

Inclusion Solutions

A Newsletter for Educators Who are Doing Amazing Things

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F T H E D O W N S Y N D R O M E G U I L D O F D A L L A S

Has Your District Named a Down Syndrome Specialist?

Five districts in the North Texas area have already formed a partnership with the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas (DSG) and have chosen to appoint a Down Syndrome Specialist in their school district.

Q: What is a Down Syndrome Specialist?

A: Your school district appoints one individual to become a specialist in the area of Down syndrome in your school district. The DSG will provide training opportunities, parent and staff educational materials, and quarterly newsletters to this designated person. The Down Syndrome Specialist in turn dialogues with the DSG with questions, concerns, and requests.

Q: Why does my district need a Down Syndrome Specialist?

A: Our streamlined approach provides an efficient, effective means to meet the informational needs of your district and our parents. Other districts have already discovered that the Down Syndrome Guild's training seminars provide real solutions for real problems and have seen an increase in effective communication between parents and schools.

For more information about this opportunity, please contact Becky Slakman, Executive Director of the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas, by phone at (214) 267-1374 or via e-mail at dsged@sbcglobal.net.

Mark Your Calendar for the Down Syndrome Guild's Annual Fall Conference

Learning Together - Focusing on Possibilities.
Saturday, October 10, 2009

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Crowne Plaza Suites - Dallas

7800 Alpha Road

Dallas, TX 75240

Join the Down Syndrome Guild for the 2009 Fall Education Conference and experience first class presenters and hands-on

sessions full of information you can take back to your home and classroom immediately. There will be plenty of opportunities to network with fellow conference participants and to shop our resource fair for products, services, and information that will help parents and educators support their children both at school and at home.

Look for more information regarding registration information, speakers, and topics in our upcoming newsletters.

Behavior Pointers:

- Avoid confrontations and power struggles.
- Provide an appropriate peer role model.
- Modify rules that may discriminate against students with developmental delays.
- Develop a system or code that will let the student know when behavior is not appropriate.
- Arrange a designated safe place that students can go.
- Develop a code of conduct for the classroom and visually display it in an appropriate place where all students can see it. Review it frequently.
- Provide immediate reinforcers and feedback.

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10 Tips for Special Educators by Project Participate

Collaborate to promote the participation of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

1. Visit the inclusive classroom.

Assess student progress and participation in the classroom setting. Your lesson modifications, accommodations, and learning goals will be more meaningful.

2. Develop a rapport with

teammates. Talk with classroom teachers in person! Encourage others to voice concerns, hopes, and fears. Even a two minute chat between classes can establish collaboration.

3. Bolster student-teacher

relationships. Brag about your students strengths! Tell the classroom teacher how your student participates. Never apologize for placing a student in an inclusive classroom or promise that a student will “not be a bother.”

4. Define roles and expectations.

Tell classroom teachers your role, and explain how you can help. Specify what you will need to increase student participation. Discuss discipline and behavior expectations.

5. Watch your language! Avoid acronyms or language specific to your field. Good collaboration stems from good communication. Use people-first language.

6. Friends are natural supports.

Peers can walk together between classes, record messages on communication devices, or assist at lunch.

7. Supervise Paraeducators. Give paraeducators explicit instructions. Outline duties in detail. Always follow up and monitor how things are going in the classroom.

8. Use the expertise of others. Solicit the classroom teacher’s participation. Ask for the syllabus, learning

objectives, outcome standards, rubrics, and any specific content information.

9. Invite students to IEP meetings.

Students who attend their own meetings understand their role and responsibility as active learners. Ask peers, family, friends, and teachers to share their goals and expectations with the student.

10. Promote active, experiential learning.

Assist in planning cooperative learning groups, centers, partner learning, and project-based lessons. Alternative methods encourage active learning for ALL students.

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Free Workshop with Kathie Snow

Friday, May 1, 2009

8:00 am - 4:00 pm

“Disability is Natural” and
“Living Real Lives, Dreaming Big Dreams”

Hallmark Center II Auditorium

16001 North Dallas Parkway

Addison TX 75001

Don’t miss this high-energy, exciting, skill-building event that

will promote new, different, and positive outcomes and enable us to help create a better world for all.

Kathie Snow is the author of *Disability is Natural and Other Revolutionary Common Sense*. Her presentations, articles, books, and products ignite positive and long-lasting changes in the lives of people

with disabilities and their families.

Registration for this workshop is required in advance, and due by Friday, April 24, 2009. The registration form is available on the Down Syndrome Guild website at www.downsyndromedallas.org or you may call Kim Harsha at 469-201-8094 to register via phone.

10 Tips for General Educators by Project Participate

With collaboration and focused efforts, all students can actively participate in the classroom.

1. Promote socialization! Seat students with students! Adults sitting with students may discourage peer interactions. Encourage paraeducators or classroom assistants to sit off to the side or away from students.

2. Vary your instructional methods! Make learning an active experience for ALL students. Create cooperative learning groups and encourage partner learning. Provide a variety of resource materials, workshop formats, and experiential activities. Have students demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways.

3. Establish learning goals! Work with the special education team to clarify learning goals for students with IEP's. Check to see that your students are continually working

toward their learning objectives. Assess student knowledge no matter their level of ability.

4. Share your lessons and plans. You are not alone. When you share your teaching plans, the special education team can modify the content to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

5. Get to know your students. Greet students as they enter the classroom. Saying hello teaches social and communication skills. Ask about home, pets, or social life.

6. Expect success! Expect ALL students to learn and participate in your classroom. Tell students what you expect. Adjust the demands of activities or assignments to match the student's abilities.

7. Treat students equally! Maintain behavior expectations and disciplinary methods for ALL students in your classroom. Share your expectations with other adults.

8. Speak directly to students! Resist temptations to talk through paraeducators who accompany students. Direct greetings, explanations, and questions to the student.

9. Ask content questions daily. When students respond to content questions, they are practicing social and communication skills as well as learning the content. Your informal assessments and teaching observations can provide useful insights into possible curriculum modifications.

10. Share ideas and feelings! Express your fears and opinions. Phrase concerns in specific terms. Instead of saying, "I don't think this student belongs here!" Try, "How can I make Shakespeare meaningful for this student?"

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10 Tips for Paraeducators by Project Participate

Classroom aides can support teaching, foster student independence, and discourage learned helplessness.

1. Facilitate peer relationships. Remind others to communicate directly with the student. Let students choose their own seat or place in the classroom. Give students the space and freedom to

socialize and develop friendships.

2. Multi-task in the classroom. Use class lectures as an opportunity to program a student's communication device, plan accommodations or modifications, and develop curriculum materials. Time away from the student's side promotes independence.

3. Ask for help. You are not alone. Ask for direction in the classroom.

Request assistance with disciplinary issues. Leave decisions about content and curriculum modifications or accommodations to the teacher.

4. Let students make mistakes and take risks. Everyone learns from mistakes. Allow natural consequences to be part of the student's classroom experience.

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5. Watch your voice and volume.

Discussions with other adults or student during instruction can be disruptive to the class. Save important discussions for after class.

6. Maintain student dignity!

Assume the student can do it! Be discreet about the student's physical needs. Schedule tube feedings, splint adjustments, stretching exercises, and toileting for in between classes.

7. Communicate and consult with caregivers. Listen to what families have to say and keep them informed.

Learn the strategies that work at home and can work at school

8. Give as few prompts as possible.

Foster independence. Fade out hand-over-hand assistance and use it to teach a task, not to complete a task. Resist the temptation to give verbal directions for every aspect of a task.

9. Help students create authentic work!

Students learn when they actively participate in assignments. Avoid completing assignments, taking tests, or answering questions for students. Show caregivers their child's genuine work and progress.

10. Let students make choices. Give students the ability to control their lives and interact with the environment. Offer choices to the student no matter how insignificant they may seem.

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My Teacher Matters

What you expect of me matters...

Because I will rise to the level you have set for me, and I have many lofty goals to achieve.

What you think of me matters...

Because I will sense what is in your heart, and it will shape not only how I feel, but what I do.

What you say of me matters...

Because you are setting a tone, and leading my way. You are the voice I wasn't given to help others understand not just what I *have*, but *who* I am.

What you accept about me matters...

Because if you meet me where I am, and embrace me for what I have to offer, together we can shoot for the moon and at least find the stars.

What you do for me matters...

Because when you offer me not just

your time, but your devotion, and not just your attention, but your passion, you are not just fulfilling your duty, but rather answering a calling.

What potential you see in me matters...

Because if you can envision my wings, I will learn to fly.

What investment you make in me matters...

Because if you dedicate yourself to making me stronger, it is not only me who will be bettered, but *you* will be, as well.

What connection you have with me matters...

Because if I know *you* care, then *I* will care. You will reach me, and I will glow.

What attitude you have about me matters...

Because if I seem as a blessing instead of a burden, my world will be much brighter, and my achievements will be much greater.

What you believe about me matters...

Because if you see my strengths and

not my weaknesses, there is no mountain we cannot climb.

What hope you have in me matters...

Because the dreams you hold for me are woven into every step of my journey, and when those dreams are big, so, too, are my accomplishments.

What ACTIONS YOU TAKE because of me matter...

Because you are not only my teacher, but my *advocate*. The role you take in my life helps dictate the very path down which I travel. Your power can help open doors for me that now stand shut, raise standards for me that remain far too low, and redefine the boundaries in my life that will either hold me back or help me soar.

Yes, MY TEACHER MATTERS, AND SO DO I!

This article was reprinted with permission from The Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas.

What's a "Behavior"?

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, www.disabilityisnatural.com

Head in places here and there is a newly-coined phrase, "He had a behavior." Now what, pray tell, does this mean, and why, for Pete's sake, are people using these words?

Let me digress for a moment and state a maxim that, if adopted by all, could have an extremely positive impact on people with disabilities and their status in society. Here it is: if it's not right for a person *without* a disability, it's not right for a person *with* a disability.

What is "it"? Anything! The way a person is treated, talked to, talked about, and anything else.

Thus, most of us would not say, "He/she had a behavior," when talking about a husband or wife, a co-worker, or a boss. (You *wouldn't*, would you?) Therefore, *we shouldn't say it about people who have disabilities!*

Based on the context of the conversations, when parents and professionals (but *never* people with disabilities) say, "He had a behavior," I'm going to infer this means the person misbehaved (according to the speaker). And I'm going to assume this terminology is supposed to replace the more familiar terms, "acted up," "threw a fit," "had a tantrum," and so forth. Furthermore, I'm assuming this phrase refers specifically to one or more particular actions that the person with a disability is supposed to know he is not to do; e.g., his "behavior plan" details actions which are big no-no's and which have definite

consequences and/or punishments. (But we must wonder if *he* knows what's in his "behavior plan," and if he was involved in the writing of same.)

Furthermore, it seems a "behavior" is a descriptor intended to identify actions relative to a person's diagnosis and/or environment. When a person with autism bites himself, that's a "behavior." When a person with a cognitive disability refuses to "comply," that's a "behavior." And maybe when a resident of a group home or a worker in a segregated work setting doesn't



follow the rules, the action might be called a "behavior."

What's the *purpose* of this new way of talking? I'm not really sure. But one of the *outcomes* is that *any and all behaviors* of a person with a disability are frequently attributed to the disability! When a six-year-old with a disability is not interested in the boring lesson at school, her refusal to complete the project is labeled "manipulation." The teacher "knows" that "all children with disabilities learn to be manipulative at an early age." But the same behavior in a six-year-old *without* a disability does not evoke the same response.

I've learned from many wonderful experts (Joe Schiappacasse, Herb Lovett, and others) that *behavior is communication*, whether one has a disability or not. Biting, head banging, withdrawal, outbursts, and other typical and not so typical actions are *all* forms of communication.

People with disabilities who don't have effective means of communication (oral speech, communication device, etc.), as well as *those who have never been listened to*, may have no other way to communicate their wants, needs, or feelings *except* by physical actions.

And in too many instances, parents, teachers, service providers, professionals, and others view these actions as "inappropriate behaviors," *instead of as the person's best efforts to communicate!* Consequences or punishments are delivered; the person tries to communicate his resulting sadness, fear, or frustration through physical actions; these are once again viewed as "inappropriate behavior" and the cycle continues and even escalates!

There's much to learn about communication and behavior. Instead of saying, "He had a behavior," perhaps we could more accurately and respectfully state, "*He's trying to tell us something.*"

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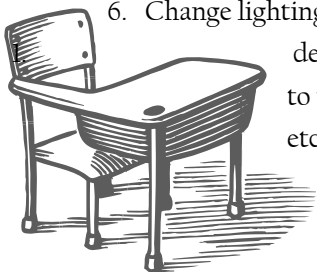
MISSION STATEMENT: THE DOWN SYNDROME GUILD OF DALLAS PROVIDES ACCURATE AND CURRENT INFORMATION, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY.

VISION STATEMENT: PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME - VALUED AND INCLUDED

Quick Classroom Accommodations

When positioning students in the classroom:

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



Pre-organizing information:

1. Highlight key points in the textbook. Students read just these points.
2. Have the student arrive 10 minutes early to go over the daily plan.
3. Provide support to preview materials before the lesson.
4. Give a structured overview at the beginning of the lesson.
5. Prepare a summary of important information with blanks for the student to fill in while listening.
6. Photocopy information ahead of time.

Giving Instructions:

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