students must have to navigate their school experience and their later lives. Our public schools should be able to teach students to read. Yet, anecdotally, we know that a large number of students with Down syndrome are leaving the school system without the ability to read. The Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton wants to change that."

To help bridge the gap that many parents agreed was evident, DSAH began their own reading club. According to Jennifer Crowson, who began the club in partnership with Ingrid Muschta, they have seen benefits already: "We have seen confidence in early readers rise; their comfort level reading to a group has greatly improved. Parents have taken pleasure in watching their children's reading progress, in them gaining confidence and in forming new friendships. Parents have also seen that their child will read, something they may have been doubtful of prior." Crowson says they started their club within a week, with just two volunteers and no budget. Here are some tips and ideas to help you get started:

WHO

This is of course dependant on how big of an audience you have to draw from. If you live rurally, you will naturally have a smaller group of people with Down syndrome. Some groups in this circumstance have broadened their reach to anyone with an intellectual disability, or any disability.

Suggested groups for larger centres:

- Newborns
- Early readers
- Young adults
- Adults

Crowson strongly suggests inviting same-age peers to come and read with children. Reading to each other has been an enriching experience for everyone attending DSAH's literacy club. She also suggests asking local literacy specialists, and specialists such as speech language pathologists, to give scheduled group presentations. This increases general knowledge and helps to promote local paid services in your area.

WHAT

A simple setup is key. Start a literary circle for early readers and young adults, a book club for young and older adults, and/or a parents circle for babies. Fold in fun activities that are age and skill-level appropriate. The Hamilton club suggests "keeping

the time 'mostly free flow', not too structured." This has helped them to boost attendance and also to engage different levels of reading abilities.

WHEN

Most clubs meet once to twice a week, with an hour to 90 minutes as the suggested time frame. At present with COVID-19 restrictions, the group has been meeting online once a week for 30 minutes.

Crowson has seen success in numbers "when there is flexibility. If someone arrives late they are just as welcome. If people have to leave early that is no problem too. You have to keep it casual to make it welcoming for people with more challenging schedules and availability."

WHERE

There are many options depending on what is available in your area: libraries, coffee shops, schools, private homes, parks, resource centres, or online.

HOW

DSAH launched the program with an informational night themed "Let's Talk Literacy," targeting preschool age children, along with their parents and caregivers, with the intention of encouraging literacy and reading at an early age. From there, the group structured different group categories, designed by age and grade level, based on what they heard was needed.

To promote the program, the Hamilton group kept the messaging very simple: Drop-in, come when you can, for as long as you can, to read with volunteer buddies. The purpose is to engage readers to read with peers their age, to make the activity a fun one.

A little bit of structure goes a long way. The basic rules at the DSAH's reading club are as follows:

- Parents must stay in the office while the program is ongoing
- Sign-ups are not required
- Siblings can volunteer to be reading buddies but it is preferred that they read to children outside of their household
- Although DSAH has a supply of books, members are encouraged to bring their own as well
- Cancellations due to weather or volunteer shortage will be announced via email or social media no later than 3pm the day prior



- Photo: Cathie Coward, Hamilton Spectator



- Photo: Cathie Coward, Hamilton Spectator

READING CLUB IDEAS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED:

The Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton's Reading Club Information: <https://www.dsah.ca/dsah-reading-club/>

Next Chapter Book Club (clubs mainly for young adults, US-based with several groups in Canada): <https://www.nextchapterbookclub.org/become-an-affiliate>

RESOURCES:

DSRF Reading Videos (Three-Part Series) <https://www.dsrf.org/programs-&-resources/our-videos/>

Any reading research studies and resources by Sue Buckley

See and Learn – Visual Learning, Step by Step <https://www.seeandlearn.org/en-us/>

Touch-Type Read & Spell - Multi-Sensory Course <https://www.readandspell.com/teaching-children-with-down-syndrome-to-read>

Hamilton's reading club was featured by Cathie Coward of The Hamilton Spectator on World Down Syndrome Day, 2020. You can check out the story here: <https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2020/03/21/down-syndrome-association-of-hamilton-encourages-everyone-to-read-more.html>.

For other news and happenings on this topic in Canada, search social media for #MyRightToRead #LetsTalkLiteracy

Canadian Down Syndrome Society | Société canadienne de la trisomie 21

Our Paperless Efforts

With much of the world 'going digital' CDSS is asking our community to join this movement.

If you currently donate to CDSS and receive tax receipts, or any other mail from us by Canada Post, we encourage you to switch to email by contacting us with your current email address. Please include your previous email or mailing address to ensure accuracy of your records.

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f @ t y
cdss.ca

Education Webinar Series:

Planning for Students Requiring Personalized Supports in the Classroom and at Home

Monday, Sep. 21 | 7-8 PM EDT
Distance Learning & Managing School At Home
CHRIS LEMONS, PH. D
How to do home support of distance learning with a focus on not going crazy, what happens when school goes online, and useful free resources.

Tuesday, Sep. 22 | 7-8 PM EDT
The Special Education Priorities Matrix
GENIA STEPHEN
How are you feeling about making good decisions about your child's education goals this year? Confident? Could use help? Or somewhere in between?

Wednesday, Sep. 23 | 7-8 PM EDT
Support ALL Learners: Resources, Research & Inspiration!
SHELLEY MOORE
Empowering schools and classrooms to support ALL learners: resources, research and inspiration!

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Save a Spot!
SEND AN EMAIL TO: webinarregistration@cdss.ca



Let's Sign, Baby!

As older kids and young adults head back to school, let's not forget about our youngest learners. For babies and children in the early developmental stages, sign language can provide an important bridge to enable communication while working towards speech.

"Sign language has been found to be helpful for all types of children: kids who are typically developing and kids with all kinds of developmental disabilities, including Down syndrome," says Riley Rosebush, Lead Speech Language Pathologist at the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation. "And parents enjoy it too; rather than it being something that's just therapy or work, it's actually a fun way to boost your everyday interactions with your child."

"The number one reason that we recommend sign language is that, for many kids who have difficulty learning language, using the fine motor skills in your hands tends to be developmentally easier than using your mouth to speak," says Riley. "Kids are

able to communicate more using their hands at an earlier developmental stage than they are with their verbal speech."

As a result, sign language can be a great tool for reducing frustration in a child who may be unable to verbalize their needs, or who in moments of heightened emotion or being tired or overwhelmed from a sensory perspective may have difficulty in accessing their language. Sign language has also been linked to benefits including fewer temper tantrums, earlier speech development and, in the longer term, higher I.Q.

Earlier this year, Riley presented an Introduction to Sign Language on Facebook Live. To watch her presentation and get started on your sign language journey, visit DSRF.org/signlanguage. Also, keep an ear out for her discussion of this topic on The LowDOWN: A Down Syndrome Podcast, coming later this fall.





You and Your School: *Starting the year off right*

by Adelle Purdham

Sending your child with Down syndrome to school can bring up scary thoughts: Will they make friends? How will they manage the work? What if they need help? But your family need not go it alone; you have your child's teacher and the school support staff as your greatest allies. The key is to build a rapport with school educators early, and to maintain these relationships throughout the school year.

Set up an Introductory Meeting

If this is your child's first time at school, ask the principal to set up a meeting with your child's teacher prior to school returning, or have a community facilitator (who may have supported your child in a daycare setting) help organize this meeting. The purpose of an early gathering is to give your child a chance to see where they will be going and meet the teacher as well as the support staff who will be working with your child. Ideally, this meeting should happen every year before school starts, but if it doesn't, plan for as early in the school year as possible. The key is that you, as the parent, are given the opportunity to discuss your child's strengths, challenges and any safety concerns.

Create an 'About Me'

When your child is new to a school, a useful strategy that helps guide the introductory

meeting is to create an 'About Me.' This document, a few pages in length, includes contact information, the child's educational and personal strengths and challenges (lead with strengths), their likes/dislikes, any medical history or information staff should know that may impact learning and, perhaps most important, any safety concerns you may have, such as: flight risks, toileting needs, feeding concerns, and difficulty with executive control/decision-making that may lead to other dangers.

While educational goals are certainly important and should never be discounted – your child has a legal right to receive the support they need to be able to learn alongside their peers – it is often their safety needs that will guarantee the support of another adult, and so safety needs must be stressed.

Be sure to also include an adorable photo in your 'About Me.' Together, all these pieces help to paint your child as the whole, lovely person they are, and your child's teacher will greatly appreciate the effort you have put into helping them get to know their future student better. Remember: you know your child best and you are your child's expert. Feel free to brag!

Offer Resources

During the meeting, after the 'About Me,' ask the teacher (as politely as possible), "Have you ever taught a student with Down syndrome before?" Their answer helps you to internally gauge their level of knowledge about Down syndrome and

their experience working with children with disabilities. As a parent, this information helps you to be able to support the teacher as well as possible. Contrary to what you might expect, educators are taught very little about how to meet the needs of children with disabilities in teacher's college. Share the link to the wonderful **Educator's Package**, available in English and French through the Canadian Down Syndrome Society. You can also provide the handy Quick Guide to Down Syndrome for Parents, which you'll find at the end of this article, as a resource that can be given to the other parents in the class.

If a teacher has never taught a student with Down syndrome before – and even if they have – offering resources and being a sounding board for their questions about your child can be helpful and reassuring. Talking about Down syndrome provides an excellent opportunity to dispel any stereotypes that may come up, and to present your child as an individual with their own distinct personality.

Show Your Involvement

In discussing Down syndrome, take a moment to share your family's involvement in the Down syndrome community. If you're a volunteer with your local association, or involved with CDSS or DSRF, this is a good time to mention that involvement. Do you volunteer on a board or committee? Perhaps you participate in a Go21 fundraiser, Run Up for Down Syndrome, or other Down syndrome related event? This is all worth mentioning because perhaps your teacher or school would like to support you in your efforts in some way.

Mention World Down Syndrome Day (3/21) and Canada's Down Syndrome Week (November 1–7) and see if your child's class or school might be interested in celebrating. Introducing these events is not only an invitation to your child's educator to join you in your advocacy work, but also sets the tone that you are your child's advocate with high expectations. When parents show they are involved – in whatever form that may take – and clearly love their child, this elicits strong feelings from the teacher to act the same way. Teachers are naturally caring individuals, and it helps to build a bridge when you show that you are too.

Volunteer

Would you be willing to come in to read a book or talk to your child's class or school about Down syndrome? The intro meeting is a great time to bring this up. If you are comfortable talking about Down syndrome, or know someone in the Down syndrome community who would be, this is an excellent resource for your child's class and/or school that requires little effort on the teacher's part and helps educate other students and staff about Down syndrome – win/win.

Communicate Regularly

Establish a method of communication that works for you and your child's teacher from the start. Some families choose a daily communication book, and this may be something your child's educational assistant (EA) – or equivalent in your area – may complete. There are ready-made templates available online if your school doesn't already have something in place. Find what will work for you and your child's teacher. You don't want to be creating a make-work project; the goal is for the exchange, whether daily or as needed, to be meaningful and informative.

In addition to written communication, request regular in-person meetings and suggest a schedule, such as two weeks after the initial meeting followed by a monthly check-in. Setting a regular meeting time (e.g. the 1st Monday of the month) is a reasonable request, keeping in mind these meetings are meant to be short updates that allow the teacher and parent to share successes, ask questions and bring up any concerns. These meetings can happen in the fifteen minutes before the bell rings as you drop the kids off at school. They are not meant to be lengthy or time consuming – that's a different type of meeting that should be scheduled as needed. A key point when communicating with your child's teacher and educational team is to focus on the positives: how can a challenge be reframed as an opportunity for growth and learning?



Stay in Touch

Throughout the school year, keep the teacher updated on your child's home life as well. If you go apple picking in the fall, for example, send in an apple for your child's educators. Get involved with your child's class to the extent you can. Does the teacher need a parent volunteer? As your child's advocate, it's important to monitor not just what the teacher says is happening, but to see with your own eyes how your child's day actually unfolds, especially if your child is not yet able or interested in telling you. Volunteering in your child's class, even one or two times, puts you in the middle of the action and can help clear up any questions you may have or serve as a point of conversation for later.

Set Clear Expectations

Be clear about your expectations for your child from the start of the year. Is your goal for your child to complete exams alongside their high school peers? Do you want your child to learn to read this year? Be realistic and be specific. Suggest ways you will help support these goals at home: i.e. we will help our child create study sheets or we will read three books together every night. Don't expect the teacher to do it all.

Show Gratitude

Though it may seem obvious, remember to be grateful to your child's teacher for their time and efforts. Celebrate special occasions with them, write a thank you note to acknowledge an extra effort made on your child's behalf, and send in small tokens of gratitude and appreciation throughout the year, such as a child's drawing or a fresh flower picked from your garden. These small gestures can go a long way. The more you put into building a positive relationship with the teaching staff, the more they will pour into your son or daughter.



welcome back!

A Quick Guide to Down Syndrome for Parents

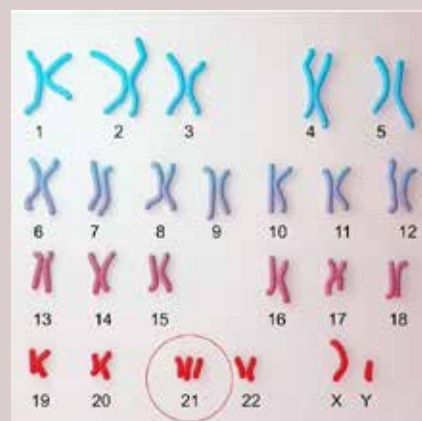
A student in your child's school or class has Down syndrome. The purpose of this guide is to give you quick and handy information so that you can comfortably answer any questions that come up at home. If you have further questions, please reach out to the school staff, or visit www.dsrf.org for more information.

What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that comes from an extra chromosome 21. Most people have 46 chromosomes in each of their cells; people with Down syndrome have 47.

Your genes make your chromosomes, and decide things like your height, your eye colour, your hair colour, and your skin colour. Having an extra chromosome affects your body too. An extra chromosome can cause troubles with things like the heart, digestion, learning and memory, and muscle tone. People with DS might be affected by some or all of these things.

This is a picture that shows the extra 21st chromosome for a person with Down syndrome. The extra chromosome could be in some or all of the person's cells in their body.



Why do people with Down syndrome need extra help at school?

People with DS need extra practice to learn new things. They might need someone to help them stay focused. People with DS have to use more energy to do the same things that other students do, so they get tired more quickly. This means they might need to take more breaks during the day.

Is Down syndrome a sickness I can get?

No. Down syndrome is not a sickness. You cannot catch DS by spending time with someone who has it. People with DS are born that way, and will have it their whole lives. There is no cure for DS.

Why do people with Down syndrome talk differently?

People with DS talk differently because their mouth is small and it has a slightly different shape. This means that there is less room for talking in their mouth. Some people with DS have trouble with feeling in their mouth, kind of like after you go to the dentist and it is hard to talk. Some people with DS have a hard time with breathing. This means that it can be hard to talk since breathing is more important than talking!

How can I be friends with a person with Down syndrome?

Some things are the same for all kids: having fun, having friends, feeling good at something, and feeling included are important for everyone. Remember that the things that make kids the same are more important than the ways that they might be different from others.

There are lots of friendly things a peer can do to be friendly: you can say "hi," and invite a student with DS to come and play. You can share toys. Being kind, sharing, being patient, and being inclusive are great things to do for ALL students.

What should I do if I don't understand a person with Down syndrome?

Sometimes it is hard to understand what people with DS are trying to communicate, and that can feel uncomfortable. Here are some things you can try:

- Ask them to say it again
- Ask them to try saying it slower, or showing you what they mean by pointing
- Ask a teacher or helper if they know what the student means
- Tell the student that it is okay to try again later if they are getting frustrated

Where can I learn more about Down syndrome?

Visit www.dsrf.org to learn more about Down syndrome, or visit @DSRFCanada on YouTube or Facebook.



Uniquely Me:

The Individualized Education Plan

This interview is adapted from Sam Leach's May 13, 2020 appearance on The LowDown: A Down Syndrome Podcast, produced by the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation. Sam is a Learning Support Services teacher in the Burnaby School District.

Our interview with Sam touched on many topics related to thriving in elementary school. In this lightly edited excerpt, we focus on the IEP process and the working relationship between parents and support staff.

3.21 Magazine: Could you tell us a little bit about your professional journey and how you ended up as a Learning Support Services teacher?

Sam Leach: I'm a second-generation teacher. My mother was a special needs teacher and whenever I had a Pro-D day I'd be at my mom's school, so I had pretty good exposure to students with learning exceptionalities and needs. Once I finished university, I was kind of unsure what direction to take, but using that experience I'd had in my mother's school, I became an EA at a school for children on the autism spectrum. I knew that that was a route that I felt passionate about, but I wanted to have more creative input into the curriculum that I was teaching, so I retrained and became a teacher. I taught in a couple of special needs schools in different countries where they have different systems, and then eventually made my way to BC where they run more of a mainstream integrated approach.

3.21: One of the key pieces of special education is the IEP: the individualized education plan. What is an IEP, and what purpose does it serve?

SL: Like you said, an IEP is an individual educational plan. It's a specific set of goals and targets for a student that has a designated learning exceptionality. I use the term exceptionality rather than disability because there are exceptions in the way that these students learn. The IEP is saying, what are we doing above and beyond what we are already providing in the classroom? How are we going beyond what is standard to meet the needs of the student?

Specific needs are usually specified; we might call them a stretch. If the student has a stretch in, for example, gross or fine motor skills, or communication, how are we going to meet the stretch? But IEPs focus on positives as well. So we talk about strengths and areas of

stretch. The IEP is a forum in which the classroom teacher, the learning support teacher, the principal, the educational assistants and the parents can all come together and really get a holistic picture of the student. There's also an element of creating accountability to ensure that we document what the student needs in the IEP, and then we can check back on that throughout the year and review the progress.

3.21: What kinds of goals should be included in an IEP? Is it strictly academic, or does it extend to other areas such as safety, self-care, etc.?

SL: An IEP should really give as much information as possible. I personally believe the more information is shared, the more we can benefit the students that we work with. Let's just say, for example, there was a student that was struggling in a certain area, and it only came to light later that they had a specific challenge in math. That changes the focus of the work that everyone is doing with the student.

For me, an IEP is about identifying the student's needs. Those needs could be centred around personal care. It could be academic goals, it could be communication goals, it could be independence or personal awareness. It really is quite a myriad of different things: all the things that make a person who they are.

The “I” in IEP is critical: it is individualized. There is no set pro forma in the sense of, if a student has Down syndrome, they need to have a communication goal; they need to have a physical goal. It's more about their specific, personal needs. So we have some students that would have an IEP that has no communication goals, no physical goals. They literally just have regulation goals: when they're upset or frustrated, they have a goal of what to do.

On the other hand, we have students that have multiple objectives in each goal. So the goal would be a general heading such as physical, independence or communication. And then within each of those, there could be three or four objectives for the student to work on.

3.21: You mentioned parents being a part of the IEP process. What would you recommend parents bring to this kind of meeting and how can they get the most out of an IEP?

SL: The more information parents can bring, the better, whether that's psycho-educational assessments that have been done in the past, or even just anecdotes of things they've noticed with their child. The parents are a partner in this process. We want to know, what language are you using at home when your child is frustrated? What are you working on at home? What expertise can you share with us so that we can better meet the student's needs at school?

In terms of documentation, even things like writing samples are helpful. A raw writing sample, if the student has printed something, you can look at it and ask, was this independent? Was it hand over hand, or was there a physical prompt?

I personally find videos fantastic because they really give you a chance to see quite a lot. If you're looking at a video, you can clearly see that the adult just gave them the pen and then they were able to write it. And I'm a big fan of the school sharing videos with parents as well. A picture paints a thousand words, but I really think a video goes even further because you can see the progress.

An overlooked factor that parents can provide a lot of insight into is the child's interests. For so many of our students, those interests are what will take them the furthest in terms of how deeply they will delve into a subject. If a teacher says, “We're going to be looking at

14th century Italy,” I can imagine some students would say, “Great,” while others would say, “I'm not that interested in it.” But if you say, “Okay, we're actually going to be looking at trains. And we are going to look at trains through the ages, and we're going to look at the differences between trains and we're going to look at comparisons,” I can imagine that you'd get a lot of students that would be clamouring. And they would probably be teaching you a few things about the trains.

Bringing in that interest piece is key. What does your child love to do? What is important to them? With our current IEP process, this is now coming from the Ministry of Education. We're actually beginning to write the IEPs in the student's language, using “I can” statements as opposed to the name of the person. Instead of “Jimmy can” it's “I can,” with the idea that we're really coaching in the student's language and thinking about how they would describe it.

3.21: When it comes to priorities, they may not be the same from one family to the next. Some parents prioritize their child's academic progress above all; others are focused on more basic skills like being physically present in the room with everyone else. Would you hope that parents would bring these expectations to you in an IEP meeting?

SL: BC's Minister of Education has just released the core competencies and they'll be updating all IEPs in light of this. There are new sections

where parents can express their priorities, so parents can now say, “I think communication is the most important thing for our family and for this child.” Certainly, this is something parents should be thinking about heading into an IEP meeting. It would be fabulous to have a parent come and say, “We know our child is fine academically, but we think social skills are what we'd really like to work on,” because then the roadmap already starts to be made. We can start to see the destination we want to get to. For



parents who don't bring that to the meeting, having someone ask them these questions is really powerful. And asking the child as well, if they're old enough and want to be present, "What are your hopes? What do you want to work on?" Again, if we lean into their interests, we'll achieve greater success.

3.21: What steps can families take to make sure they have a successful working relationship with the school?

SL: A lot of it depends on the school or district policy about the relationship between support staff and parents. For example, I know that in some schools, parents are sending videos directly to educational support staff and the staff send things back to parents, whereas in other schools it's the classroom teacher that is doing that. So, it can look different in different places. It's important that the expectations are very clear so everyone understands that we will be communicating once a month, or we will be communicating once a week. We'll be sending a video twice a week. Everyone should be on the same page.

Something that parents may have less control over, but which is absolutely essential, is ensuring that the child is working with someone they really feel respects them. This flows out of the way in which the staff interacts with the student. The staff should follow the child's lead as they communicate what they need. We have one student who literally skips off the bus each morning and it's like,

okay, if you're skipping off the bus to school you are very much looking forward to your day.



3.21: Who should parents talk to if they feel that the student/EA relationship needs some help?

SL: All parents want their child to receive the best when they're at school; they want to feel like their days are purposeful and it's time well spent. I would always seek out the principal or whoever is in charge. It's always worth having the learning support teacher involved, someone that is in my role. The learning support teacher works alongside the EAs and helps with their schedules, but in terms of assigning of EAs to specific students, the principal is responsible for that, in collaboration with the district. So, it ends up being a multilayered approach.

Looking at the big picture, these decisions are based on the school's needs, the available staff and their

expertise. Keep in mind, it can be very difficult for a lot of the educational support staff, because when they're given a student that may have some challenging behavior, they're not necessarily given a lot of prep time in order to adapt the material. And technically, it's not their role to adapt the material; that should be done for them. But regardless, they have a very short period of time to adapt content for a student with very high needs. For parents, it's helpful to remember, as a starting point, that EAs are under quite a lot of pressure themselves and are working very hard for the benefit of the child. If that perspective guides the interactions, it can only help the relationship between the family and the staff team.



INVEST IN INDIVIDUALS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

Take Your REAL Investment VIRTUAL!

Experience the REAL thrills of Up the Down Market while making a REAL investment in the lives of individuals with Down syndrome - virtually!

This year, we're taking Up the Down Market online. The event will be hosted through Traction Gather, an online meeting space that brings the event experience to your home or office.

Your team will plot trading strategy in your own private Zoom room, and enter your trades through a web browser. Mix and mingle with other guests in the virtual reception room. Make high stake bets through chat, bid on exciting silent auction prizes, and purchase tickets online for our popular Air Canada draw. It's everything you expect UDMD to be... from a safe distance.

At Up the Down Market, you and your team will go head-to-head with the heavyweights of finance and industry, buying and selling shares in fictitious companies to see who's the savviest and shrewdest. News broadcasts fuel the trading frenzy as competing teams brave the ups and downs of the market and vie for the coveted Up the Down Market trophy - and bragging rights for the next year.

As you play, you'll be investing in something more significant than just stocks and bonds. Through Up the Down Market, a deposit is made toward a brighter future for individuals with Down syndrome - a compounding investment that pays lifetime dividends to so many families.

Toronto: Oct. 15, 2020 | Vancouver: Oct. 29, 2020
Montreal: (Action 21): Nov. 19, 2020

Firsthand Insights:



Self-Advocates on Continued Learning

3.21 spoke with young adults with Down syndrome from across the country to share their experiences about post-secondary education and lifelong learning.

Here, they tell us how they planned and chose their next steps following high school, what they experienced in traditional and untraditional education settings, and what they found both helpful and detrimental to their learning.

Our contributors talk about the importance of realizing one's full potential and ambitions, and share stories about following their own passions and interests.

They also offer some practical takeaways for students: tips on staying organized, strategies to help with motivation, getting creative with supports, and great advice on developing future employment skills.

We hope you enjoy!



What kind of continuing learning did you do after completing high school?

After high school, I went to Capilano University for two years. I took the Discover Employability Program. After that, I also took an employment program at PosAbilities.
-Danielle

I made a choice to continue my education and I went off to college!
-Matt

I took some classes at the University of Calgary in Archeology, Kinesiology and Physical Education.
-Natalie

I took some music and drama classes at the Greater Heights Learning Academy. Then I started going to DSRF for Reading and Communication, Money Math and Budgeting, Bollywood Dance, Music in Motion, and Taekwondo.
-Chris

I took a couple of employment readiness programs with the Council of Persons with Disabilities and another organization that had a job coach and job placements. I took adult upgrading to get a few academic credits and then some courses at Holland College in an Administrative Assistant course.
-Janet

I studied in the Child Development Practitioner Apprentice Program with The Ontario College of Trades. To help me learn how to prepare for the work world I also took a course offered by March of Dimes. I also take acting classes.
-Julia

I studied Public Relations in college. I have taken dance courses and education at the National Arts Centre, and the Ontario Arts Council. I also applied to a music academy that I found online and got accepted for three summers. I loved it! I had two roommates and it was like going off to college!
-Jessie



I go to Vancouver Community College. I feel that it is right for me because I love reading and writing. I used to go to summer school at DSRF.
-Jodi

I attended Mount Royal University in the Transitional Vocational Program to help my math and reading skills, and an evening course to improve my computer knowledge. I still take an evening course once a week to learn about the world around us. I also attended Columbia College in their employment program.
-Paul

After high school, I did transition programs at DSRF. These included Money Math, a reading and writing course which helped with my keyboard skills, and advancing my reading using the computer. Following this, I did the retail course at Douglas College.
-Andrew

If you did continue formal learning after high school, why did you decide to do that?

Continued learning is invaluable to me, both from what I learned and for giving me a credible certificate of competence.
-Andrew

After high school I really didn't know what job I would enjoy doing, so I thought that continuing my education might give me some additional skills, as well as some time to find out what I really wanted to do.
-Paul

My mom encouraged me to do it. I thought it would be helpful in finding a job.
-Chris

I was generally interested, and wanted to get a job.
-Janet

I think it's important to keep learning and keep my brain sharp.
-Natalie

It was a good opportunity to try something new and it would help in the future to help to get a good job. I decided what to study based on what I like to do, so I studied recreation and leisure.
-Matt

I wanted to know what college life was like. I was familiar with Algonquin College because my dad taught there.
-Jessie



Why do you think it's important to keep learning?

Because you need to always better yourself. Everyone needs to continue learning to achieve their goals and dreams and to find their perfect dream job.
-Julia

I see things differently now than I used to. I need to have a job and learning helps me.
-Chris

Learning keeps your mind active and keeps you involved in the community.
-Andrew

It's important to keep your brain sharp and do things to improve yourself.
-Natalie



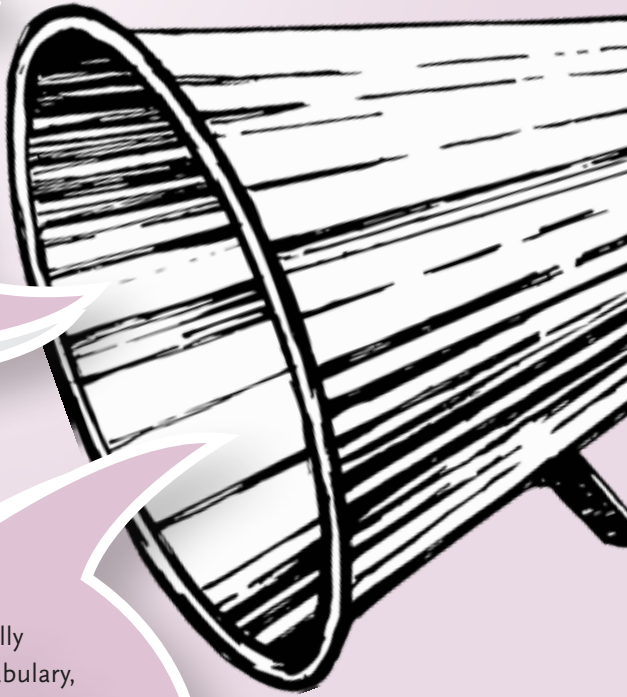
Because it helps in your adult life.
-Matt

I am continually improving my vocabulary, communication skills and knowledge of the world. That way I can more easily participate in the world around me and contribute to society.
-Paul

It is important for everyday life, and to learn about ourselves.
-Jodi



To be involved with other people and it is good to keep your mind sharp and learning new things feels good.
-Janet



How has your education helped you in your adult life?

It helped me feel included in my community because I was able to go to university like other people my age.
-Natalie

My education has helped me to interact better with others. It has helped me to make connections and given me the confidence to work with others.
-Paul

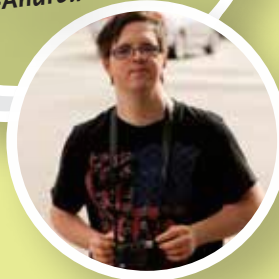
At Capilano University I worked at six different businesses to get work experience, which helped me to figure out what kind of work I like to do. I also learned how to do many new things. My education helped me to get work in my community.
-Danielle

I use a lot of skills I learned in school in my jobs. It's helped me be observant. I use my typing skills a lot.
-Chris

Education does help in adult life. Examples I use in my life and at work are managing money - learning about tax, making change, understanding things like that. At home, paying bills and managing my schedule. College also helped me decide what I wanted to do after graduation.
-Matt

Some of it was practical like cooking and money skills. Some of it was fun like drama and gym. Some just was interesting and let me meet people. Some was not very useful. Like algebra!!
-Janet

It has provided me with the skills that have helped me secure employment.
-Andrew



My dance education has given a great career. I use my public relations knowledge whenever I do public speaking, like question and answer sessions after a show.
-Jessie

My education has helped me to perform my work independently. And I work at it even though it's hard.
-Jodi

I learned skills from all the different courses I took. I was able to take co-op classes in the daycare field, which gave me workplace experience, knowledge and confidence to get my job as a daycare assistant. Education taught me the importance of inclusion in schools and lifelong friendships. Many courses I took helped me gain confidence in skills to be independent too.
-Julia

Did your education help you find employment?



I worked as a principal's assistant in elementary school. I started working at DSRF after taking classes there.
-Chris

Drama helped me become a motivational speaker. Child development and first aid helped me get jobs in child care.
-Janet

My dance education certainly did.
-Jessie

Education was great to help to build my resume because in school we took a co-op and that helps make the skills you need to find great employment.
-Matt

Yes! In my Career Studies course we created a resume and a cover letter. Co-op classes gave me a chance to take first aid classes, health and safety courses and learn about different jobs.
-Julia



Absolutely! My communication skills as well as my computer knowledge helped a great deal in finding my job.
-Paul

What was your favourite part of school?

Learning how to do so many different things. I also enjoyed the work and the people that I met.
-Danielle

My favourite part of school was the social interactions and routine and the interest I developed in photography through courses offered.
-Andrew

Woodworking shop, I really enjoyed learning how to operate the tools and the satisfaction of building things. I enjoyed the cooking classes as well.
-Paul

I liked school a lot. I enjoyed woodworking, computers, math and science. I made a birdhouse and a toolbox.
-Chris

My favourite subjects were science, religion, and drama. I also liked the socialization. And in college, I really loved the professors.
-Jessie

I was included in activities with other students, for example taking gym class, being part of student and house council, and joining school sports.
-Matt

I love sports so physical education classes were really fun for me. I also loved art classes and cooking classes. I had great teachers and aids that helped me to succeed.
-Natalie

Seeing friends and playing music, seeing everyone and also sharing a laugh.
-Jodi

Making new friendships and being with my friends. I was included in different activities like a performance class musical production - live on stage! I loved taking interesting classes in high school like parenting class and hair and aesthetics and co-op classes. I loved having resource teachers to help me with my learning because they supported me to learn new skills.
-Julia

Friends, learning new things. Courses that I was interested in like drama and foods and nutrition.
-Janet



What did you find challenging about school?

Often in school people do not take me seriously enough. It surprised people that I do know about lots of things.
-Matt

I was the only person with Down syndrome in my school. I got bullied; they told lots of short jokes about me. Also history class was hard.
-Chris

MATH... and taking notes and going at a fast pace.
-Janet

College was new; I didn't know if I'd be able to fit in. I was helped by my T.A. (my dad) and the teachers who adapted things for me. I had a group of friends formed to help me cope with high school.
-Jessie

At college there's lots of drama, and I feel upset by that.
-Jodi

School was challenging for me to make friends and fit in. I was constantly getting bullied because of that.
-Alana

In my post-secondary education it was hard to get up early and get to class, and the university was big and I would sometimes get lost. It was also hard to understand all subjects, but I did my best and took notes.
-Natalie

I found homework challenging. I enjoyed high school in my learning assistance class much more enjoyable than elementary school, where I often felt alone in a class or with my assistant.
-Andrew

The challenging part about school was that I had a hard time learning certain skills like math, money and time skills. I needed extra time with my teachers to help me improve my skills.
-Julia

Keeping up with all the other students was really difficult. Making friends was hard as well. Sometimes I felt frustrated.
-Paul



Can you offer advice on ways to stay motivated and organized?

I found making lists helped me to stay organized and on task. Staying motivated is difficult if you don't enjoy what you are doing.
-Paul

My advice I give to keep motivated is to keep at it until it is done, and then you can choose what is next. And always have an open mind.
-Matt

You have to do it even if you don't feel like doing it. I like to be very organized. I'm a germaphobe so I keep things very clean. I always like a tidy workspace.
-Chris



To stay organized I like to put things away in bins. To condense things, I put things into categories.
-Alana

Have a support circle to encourage you. Ask for help when you need it emotionally and academically. Get involved in school activities, you will have fun and meet new friends. Work on developing your self-confidence because it helps you to try new things. Accept that some things are hard to do, but don't give up. To stay organized in school, use an agenda to keep track of everything. Don't let assignments pile up. Post your schedule inside your locker with reminder notes. Have a buddy in each class that you can call to ask questions about assignments.
-Julia

To help stay organized, get ready for school the night before. Make sure you have your school things ready and most importantly, make sure you prepare your lunch the night before.
-Danielle

To be motivated, study things that you like, that are practical or about real life. To be organized...well I know lots of things...binders, schedules, timers, planners, technology to help like computer, e-readers, voice recognition, etc.
-Janet

I recommend using a calendar and asking family for help to stay organized. Participating in education and activities that interest you help to keep you motivated.
-Andrew

I like to have a routine so I know what to expect and what to do, it helps me make time for all the things I want to do. Sometimes I don't feel like doing something but I do it anyways because it's part of my routine.
-Natalie

What would you say to a person approaching the end of high school and wondering what to do next?

I would suggest doing some online learning. Try different things to find out what you like to do.
-Chris

Research courses that interest you and also those that will help you achieve your goals.
-Andrew

I would say it is good to have a transition year. I had a transition worker and I did some job and community placements and worked on life skills, but still did a course or two at high school.
-Janet



Figure out what you like to do and what you want to study.
-Danielle

I would tell them to try to find out what they enjoy doing most and what they are good at. They may already know that, but I did not. So trying different job opportunities helped me to realize what I really wanted to do. Stay active and take advantage of opportunities when they arise.
-Paul

Follow your passion!
-Jessie

After high school it might be scary at first, but you will find your way.
-Jodi

Explore options in education and the workforce well before the end of final year. Have a transition plan, do this with your school and your parents. Take as many Co-Op courses as you are allowed to give you experience. If you think you want to go to college, plan well ahead to apply. Visit schools in person and discuss what assistance can help you to be successful. Take advantage of community resources and services to help you job shadow, volunteer, or find a job.
-Julia

I would tell them to think about what they like and what they want to do and to keep learning in different ways. Going to post-secondary school is right for some people but not for everyone.
-Natalie

I would say to keep open mind and if you feel like continuing your post-secondary go for it. If more school is not right for you, that is fine too, do what you need to do to feel happy.
-Matt

CDSS SPOTLIGHT

Welcoming Two New Members to the CDSS Board!

Maria Borges lives in Sherwood Park, Alberta with her husband Steve and children Madison and Kennedy. Her daughter Madison was born with Down syndrome and the family has been a strong advocate for inclusion with schools, sport programs and communities. Maria is also an active board member with Special Olympics Alberta.

Jennifer Crowson lives in Hamilton, Ontario. Since the birth of her youngest son in 2012, she has been very involved in her local Down syndrome association and has served as chair for over seven years. Jennifer is a social worker with over 24 years experience working in child welfare, non-profit organizations and government.

The CDSS Board of Directors is made up of volunteers from across Canada who are committed to the vision and mission of the society. Currently the board is made up of individuals who have a personal or professional relationship to people with Down syndrome, or who have Down syndrome themselves. Learn more [here](#).

Education Webinar Series:

Planning for Students Requiring Personalized Supports in the Classroom and at Home

CDSS's Webinar Speaker Series Continues September 21 - 23

Our latest FREE webinars are all about education. See our ad on page 19 with information about our incredible speakers and their featured topics. Register online [here](#), and make sure you stay tuned to our social media channels for more details.

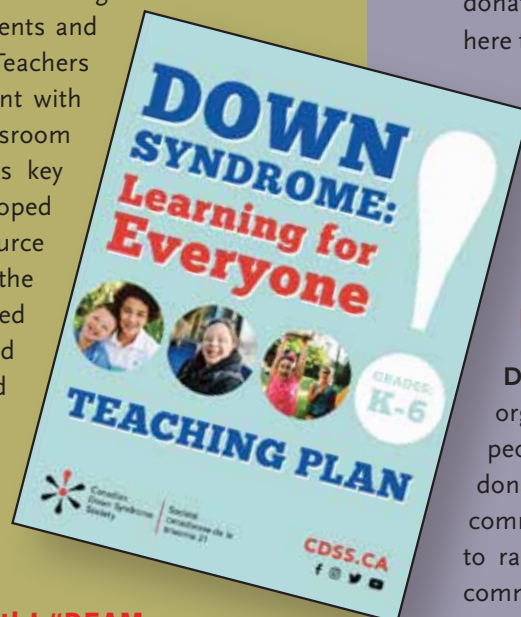
webinarregistration@CDSS.ca



RESOURCE NEWS!

Down Syndrome Learning for Everyone - Our Latest Resource for Back to School

The start of a new school year can be an exciting and nervous time as parents, students and educators get into their routines. Teachers and classmates may have a student with Down syndrome in their classroom for the first time. To support this key time of the year, CDSS has developed Learning for Everyone. This resource acts as an educational tool for the classroom, can also be circulated digitally to promote awareness, used to train administrative staff, and to help welcome a student with Down syndrome. Access this free resource [here](#) in both French and English.



October is Disability Employment Awareness Month! #DEAM

CDSS is excited to share a new resource to help support employment for people with Down syndrome this fall. If you're thinking about finding work, what kind of work interests you, and preparing for the interview and hiring process, then you will love this new guide! It can help you to learn what your interest are, discover different types of work, what it means to have a job and what you need to get a job. It includes helpful links for employment agencies, life skill programs, and volunteering websites to help build useful skills, and tips about job applications, resumes, cover letters, interviews and practicing common interview questions.

Stay tuned to our social channels and [subscribe](#) to our news updates about the release.



Canadian Down Syndrome Week 2020 #CDSW2020

Celebrate Down syndrome in Canada this November! November 1 -7 host a #GO21 awareness and fundraising community event, a class or school presentations, plan a blue and yellow light show, and get active on social. Let's all get involved to promote awareness, advocacy and teaching others to #SeeTheAbility! #CDSW2020

GO21 NEWS

CDSS's GO21 platform helps to raise awareness about Down syndrome, and funds for important community programs. CDSS can brand your event and look after all electronic donations and receipting. The GO21 model of fundraising is here to support your virtual or distanced walk, run, dance party, dinner, or whatever creative and engaging event your group comes up with!

Email GO21@CDSS.ca to learn more.

GO21 EVENTS

Upcoming GO21s on September 27!

Down Syndrome Niagara is a parent volunteer-driven organization dedicated to improving opportunities for people with Down syndrome. Support them by attending or donating to their GO21 2020 walk, where families, friends and community partners will stroll the trails of Heartland Forest to raise money and awareness for Down syndrome in their community.

Join them September 27 for the walk, lunch, prizes, 50/50 draw and presentations. [Register](#), [donate](#), and [learn more](#).

Every dollar **Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society** raises goes towards local programs and services. On September 27, join supporters near and far as they participate for 21 minutes in the WRDSS GO21 'Any Which Way You Can A-Thon'. Get active while raising money for a great cause!

Learn more, register an individual or a team, fundraise, and invite family and friends virtually [here](#).

WRDSS also invites you to participate in their '21 Challenges Over 21 Days' leading up to September 27. Download or print out the calendar [here](#). For every day you participate, you will be entered into their draw!



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Canadian Down Syndrome Society

Société canadienne de la trisomie 21

DSRF CORNER

Run Apart for Down Syndrome Raises \$200,000 for Individuals with Down Syndrome

Normally in early June, the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation hosts Run Up for Down Syndrome at Burnaby's Swangard Stadium, drawing over 1,000 participants to our largest annual event.

As it has for so many other events, COVID-19 dashed DSRF's plans to make this year's Run our biggest ever in celebration of our 25th anniversary year. Nevertheless, the pandemic could not deter DSRF's supporters from finding creative ways to celebrate their loved ones with Down syndrome.

Run Up was reimagined as Run Apart for Down Syndrome, a COVID-proof virtual event that saw over 760 people across the Lower Mainland run through their local streets and parks to raise money and awareness.

In Tsawwassen, where DSRF alumnus Scott Fattedad is well-known to locals from his job at Thrifty Foods, Scott and his family marched through their neighbourhood with huge signs proudly proclaiming them members of "Scott's Squad."

"It's such an important fundraiser for the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation," said Scott's mom Mary Lynn Cassels.

"It was disappointing not to be able to get together with everybody, see old friends and do this together, but we still felt it was important to support them by running apart."



Remarkably under these challenging circumstances, Run Apart for Down Syndrome almost matched the previous two record-setting years. This year's \$200,000 fundraising total was the third highest in the 24-year history of the event – demonstrating just how important DSRF's services continue to be to the local Down syndrome community.

"When COVID-19 struck, our dedicated staff quickly reimagined every aspect of our programs and services," said CEO Wayne Leslie. "By early April we were pioneering online classes and teletherapy services. There was a learning curve to be sure, but these services have proven to be a lifeline for many families. One family even shared that DSRF is more important in the life of their child than school."

"Every person who Ran Apart for Down Syndrome has played a critical role in our ability to continue caring for families through the COVID-19 lockdown and ensuring that we come back strong in the months to come."

Run Apart for Down Syndrome was generously supported by Lead Sponsor Euro-Rite Cabinets, along with a host of local businesses.

Back to Business

Like many Canadian organizations, early summer found DSRF taking our first steps towards reopening after the COVID-19 lockdown. In doing so, we are prioritizing the health of our students, families, staff and supporters above all. We are in regular communication with WorkSafeBC and local health authorities, and we have and will continue to adhere to their guidance as we work to restore regular services and programming.

With full safety measures in place, we welcomed back our first students in early July. Trail Mix, a modified version of our summer school program, ran for six weeks with a combination of in-person and online instruction. Each week, a small group of young adults participated in a variety of recreational activities including art, music, dance, literacy, pop culture, improv, and social communication – all with careful social distancing in effect.

July also saw the return of our first individualized services clients, as our occupational therapists resumed seeing students in person. To maintain a safe distance, parents attended sessions with their child and acted as the arms of the therapist whenever the child needed hands-on assistance.

UPCOMING AT DSRF

Up the Down Market Toronto
Virtual Event – **October 15, 2020**

Up the Down Market Vancouver
Virtual Event – **October 29, 2020**

Action 21 Montreal
Virtual Event – **November 19, 2020**

All of this was a dry run for September, when we anticipate a full return to in-person programs and services. For further updates, visit **DSRF.org**.

DSRF News with Andrew Bingham

After debuting on March 1, DSRF's new monthly newscast starring Ambassador Andrew Bingham was unexpectedly thrust into a six-month COVID-19 hiatus. But Andrew is back! Check @DSRFCanada on **Facebook** and **Twitter** on September 1 and the first of every month thereafter for all the latest news from DSRF.



FRIENDS OF DSRF

The Macquarie Foundation has generously matched the \$28,188 raised by Geoff Gates, the top fundraiser for Run Apart for Down Syndrome. We are deeply grateful to Geoff, his team Leo and the Lionhearts, and Macquarie for their incredible contribution.

Employment & Social Development Canada, administered by United Way of the Lower Mainland, has granted DSRF \$20,000 from the COVID-19 Emergency Community Support Fund in support of our mental health services for individuals with Down syndrome. This funding from the Government of Canada has played a crucial role in our ability to continue to care for families through the pandemic.

Long-time supporter the Ames Family Foundation has gifted DSRF \$10,000 towards DSRF's educational programs and services for children and adults with Down syndrome. We are thankful for their faithful support through the years.

The Burnaby Firefighters Charitable Society has been an extraordinarily committed and generous supporter of the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation and individuals with Down syndrome for the past two decades. This year, they donated \$5,000 towards DSRF's World Down Syndrome Day campaign and Run Apart for Down Syndrome. We thank them for their ongoing partnership.

Coast Capital Savings has generously granted DSRF \$5,000 for our Money Math and Budgeting program for students with Down syndrome - for the second year in a row. Please join us in thanking Coast Capital for their investment.

The Coquitlam Foundation has donated \$1,900 towards DSRF's one to one reading program for students with Down syndrome. Thank you!



**Down Syndrome
Resource Foundation**

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Support CDSS Today

Ensure Our Critical Work Continues
Now and Into the Future



Your donations provide life stage resources to new and expectant parents, medical professionals, teachers and families. You also support important work in areas such as human rights, health, social programs, inclusive education and employment, and help to strengthen the voice of all Canadians with Down syndrome in Federal and Provincial Government matters.

Donate today

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