



Working Hand In Hand

Topics in Down Syndrome Education for School Teachers, Staff and Administration – Teacher Appreciation Spring 2018



in partnership with

DOWN SYNDROME AFFILIATES IN ACTION

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Down Syndrome Association of the Valley is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization which serves individuals with Down syndrome throughout eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania. Established in 2007, DSAV is committed to providing support, resources, advocacy, education and opportunity to individuals with Down syndrome, their families and our communities throughout the region.

INCLUSION

Podcasts are a great way to learn “on the go”. Check out these podcasts on inclusion – [The Inclusive Classroom](#), [Think Inclusive](#), [Inclusive Education Project](#).

EDUCATION STRATEGIES

Literacy

Children with Down syndrome are strong visual learners with challenges in auditory learning. Reading makes language visual and helps to improve working memory, speech, and articulation by seeing words in print. Reading is often an area where children with Down syndrome feel successful and should begin early in preschool. Students initially benefit from sight word instruction and then progress into phonics instruction once a core sight word vocabulary has been reached ([Down Syndrome Education International](#)).

Simple sight word books for students beginning to read are available from the [Down Syndrome Foundation of Orange County](#). Many of these books can be downloaded for free (LP archive)!

Additionally, this [research article](#) provides a set of 10 research-based tips for educators to consider when planning literacy instruction for students with intellectual disability (ID) in order to maximize student outcomes. Research, and the students themselves, show us that integrating components of traditional reading instruction into instructional strategies for students with Down syndrome can lead to higher reading achievements.

Vision

Most people think that if a person’s visual acuity is 20/20, their vision is ‘normal’ or ‘perfect’. Visual acuity is a measure of the clarity of a person’s vision and is tested by having a patient read a line of letters on an eye chart. This test does not require the same amount and types of eye movements that reading does, so it cannot be used to determine



Thank you to all
the educators who
make a difference
throughout
eastern Ohio and
western
Pennsylvania.

whether a child has the visual skills necessary to read. These vision challenges can include: eye movement problems (where the eyes might lose their place or jump around), eye teaming problems (binocularity, when the eyes are not working well together), and focusing problems.

Children with Down syndrome will rarely tell someone that their vision is blurry, that their eyes are hurting, or that they get headaches from reading. Educators and parents can help watch for signs that might indicate a visual problem and a vision exam by a skilled [Developmental Optometrist](#) can diagnose visual problems beyond just sight acuity. The optometrist may recommend vision therapy in which optical devices and exercises are used to retrain the muscles that control the eye in order to make eye movements easier and more efficient.

Communication

All students who do not use reliable speech for communication should have an effective communication device in place! There are [too many excuses](#) for not beginning high-tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) with students who have complex needs. All individuals have the right to communicate!

IEPS

For your next IEP review, disability legal experts say a U.S. Supreme Court ruling will set the stage for stronger goals and higher expectations. The U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous March 2017 decision in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* is holding school districts to a higher standard by requiring "appropriately ambitious" programs. In December, the [U.S. Department of Education](#) issued guidelines on implementation of the ruling that are now being used in IEP meetings.

TRANSITION

For students in transition, this new video series shows quick practical tips from PACER's [Project Launch](#). It provides **five key strategies** parents can use to help their youth be prepared for employment success.

COLLEGE FOR STUDENTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

There are now 264 higher-ed programs nationwide for students with ID and the programs continue to expand. The employment rate of the graduates from college programs is almost triple that of those who did not go to college, 45 percent versus 18 percent, according to the Think College National Coordinating Center. Check out these great videos of college students with Down syndrome from [Ruby's Rainbow!](#)

ONE MORE THING!

A group of mothers came together to create a World Down Syndrome Day video to show the world that they '[Wouldn't Change a Thing](#)'!

