

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

What is *Inclusion Solutions* and Why Should I Read It?

Inclusion Solutions is a quarterly newsletter written especially for educators by the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas. Our goal is to assist you in your efforts to support students with Down syndrome in your classroom.

Each edition will provide you with strategies you can implement with your students to help them achieve their unique potential.

We hope this newsletter will become an effective means of exchanging ideas between teachers, parents, paraprofessionals,

therapists, and administrators. Each edition of the newsletter will have ideas submitted that have been effective in working with learners who have Down syndrome.

We will also share information about upcoming conferences, seminars, and new products that may be helpful to you in your classroom.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, and input so *Inclusion Solutions* will benefit all educators. Please send any ideas you would like to share with other teachers to Becky Slakman at dsged@sbcglobal.net.

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.

Important Dates to Remember

Saturday, January 24, 2009
IEP Clinic for Parents and Educators (pg.3)

Friday-Saturday, January 30-31, 2009
Practical Solutions Workshop for Parents and Educators (pg. 8)

Monday-Wednesday, February 23-25, 2009
2009 Annual Texas Transition Conference in Austin (pg. 8)

Wednesday-Saturday, February 25-28, 2009
Inclusion Works! Conference in Austin (pg. 8)

Saturday, March 7, 2009
IEP Clinic for Parents and Educators (pg. 6)

Saturday, April 4, 2009
IEP Clinic for Parents and Educators (pg. 6)

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Describing People with Disabilities... A Lesson in People First Language

People with disabilities are - first and foremost, people - people who have individual abilities, interests, and needs. *People First Language* recognizes that individuals with disabilities are indeed - first and foremost - people. It emphasizes each person's value, individuality, dignity, and capabilities.

Eliminating Stereotypes -- Words Matter!

Every individual regardless of sex, age, race, or ability deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. As part of the effort to end discrimination and segregation - in employment, education, and our communities at large - it's important to eliminate prejudicial language.

Like other minorities, the disability community has developed preferred terminology - *People First Language*. More than a fad or political correctness, *People First Language* is an objective way of acknowledging, communicating, and reporting on disabilities. It eliminates generalizations, assumptions, and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability.

As the term implies, *People First Language* refers to the individual first and the disability second. It's the difference in saying the autistic and a child with autism.

Equally important, ask yourself if the disability is even relevant and needs to be mentioned when

referring to individuals.

What Should You Say?

Be sensitive when choosing the words you use. Here are a few guidelines on appropriate language.

- Recognize that people with disabilities are ordinary people with common goals. Talk about people in ordinary terms.
- Never equate a person with a disability - such as referring to someone as retarded, an epileptic, or quadriplegic. These labels are simply medical diagnosis. Use *People First Language* to tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS.
- Emphasize abilities not limitations. For example, say a man walks with crutches, not he is crippled.
- Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, prisoner, and unfortunate.
- Recognize that a disability is not a challenge to be overcome, and don't say people succeed in spite of a disability. Ordinary things and accomplishments do not become extraordinary just because they are done by a person with a disability. What is extraordinary are the lengths people with disabilities have to go through and the barriers they have to overcome to do the most ordinary things.
- Use handicap to refer to a barrier created by people or the environment. Use disability to indicate a functional limitation that interferes with a person's mental, physical, or sensory abilities, such as walking, talking, hearing, and learning. For example, people with disabilities who use wheelchairs are handicapped by stairs.
- Do not refer to a person as bound to or confined to a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are liberating to people with disabilities because they provide mobility.
- Do not use special to mean segregated, such as separate schools or buses for people with disabilities, or to suggest a disability itself makes someone special.
- Avoid cute euphemisms such as physically challenged, inconvenienced, and differently abled.
- Promote understanding, respect, dignity, and positive outlooks

The table on the following page provides examples and guidance on what terms to use and which ones are inappropriate when talking or writing about people with disabilities.

This article was adapted and reprinted with permission from the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities. The original document can be viewed on the web at <http://www.txddc.state.tx.us/resources/publications/pflanguage.asp>.

People First Language to Use

- people/individuals with disabilities; an adult who has a
- people/individuals without disabilities; typical kids
- people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; he/she has a cognitive impairment; a person who has
- a person who has autism
- people with a mental illness; a person who has an
- a person who has a learning disability
- a person who is deaf; he/she has a hearing
- person who is deaf and cannot speak; who has a speech disorder; uses a communication device; uses synthetic speech
- a person who is blind; a person who has a visual
- a person who has epilepsy; people with a seizure
- a person who uses a wheelchair; people who have a
- a person who has quadriplegia; people with paraplegia
- he/she is of small or short stature
- he/she has a congenital disability
- accessible buses, bathrooms, etc.; reserved parking for people with disabilities

Instead of Labels that Stereotype and Devalue

- the handicapped; the disabled
- normal people; healthy individuals; atypical kids
- the mentally retarded; retarded people; he/she is retarded; the retard; he/she's a Downs kid; a Mongoloid;
- autistic
- the mentally ill; the emotionally disturbed; is insane;
- he/she is learning disabled
- the deaf
- is deaf and dumb; mute
- the blind
- an epileptic; a victim of epilepsy
- a person who is wheelchair bound; a person who is
- a quadriplegic; the paraplegic
- a dwarf or midget
- he/she has a birth defect
- handicapped buses, bathrooms, hotel rooms, etc.; handicapped parking

Don't Miss the First IEP Clinic in 2009

Inclusion: From Law to Implementation

Saturday, January 24, 2009
 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
 Region 10 Service Center
 904 Abrams Road
 Richardson, TX 75081

The Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas is pleased to bring to Dallas attorney *Anne Eason* and *Kathleen Whitbread, PhD*, co-authors of the book *IEP and Inclusion Tips for Parents and Teachers*. This dynamic duo has

designed a seminar to help parents and professionals understand the law and develop an IEP that enables students with disabilities to succeed in their neighborhood schools.

Participants will walk away with ideas to create learning and social environments that promote learning and friendship for *ALL* students. The myths of including kids with disabilities in regular education classes will be examined.

Participants will also see how the Individualized Education Program can be aligned with the general education curriculum.

This workshop is *FREE* for Down Syndrome Guild members and all teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. Space is limited and RSVP is required. RSVP to Becky Slakman by phone at (214) 267-1374 or via e-mail at dsged@sbcglobal.net.

Making Relationships a Priority *by Paula Kluth*

One of the biggest myths I hear in my work in inclusive education is about friendship. Teachers commonly share that they struggle to facilitate relationships during the middle and high school years because older students simply are not interested in socializing with students with disabilities. As one teacher told me, “When they are little, they are more accepting but as kids get older...they are just more into their own thing. We can't force friendship!”

It is certainly true that no teacher can create friendships between students (nor would we want to), but it is equally true that every educator can create conditions in the classroom that will give students opportunities to strengthen social relationships, learn about and from each other, and get and give support. These opportunities, in many cases, lead to the development of friendships.

Many students with disabilities—including those with significant disabilities—make friends during the secondary school years and sustain those friendships for years. We know this dream is possible. The goal, then, is to create the conditions that will make the dream a reality for a wider range of students. Five ways that schools can encourage interactions, build

community, and facilitate relationships are offered here.

Make It a Priority

It almost seems to simple to be true but when students with disabilities do have a robust network of friends it is often, in part, because they are supported by teachers who value and cultivate student collaboration and interaction. In other words, schools that succeed in bringing students together understand relationships as a priority and engage in practices that



are related to that priority. In these schools, for examples, social interactions are prioritized on Individual Education Plans and considered in the development of lesson plans.

Build a School Community

The development and sustenance of a school community involves strategies and practices that purposefully encourage and teach sharing, learning, interdependence, and respect. For example, teachers

might encourage community through cooperative learning experiences, conflict resolution opportunities, play and games, class meetings, service learning, social-justice education, cross-age and same-age tutoring and mentoring, and school and classroom celebrations (Sapon-Shevin, 1999). Teachers can also cultivate community by working for whole-school change. For instance, by lobbying for smaller classes, challenging competitive school structures (e.g., cutting students from sports teams), and developing ways to connect students across classrooms and grade levels (e.g., in-school e-mail pals), teachers can not only strengthen the classroom community but help the school as a whole become more responsive to a wider range of learners.

Create Spaces for Sharing

Teachers who seek information about students' experiences, dreams, interests, and needs can use this information to better educate their students and to facilitate relationships between learners. Too often (especially in secondary schools), students are educated in the same classrooms day after day without developing personal relationships. When I was observing one middle school classroom, I asked a young man to tell me the name of one of his classmates. “I don't know his name” the student replied. “I've never talked to him”. I later found out that these two students had been in the same classroom for over two months.

Students' voices must be central to work in the classroom and time must be carved out for communication and idea sharing. Teachers interested in incorporating students voices might begin by increasing forums for student participation and leadership. For instance, students might be asked to lead weekly class meetings or to mentor one another. In Kim Rombach's classroom, students have ample time and space for sharing; they are even in charge of managing conflicts. Rombach facilitates this process by providing two "talking chairs" that are available to any two students who engaged in a disagreement. Students in this classroom don't go to the teacher to have their recess scuffle assessed, instead they secure permission from the teacher to use the "talking chairs". In the chairs they discuss their issues and try to find a solution or explain their feelings (Sapon-Shevin, 1999).

Look to Peers to Teach and Support

Peer support is an essential part of inclusive schooling for students with and without disabilities. In some cases, students succeed when teachers cannot. Often times, peers will learn quite naturally how to support a friend with disabilities. They will know how to calm, how to teach, and how to encourage a classmate without any direction or interference from adults. In addition, peers are valuable resources because they tend to understand each other in ways authority figures or adults do not. Even the best teachers lack the same degree of intimacy with students that students share with

each other. Students know each other's secrets and their fears. They often recognize each other's needs and gifts in ways that adults do not always recognize. This type of help and mutual support is great preparation for adult life for all participating.

In any peer support model, however, it is critical that teachers seek opportunities to give all students opportunities to both give and receive help and support. Relationships where some individuals are always helped while others are always helping are neither natural nor particularly useful in building a classroom community. It is a teacher's job, therefore, to cultivate a classroom culture that allows all students to give assistance and receive assistance.

Provide Opportunities for Social Connection Beyond Classroom

In order to support the development of relationships in the classroom, teachers may need to help students find social opportunities outside of the classroom. Extracurricular activities with all of the related fun, camaraderie, and socializing can offer some of the richest opportunities for relationship building students are likely to have during their school years.

While some schools offer activities to meet the needs of all students, other schools need to develop a wider array of activities so that every student can find an extra-curricular home. Some schools, for instance, are moving beyond the traditional sports-based and arts-based extra-curricular options and offering clubs and activities related to academic content (e.g., chess club), political issues (e.g., conservation groups, Students Against Drunk Driving [SADD]), and social

support (e.g., anti-drug groups).

All schools must be conscientious about offering options that will interest and engage a range of students in the school (Sapon-Shevin & Kluth, 2003). This means questioning whether or not all students can afford certain clubs or activities; whether meeting times are convenient for students who may have after-school responsibilities; and whether students can get the appropriate supports they need to participate in after-school activities. If a student with a disability, for instance, needs personal support to participate in activities, teachers must brainstorm ways to provide this. Schools may try and provide natural supports by structuring the activities in creative ways or they may ask paraprofessionals or teachers to provide this support or look to student or adult volunteers.

References

Sapon-Shevin, M. (1999). *Because we can change the world: A practical guide to building cooperative, inclusive classroom communities*. Boston : MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Sapon-Shevin, M. & Kluth, P. (2003). In the pool, on the stage, and at the concert. In P. Kluth,

D. Straut, & D. Biklen (Eds.). *Access to academics for all students: Critical approaches to inclusive curriculum, instruction, and policy*. Erlbaum Publishing.

This article was reprinted with permission from Dr. Paula Kluth and can be found on her website at <http://www.paulakluth.com/articles/relationships.html>.

Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming IEP Clinics

These workshops are designed to provide families and educators with information to be prepared for the annual Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting required by school districts for every child who receives special education services. This workshop is *FREE* for Down Syndrome Guild members and all teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. Space is limited and RSVP is required. RSVP to Becky Slakman by phone at (214) 267-1374 or via e-mail at dsged@sbcglobal.net.

Behavior Intervention Plans

Saturday, March 7, 2009

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Region 10 Service Center

904 Abrams Road

Richardson, TX 75081

Regan Roth Fitzgerald (M. Ed. BCBA and President Behavior and Education Specialists of Texas, LLC) will speak on how to develop and implement an effective Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Attendees will learn about the four main functions of all behaviors and how this relates to the development of all parts of the BIP from the functional assessment to positive intervention strategies. The speaker will take attendees step by step through the process and have a chance to practice writing techniques and strategies for problem behaviors.

It's Fun to Have Fun, but You Have to Know How!

Saturday, April 4, 2009

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Region 10 Service Center

904 Abrams Road

Richardson, TX 75081

Julie Liberman (M.A.CCC-SLP and owner of Speech TX) will present strategies for facilitating friendships. Topics will include:

- Importance of play
- Typical development of play skills
- Different theories for teaching how to play and improve social skills
- Incorporating these skills into IEP goals and objectives

20 Ways to Adapt the Science Lab

by Paula Kluth

Too often, students with disabilities, especially those with more moderate and significant disabilities, are excluded from the rich and complex experience of the science lab. This is unfortunate as many a science teacher would argue that if students are not engaged in hands-on science, then they are not really “doing” science. In other words, science is about learning ideas and concepts, studying vocabulary, and understanding theories, but it is also about observation, exploration, and discovery.

Another reason to give all students access to lab work is to pique their interest and enhance

their learning. It is widely accepted that students who participate in labs and other hands-on science activities will remember the material better and be able to transfer the learning across situations and lessons. Students who have learning difficulties or differences often are more on task during hands-on activities because there are often a wider variety of ways to participate and the active and social nature of the science lab keeps students engaged and interested. Finally, lab work helps all students hone social and communication skills, making it ideal for learners with disabilities who may need help with asking and answering questions, taking turns in a conversation, or knowing how to enter

a discussion

Having shared all of these benefits, many learners will need adaptations or modifications in order to be successful in a lab situation. Twenty ideas that can help you support diverse learners in your science classroom are offered here:

1. Be *explicit* about what you want students to know and do in each lesson and model what you want to see (e.g., language, behaviors, techniques, safety procedures) in the lab.
2. Post expected “lab behavior” on a poster or chart that is clear for all to see- emphasizing, of course, safety guidelines. Draw students attention to this information every time they work

in the lab.

3. Organize your lab around big questions that all students can answer in some way. For instance, the question, "What is a rock?", can be answered on many different levels. One learner will be able to show or give an example of a rock while other learners will learn that it is "consolidated mineral matter".

4. Be sure to create very clear step-by-step directions for the lab. If needed, provide a checklist or even an illustrated checklist of steps.

5. Instead of pairing students alphabetically or randomly, think about individual needs to determine best partnerships. You might also give students a questionnaire to find out not who they want to work with but who they think they can work effectively with. Get suggestions from them but make the final decisions based on your observations. Some learners might have difficulty working with new or unfamiliar people. You may want to pair these students with a familiar peer.

6. Give different students different roles based on their strengths. For example, a student who is a strong writer might take notes for the group, while a student who enjoys public speaking might present the group's findings to the class. You can also assign roles based on student needs. For instance, an individual who needs more practice with social skills might be asked to serve as the group facilitator.

7. Some students may be better served by working across groups instead of within a group. For instance, if measurement is a skill you are focused on, you might have a learner go to each group to measure and pour liquids. If calculations are

a target skill, perhaps an individual can help each group check and re-check their work.

8. If the experiment or lab requires procedures that are complicated or has directions that are easily misunderstood, be sure to clearly demonstrate these pieces in front of the students.

9. If reading the supporting materials will be a challenge for one or more learners, consider simplifying the directions, highlighting key words, or adding icons, tables, or photos to the text.

10. If you work with students who struggle with the writing requirements of labs, allow all or some to use portable word processors or to speak observations and findings into a tape recorder or digital voice recorder.

11. Add additional roles or tasks for students who are working on individual goals that would not typically be addressed during lab. If a student is learning to use a new communication device, for instance, you might ask students to allow that individual to direct or, at least, introduce the activity with pre-programmed messages on their device.

12. Look for a range of materials that diverse learners can access to understand the key concepts or ideas being explored in the lab. For a lab on dissecting frogs, for instance, you might have a plastic model of a dissected frog, books on frogs, and an on-line virtual dissection available to learners who need extra support.

13. Provide more durable materials, if needed. Plastic beakers might be a better choice than glass ones for some learners, for instance.

14. When necessary, incorporate adapted materials such as talking thermometers and laboratory

glassware with raised numbers.

15. Play with technology as a support for diverse learners. For example, digital cameras can help students record steps of an experiment.

16. For those who need repeated practice or extra materials for review, you might record experiments and give them to certain learners to view. Or you can post parts of your labs on a classroom website for all to see.

17. Reduce the writing component of the lab work. Instead of asking for the purpose, materials, procedure, and the conclusion, you might have some students responsible for writing only the conclusions. Or you might prepare a set of guided notes (a map or outline of the lab notes) for some learners; these students would only need to fill in the blanks where content is missing or finish diagrams or charts that have been partially completed.

18. Allow students to report their findings in a variety of ways. They might choose from writing a description, drawing a diagram, or explaining findings to a peer.

19. If a particular student needs supplemental activities or supports during the lab, he or she might spend some class time away from the lab gathering information that can be brought back to the whole group. For example, a student an interactive science website (gathering related information) or looking at photographs related to the lab.

20. To challenge some learners, ask them to design a new experiment or to extend their experiment.

This article was reprinted with permission from Dr. Paula Kluth and can be found on her website at <http://www.paulakluth.com/articles/20wayslab.html>.



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Pictured Above: Kendall Tignor

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

Upcoming Workshops and Conferences

Practical Solutions for Education of Students with Down Syndrome

Friday-Saturday, January 30-31, 2009

Registration at 8:30 am

Workshop from 9:00 am - 12:00 noon

Dee Kelly Center on the TCU Campus

2820 Stadium Drive

Fort Worth, TX 76129

The Down Syndrome Partnership of Tarrant County is pleased to offer the *Practical Solutions Workshop* to help you understand how to successfully engage, instruct, and enjoy your students with Down syndrome. The Friday session will be directed toward educators while the Saturday session will be directed toward parents. Both workshops are open to educators,

parents, service providers, and other interested parties.

There is no cost to attend but registration is required. To register, please call (817) 496-5100 or e-mail greenoaksschool@sbcglobal.net.

Blazing the Trail with Transition - 2009 Annual Texas Transition Conference

Monday-Wednesday, February 23-25, 2009

Doubletree Hotel, Austin, Texas

The Texas Transition Conference is an annual three-day conference that equips individuals with transition information in the hopes of improving outcomes for postsecondary opportunities for youth with disabilities. Key note speakers are internationally recognized experts with topics

including: *Transitioning to the University, Student-Directed IEP Meetings, and the State of Transition in Texas* among others. For more information contact Cheryl Grenwelge, TTC Coordinator at (979) 458-1593 or see the TTC website at <http://ttc.tamu.edu/>.

Inclusion Works! Conference

Wednesday-Saturday, February 25-28, 2009

Renaissance Hotel, Austin, Texas

Sponsored by the Arc of Texas, this annual state-wide meeting for parents and educators will focus on presentations about "best practices" for including students with disabilities in general education classes. To register go to www.thearcoftexas.org/conferences.