

QUICK GUIDE:

Education Assistants



Like all students, those with Down syndrome have differing abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Welcoming students with all abilities together in regular classrooms allows students to learn, contribute, and participate in all aspects of school life.

An education assistant plays an important role in the school community and is a critical part of the teaching team. They are there to offer students learning support, help with supervision, class preparation and assisting teachers and other staff throughout the day.

Suggestions for the education assistant:

- Meet early. Schedule a meeting with the teacher early at the beginning of the school year. You can take this time to clarify the roles, boundaries, express your comfort level, and seek out professional development opportunities to better help a student with Down syndrome.
- Meet often. Meetings are crucial for communication and for building a partnership with the teacher in the classroom you are supporting. Consider the use of a communication booklet for both you and the teacher to regularly share your feedback, observations, and notes on a day to day basis.
- Share your knowledge and experiences. But don't hesitate to let the teacher know if you have very little or no experience in supporting a student with Down syndrome. Be open to learning some tips, sharing suggestions and learning more about Down syndrome.
- Give the student some space. Help promote independence in the classroom by not hovering over the student you are helping. Schedule your attention between direct student support and general classroom or small group support. It is recommended that education assistants facilitate classroom participation rather than focusing strictly on one on one interaction, unless it is required for specified reasons.

- Encourage students to speak with each other. Don't become the messenger or translator for the student with Down syndrome and the other students in the classroom or playground.
- Being around all the time hinders connections. When a student is always with the education assistant, the student with Down syndrome and other students may see it as a barrier and it can limit true social interactions and real academic inclusion in the school community. Try to remember that constant presence of an education assistant can hinder the development of true friendships, learning and development.



Check out our full
resource for more info:

