



# Inclusion Solutions

A newsletter for educators who are doing amazing things!

Fall 2007 Edition

Individuals with Down syndrome have unlimited potential when given the opportunity to succeed.

## Back to School TIPS to Help Students Adjust

Back to school time often means changes for students, families and educators: new classrooms, new teachers, new building and new rules can be hard to learn all at once. Making smooth transitions between home, programs and schools can help students feel good about themselves and teach them to trust adults and peers. Helping your students adapt to new situations can ease the tension of going back to school and set students up to succeed.

### Supporting Transition Professionals

The Transition Coalition provides online information, support, and professional development on topics focusing on the transition from school to adult life for youth. Check out this great website for more information [www.transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org)



### Great things happen in Inclusive Schools!

Visit the National Inclusive Schools website to learn more about their celebration week, to read tips from other educators and to read stories about schools who are doing amazing things to provide inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities. <http://www.inclusiveschools.org/tip.asp>

**Make an effort to get to know each individual student as quickly as possible**– Ask parents to provide detailed information about the student's strengths/weaknesses, likes, dislikes, and special interests. Parents can offer specific suggestions they have found useful for their own child, and advise on classroom set-up and modifications.

**Make sure activities are developmentally appropriate for students**– Interesting and challenging, but doable, activities will help children feel comfortable in their new setting.

**Show students around the new school or program, introducing them to other adults who are there to help them become acclimated**– Navigating school hallways, lunch rooms and playgrounds can be overwhelming for students with Down syndrome. Have key adults throughout the building assigned to be touchpoints if the student becomes overwhelmed or needs assistance.

**Set up an area for photos of parents and family members that students may "visit" throughout the day**– Also include items that reflect the cultural experience of all children to help promote a sense of mutual respect and understanding.

**Help your student to communicate effectively**– Many students with Down syndrome may not have the verbal skills to communicate with their peers or teachers. Help your student by offering visual schedules and alternative methods of communication, such as sign language or picture exchange cards.

**Encourage and support student focused solutions**– Educators should avoid the tendency to rush in with the answers. Talking together about potentially awkward situations or questions and finding solutions increases a student's confidence. Helping them develop and fine tune their own problem solving strategies is preferred to giving them an adult version.

**Have appropriate expectations**– Parents, teachers, and students should be realistic about particular challenges and the criteria for success. If problems arise, it is best to reassess the situation, avoid blame, adjust expectations, modify interventions, and develop new solutions. Also be aware that after the freedom of summer everyone needs time to adjust to the school schedule.

### Inside this issue:

Back to School Tips	1
Helpful Websites	1
Tips for General Educators	2
Excellence Awards	3
Playground Inclusion	3
Submit a Tip!	3
Buddy Walk Festival	4



**Establish good communication between school and home**– Both educators and parents should strive for a collaborative relationship. Having the full picture on what a student's strengths/weaknesses and day to day expectations are is critical particularly at the beginning of the school year.

**Monitor situations and intervene promptly**– Evaluating a student's problems and changing the academic program are best accomplished as soon as possible. Parents and teachers should continually assess the degree to which a behavior or issue is interfering with learning or with peer interactions.

With a little extra time and attention to the above details you will help your student with Down syndrome get off to a great start. Best wishes for a great school year!

# TEN TIPS FOR GENERAL EDUCATORS

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



## PROMOTE SOCIALIZATION!

Seat students with students!  
Adults sitting with students may discourage peer interactions. Encourage para-educators or classroom assistants to sit off to the side or away from students.

## SHARE YOUR LESSON 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 Down syndrome so they can fully participate in your class.

## SPEAK DIRECTLY TO STUDENTS



Resist temptations to talk through para-educators who accompany students. Direct greetings, explanations and questions to the student directly. This conveys respect to everyone in the classroom.



## 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 your students demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS!



Greet students as they enter the classroom. Saying hello teaches social and communication skills. Ask about their home, pets, friends and social life. Don't forget to make eye contact and wait for a response.

## ASK CONTENT QUESTIONS DAILY!



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

## 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 students abilities.

## 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.

## TREAT STUDENTS EQUALLY!



Maintain behavior expectations and disciplinary methods for ALL students. Share your expectations with everyone on the special education team.

## 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?"

## COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

DSG is currently seeking nominations for outstanding professionals who are doing exceptional work with individuals with Down syndrome.

All nominees will receive a certificate of appreciation and commendation from the DSG for their valued work.

Several Commitment to Excellence winners will receive Visa Gift Cards from the DSG as a special showing of our appreciation. Contact the DSG Center today at 913-384-4848 to request a Shining Star Award nomination form. All nominees will be recognized in October 2007 as we celebrate National Down Syndrome Awareness Month.



## GOT A GREAT IDEA?

Do you have a great idea you would like to share with other educators? The Down Syndrome Guild would love to hear from you on the methods you are using to create positive outcomes for students with Down syndrome.

Educators who submit a tip, strategy or article for the Spring edition of Inclusion Solutions will be entered in a contest to win a \$50 Plaza Gift Card.

Submissions should be emailed to: [kcdsg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kcdsg@sbcglobal.net) by January 15, 2007. One winner will be drawn from the entries and the winner will be notified in early February. All tips will be published with the educators name so others will recognize the great work you are doing.

## PLAYGROUND INCLUSION STRATEGIES

Inclusive schools should be places where children not only achieve...but enjoy. The playground or inside play areas are oftentimes the center of a young child's social world. It is the place where friendships start, social networks form, and the rigors of the classroom seem far away. Children with disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may find it challenging to fit in during playtime. Here are some ideas to help facilitate social interaction and acceptance on the playground:

Facilitate fun structured games and activities on the playground. An adult supervisor can ensure that all children understand the rules and are able to participate.

Introduce games and activities that include repetitive actions and are not too complex. These kinds of activities can be easier for children to learn and master; helping them to feel accepted and successful during playtime.

Make sure children come to the playground with a functional communication system. A portable augmentative communication device, picture communication book, or object system is imperative to allow social dialogue to happen on the playground.

Make small or grand changes to the physical layout of the playground to make it more accessible to children with disabilities. On a grand scale there are several companies who construct accessible play areas.



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For those on a tighter budget, there are store bought items such as water and sand tables or handmade items, such as an object exploration area, that can be easily accessed by children with physical disabilities.

Discuss the topics of sharing and friendship before heading out to the play area. Encourage students to meet new friends and to include others in their activity.

Have an adult supervisor in each area of the playground instead of adults congregating in one area. This facilitates a safe play environment and allows adults to facilitate social interactions among children without hovering over an individual student.

Have fun with your students. There is no better way to teach than by example!



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## BUDDY WALK: HELP US CELEBRATE LIFE WITH DOWN SYNDROME

We invite you to join one of the largest Down syndrome celebrations in the nation on Saturday, September 22, 2007 at the 12th Annual Buddy Walk Festival. Last year's walk welcomed over 5000 participants, 180 teams and raised \$300,000. The Buddy Walk is a worldwide event started by the National Down Syndrome Society in 1995. In 2006 there were more than 280 walks hosted worldwide with over 1,000,000 walkers!

With Radio Disney, carnival games, Chief's appearances, moon bounces, chair massages, food, music and special surprises, the Buddy Walk is a fun event for everyone.

95% of The Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City's programs and services are funded through the proceeds raised at the Buddy Walk each year. Please support our work by creating a Buddy Walk team.

Visit [www.kcbuddywalk.org](http://www.kcbuddywalk.org) to register or learn more about this great event. You can also call 913-722-2499.

