

Opening the Doors to Friendships Through Education and Peer Presentations

Presented By,



Peer Presentations

- ❖ 15-20 minute classroom or grade level presentation tailored around a specific student to address any issues related to their disability that others in the class may need help to understand.
- ❖ Ask parents if child should be included or out of the room during the presentation.
- ❖ The following should be present for the presentation, if possible:
 - ❖ All educators who are on the IEP team
 - ❖ All students in that grade level
 - ❖ Administrative staff (if pertinent)
 - ❖ School Counselor
 - ❖ School Nurse
 - ❖ Parents of student (if not presenting)



Peer Presentation Outline

- Icebreaker(s)
 - Age-Appropriate books
 - The "Superstar List"
 - "Segregation Simulation"
- NDSS Dreams video
- Down syndrome 101
 - What is Down syndrome?
 - Hypotonia
 - Speech
 - Hearing
- Opening the Doors to Friendships
 - Peer modeling
 - How to be a friend
- Q & A
- Send child home with give-aways (personalized book marks, pencils, candy)



Materials you will need

- "Peer Presentation" Kit
 - NDSS Dreams video about Down syndrome
 - Books about Down syndrome
 - 1 pair thick socks per student
 - Myths/Truths about Down syndrome
 - Letter to parents regarding presentation
- Information from Parents
 - "Superstar list"
 - List of hobbies, things their child enjoys
 - Goals for interactions with classmates
- Additional Materials
 - Jumbo marshmallows (1 per student)
 - TV and DVD player
 - Oven Mitts (8 so you can have 4 students model the activity)
 - Bag of cottonballs



Three (3) Goals:

- GOAL #1
To increase the students' personal awareness and knowledge about similarities and differences between people, and to raise their personal awareness about disabilities.
- GOAL #2
To share language and give them knowledge about Down Syndrome.
- GOAL #3
To ask for the students' help in supporting and teaching their classmate with Down Syndrome and any other people who may have differences or special needs.



Ground Rules

- We're going to talk to you like "adults" and use "adult" language.
- No questions are silly.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand something.



Icebreakers

"The Superstar List"

Preparation:

- Before presentation, ask parents to prepare a list of things that are unique about the child with Down syndrome (travels, hobbies, accomplishments).

Class Exercise:

- Ask all students to stand. Then go down "superstar list" and ask questions. Have you ever traveled to Hawaii? If not, then sit down. Have you ever won a medal for swimming? If not, then sit down.
- Continue asking questions until everyone is seated.

Discussion Points:

- When everyone is sitting down, talk about the "superstar" who has done things no other children in the class have done. Wow!



Icebreakers

"Segregation Simulation"

Class Exercise:

- Separate students into groups based on hair color.
- Tell them: "There was a new law passed. Only people with brown hair will be allowed to attend this school starting tomorrow. The rest of you will have to take a bus to a school across town."

Discussion points:

- Talk to them about segregation and how it felt to be singled out because of something they were born with.
- People with Down syndrome have historically faced discrimination and exclusion, and were regularly institutionalized, imprisoned and involuntarily sterilized well into the 20th century. Until the 1970s, they were routinely denied access to education.
- Talk about equality, fairness, and appreciation of diversity. Stress that it's good for us to have a chance to be friends with people who are different than we are and get to learn from each other.
- Discuss inclusion and how good it feels to be an accepted and valued part of a group.



Icebreakers

"More Alike Than Different"

Preparation:

- Ask parent of student with Down syndrome for a list of the things he or she likes and dislikes.

Class Exercise:

- Ask the students questions, like "How many of you like to watch TV/ go swimming/ go to birthday parties?" "Who wants to go to college / get married/ drive a car some day?"
- After each response, let the students know that their friend with Down syndrome likes the same things they do!

Discussion Points:

- Talk about appreciation of diversity and recognizing that people have similar interests, likes and dislikes.
- "Don't judge a book by its cover." What does that mean? Ask students to see beyond the outside and make friends with the person. You'll be surprised at how alike you are!



Icebreakers

Books to read to young students:

- My Friend Isabelle (www.woodbinehouse.com; downloadable teacher guide available)
- Hi, I'm Ben and I've Got a Secret! (www.bandofangels.com)
- Taking Down Syndrome to School (www.jayjo.com)
- I Just Am (www.ijustam.org)



NDSS Videos

- Play the short 4 minute Dremas video to help the students understand that people with Down syndrome have dreams too!
- You can also play the 3 minute Everyone Counts Video which consists of a commercial aired on Nickelodeon
- You can borrow a copy of either video by calling DSG at 913-384-4848.



What happens at conception?

Conception

- This is the first "adult" word you will learn today.
- At conception, when you were still in your mother's womb, some things were determined:
 - Eye color; Straight or curly hair
 - Boy or girl
 - Ability to curl tongue; Double jointedness
 - How tall you will be, what size feet you will have
 - What talents you might have
 - Your eyesight and the need for glasses etc.
- Can you change your eye color? Can you decide how tall you're going to become?
- We have no choice in some of these things.



Cells and Chromosomes

These are the next two "adult" words you will learn today.

- Our body is made up of CELLS, trillions of them and that they can only be seen with a microscope.
- Inside each cell are CHROMOSOMES.
- At conception we each receive 23 chromosomes from our mom and 23 chromosomes from our dad. So how many chromosomes do we have in each cell of our body?

Trisomy 21 (three 21st chromosomes)

- When a baby with Down Syndrome is conceived, they get an extra 21st chromosome, so they have 47 chromosomes in each cell of their body.
- They have no choice in this happening and their parents have no choice.



What is Down Syndrome?

- Down syndrome is very common. In fact, it is the most common chromosomal abnormality in humans, which occurs once in every 733 births.
- There are people with Down syndrome from every race, nationality, religion, and background. It occurs equally in boys and girls.
- It doesn't run in families, and nothing the parents did when they were pregnant causes Down syndrome. Doctors and experts are not really sure what causes it. It just happens randomly, like flipping a coin or winning the lottery.
- People with Down syndrome can grow up to go to college, get married, work, and live a long happy life -- just like you! They want to make friends, do fun things, and be included in the classroom, lunch and at recess.



Down syndrome is a condition

- Down syndrome is a condition and not a disease.
- You cannot catch Down syndrome like you can catch a cold or virus.
- It is something you are just born with—like blond hair and blue eyes.
- If you have Down syndrome when you are born, you will have it your whole life.
- Scientists think they might soon find ways to help our friends with Down syndrome learn better!



What is Down syndrome?

Having Down syndrome makes some things easier and some things harder for our friend, but they are capable of doing the same things you are: learning, playing, and making friends!

Easier:

- Point out things that some things are easier.
- Examples: greater flexibility; can touch nose to ground while seated.
- Ability to read peoples emotions



Why do students with Down syndrome need adapted activities?

- Some things are harder for our friends with Down syndrome. They sometimes need extra help, so they sometimes leave the classroom (to go to speech therapy or whatever is applicable for the student).
- We're going to do some exercises/ experiments so that you can see how hard some things might be and understand our friend better:
 - Hypotonia/ muscle tone;
 - Speech/ Communication; and
 - Hearing.



Hypotonia

Hypotonia is a medical term used to describe decreased muscle tone (the amount of resistance to movement in a muscle). It's what it feels like when your arm falls asleep when you are on the couch and you can't pick up the remote control to change the channel.

- Class exercise:
 - Ask students put oven mitts or thick socks on their hands. Then ask them to take the cap off a pen, get out their paper, and write their names with their non-dominant hand!
 - Let the students struggle to remove cap and coordinate pen to write on board.
- Discussion points:
 - Mention the size and legibility of their writing.
 - Point out that students with Down syndrome have muscle hypotonia so their paper may look different.
 - Discuss frustration – how it feels when you want to be able to do something but you can't.
 - Explain that this may cause the student not to be able to run as fast or be as coordinated and they will work **TWICE AS HARD** to do the same task.



Speech

- People with Down syndrome have differences in the mouth and throat areas that make it more difficult for them to eat, drink, and be understood when they are speaking:
 - small and narrow upper jaw, and a high arch/ roof of mouth;
 - low muscle tone, and weak oral facial muscles.
- Class Exercise:
 - Have students put a large marshmallow on the top of their tongue.
 - Ask them to tell the person next to them what they ate for dinner last night/ what they want for Christmas/ what their favorite color is.
 - Ask students for a show of hands about whether they could understand each other.
- Discussion points:
 - Frustration – imagine how you'd feel if you kept trying and trying but people couldn't understand you.
 - Remind them of muscle hypotonia and that the student with Down syndrome has to work twice as hard to control muscles to make words.
 - Point out their peer with Down syndrome may leave the classroom for speech therapies.



Speech

- Provide students with strategies for understanding the speech of their friend with Down syndrome:
 - You can ask our friend to repeat what he or she said;
 - You can ask our friend to show us what he or she wants; or
 - You can ask the teacher.
- Sign language
 - If the student with Down syndrome uses sign language, teach the class any of the signs the student typically uses.



Hearing

- 65-80% of people with Down syndrome have some level of conductive hearing loss. Hearing loss may fluctuate when fluid is present or when a child is experiencing ear pain.
- Class Exercise:
 - Have students stick cotton balls or ear plugs in each ear. Ask them to turn to their neighbor and talk about what they ate for breakfast and lunch.
 - With a show of hands, ask how many students were able to hear and understand their neighbor.



Hearing

- Discussion points:
 - It must be frustrating to want to be a part of the class or activity and not be able to hear your friends. Or not be able to hear your favorite show.
 - Use example where they try to tell their parents something about what happened in school that day and they just don't understand it.
 - This is why students with Down syndrome often have to sit near the teacher.
 - Recognize that your friend with Down syndrome is not "ignoring" you. He or she wants to be your friend, but may not be able to hear you.
 - Repeat yourself. Slow down and say it again. Use sign language, pictures, or symbols. Show your friend what you are talking about.
 - Your friend with Down syndrome may also need extra time, so it's important to be patient!



Big Secret # 1

Class exercise:

- I'm going to share a BIG secret with you. Who do you think is the BEST teacher for our friend with Down syndrome?
- Let them discuss and shout out possibilities.
- The correct answer is: each and every one of YOU! You are the BEST teachers for our friend and very important in his or her life.



Opening the Door to Friendships

- "Mother Hen Syndrome" vs. Peer Modeling
- Class Exercise
 - How many of you help your friend with Down syndrome tie his or her shoes? Put on his backpack?
 - How many of you are going to move in with your friend when you grow up and go to his job with him and help him every day?
- Discussion Points
 - Your friend with Down syndrome needs to try to do things for him or herself so that they learn!
 - What can you do?
 - You can show him or her how you put *your* backpack on. You can show him or her how you tie *your* shoes.



How to be a good teacher & friend

- Here are some ways you can help teach your friend with Down syndrome (*ask parents if they want to add to this list to address their child's particular areas of need*):
 - Don't talk baby talk;
 - Speak slowly and clearly;
 - Use visual aids when you can (pictures, symbols, or just *show* them);
 - Talk to them every day (more than just hello);
 - Invite them to eat lunch with you and play with you and your friends during recess, lunch, or class; and
 - Talk with an adult if you observe hurtful things happening (either to your friend with Down syndrome - it's never okay to tease - or caused by him or her).



Big Secret # 2

I'm going to share another big secret with you:

- Did you know that by teaching someone else, you also learn?
- That's right! Research has shown that you learn even more by teaching others than you do by being taught yourself!
- If you have an idea about how to help your friend learn, share it with your teacher. It feels good when you can help other people!



Review: Goals

Do you remember the 3 goals? What were they?

- GOAL #1: Have we increased your awareness and knowledge about similarities and differences between people?
- GOAL #2: Have we taught you about Down Syndrome?
- GOAL # 3: Do you know how to help in supporting and teaching our friend with Down Syndrome and any other people who may have differences or special needs?



Review: Secrets

Do you remember the secrets?

1. You are the BEST teachers for our friend with Down syndrome!
2. By teaching our friend, you will also learn!



Question and Answer Session

- Do any of you have questions?
- Remember, no question is too silly.



Send materials home with students

- Letter to classroom parents
- Myths/Truths About Down Syndrome
- Personalized Bookmarks
- Other fun items like pencils, candy, or school supplies if they are available



We Are Here to Help!



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