



Down Syndrome Connection
of the Bay Area

Acknowledge and Celebrate World Down Syndrome Day - 3/21!

There are lots of ways to acknowledge and celebrate World Down Syndrome Day. You can host guest a speaker/s to talk about Down syndrome awareness or show the “Just Like You” video. This is a wonderful 13 minute video that can be found by searching “Just Like You and Down syndrome” on YouTube. You can put up a display or table about Down syndrome at your school, we’d be happy to provide some materials and information to do this. Read and discuss a book with your class (or your child’s class) about Down syndrome - some recommended books are listed below. You could have students work together to come up with 21 facts (or myths/facts) about Down syndrome (or use the samples provided) and post these throughout the school or print them up for students. There are endless ideas; some are quick and easy and some require more time and planning. An easy thing to do is to have your school make an announcement about World Down Syndrome Day. We’ve written some samples below that can be read. We hope you celebrate on 3/21 and send us photos and your ideas.

Example Messages:

At elementary schools:

“Today is World Down Syndrome Day. Down syndrome is a disability that some people are born with. If they are, they always have it. If they’re not, they never get it. People with Down syndrome are just like you and me, but it might take more time and work for them to learn certain things. Today is a day that people all across the world are celebrating the inclusion and acceptance of people with Down syndrome. We hope you’ll join us in celebrating differences and include and support your school-mates with Down syndrome or any disability. Invite a classmate to eat with you at lunch, play with you at recess, join you at your birthday party or to read a book together. Your class can discuss more ways to be respectful and include all students. Happy World Down Syndrome Day!”

At middle and/or high schools:

“Today is World Down Syndrome Day. Down syndrome is chromosomal disability that about one in 700 babies are born with. There are about 400,000 people with Down syndrome living in the United States today. People with Down syndrome may take a bit longer to learn how do do some things, but mostly they’re just like all of us: they enjoy friends, hobbies, having fun, learning, and being included. Take a moment today to think about how you can include and support someone with Down syndrome (or any disability). Invite them to join you for lunch or to join in a sport or extracurricular activity with you. If you have a classmate with Down syndrome, invite them to do a class project together. Most importantly, be respectful. Before you act or speak...*think twice and just be nice*. Happy World Down Syndrome Day!”

Recommended Books:

Taking Down Syndrome to School, by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos. This book is best for children ages 4-7. It explains a bit about Down syndrome and how it can effect children born with it. The text points to a child who is in a special education class. If appropriate and desired, this can be changed to describe a child who is in a regular education class.

Our Brother has Down's Syndrome, by Shelly Cairo. We tend to use this book for children ages 6-10. Though parts of it might be a bit young for 10 year olds, we modify and adapt it according to the age of the students. There is information on cells and chromosomes that older children find interesting and may go into a bit more depth with. As we read the book, we change "Down's syndrome" (as it is referred to in the UK) to "Down syndrome." We also change "handicapped" to "people with disabilities."

There are several other wonderful children's books that either feature children with Down syndrome as a lead character or speak directly about Down syndrome. The two listed above, however, are the ones that we most commonly use.

Example 21 facts about Down syndrome:

1. Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder.
2. Down syndrome effects about 1 in every 700 babies.
3. There are about 400,000 people with Down syndrome living in the United States.
4. Down syndrome is named after John Langdon Down, who discovered it in 1828.
5. People with Down syndrome have an extra copy of the 21st chromosome.
6. People with Down syndrome have 47 instead of 46 chromosomes.
7. People with Down syndrome can and do achieve great things - they are actors, hold good jobs, go to college, live independently and lead happy lives.
8. People with Down syndrome love to be included and have friends.
9. Even if someone with Down syndrome can't talk much, they can understand a lot.
10. People with Down syndrome have "low muscle tone" - it's harder for their muscles to work.
11. People with Down syndrome hate hearing the words "retard/ed" even if it's not said to them or even about a person.
12. If you were born with Down syndrome, you will always have it - there is no "cure."
13. If you weren't born with Down syndrome you will never have it - it's not contagious.
14. Many people with Down syndrome have health complications.
15. People with Down syndrome need more time to think/process what someone is saying. Be patient!
16. People with Down syndrome can do A LOT, let them try!
17. People with Down syndrome are more alike you than different.
18. Students with Down syndrome can succeed in regular education classes.
19. People with Down syndrome have all the same emotions that you have.
20. Patience and an open mind are the only requirements needed to makes friends with someone with Down syndrome.
21. You do not need to feel sorry for someone with Down syndrome - it's not a bad thing!