

DOWN SYNDROME

What is Down Syndrome?

- A congenital disorder that occurs when an error in cell division causes an extra version (full or partial) of chromosome 21
- Three different types:
 - Trisomy 21 – most common
 - Mosaicism
 - Translocation
- Each of these types typically result in mild to moderate cognitive impairment

For more information and resources, you can visit the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) website!

Communication Needs

Strengths:

- Good social skills and strong ability to communicate using gestures, facial expressions, etc.
- Can often understand language well

Challenges:

- Difficulty with speaking – need to increase speech intelligibility
- Usually have difficulty with grammar (rules and structure of language)

Hallmark Characteristics

- Mild to moderate cognitive deficits
- Decreased muscle tone
- Distinct facial features
- Compact structure of ears, nose, and throat
- Slow rate of development, including speech & language delays

Common Health Issues

- Congenital heart disease or heart defects
- Hearing and vision problems
- Respiratory problems
- Obstructive sleeping disorders
- Sensory processing disorder
- Feeding and swallowing difficulties



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Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Target speech, language, and communication difficulties. May help child to:
 - Produce clear speech to improve intelligibility
 - Improve language skills, including grammar & comprehension
 - Use augmentative and alternative communication strategies
- Assess and treat feeding/swallowing difficulties
- Work with other professionals and the child's family to help the child better communicate and be successful

Classroom Modifications for Down Syndrome

	Suggested Modification
Learning Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Repeat key ideas and directions -Allow extra time for response -Take frequent breaks and check for child's understanding -Provide demonstration with verbal instruction -Break directions into small steps -Be aware of classroom noise levels or distractions -Incorporate visual supports
Language Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ask parents for advice and effective communication strategies -Incorporate sign language, gestures, and visual cues -Be patient waiting for a response
Motor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide back support if child is sitting on the floor -Consider classroom layout and adjust for ease of movement -Provide extra supervision during active games -Ensure that the child has a properly sized desk and chair (feet fully resting on floor when seated)
General Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seat student at front to lessen impact of hearing and vision deficits -Reduce sensory distractions



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