

Fall 2022

ISSUE #12

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with Students with
Down Syndrome*

The
**Back to School
Issue**

Plus: Canadian Students Share Their Thoughts on the Year Ahead

Canada's
Down Syndrome
Magazine
3.21

is a joint publication of

**Down
Syndrome**
Resource Foundation



Canadian
Down Syndrome
Society

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In this issue of **3.21** Canada's
Down Syndrome
Magazine

Welcome to a new school year – and to 3.21's third annual Back to School issue.

Success in school is a team effort, and within these pages you will hear from all the key members of the squad: teachers, support staff and school administration, therapists, parents, and of course the stars of the show – the students! They'll tell us about their goals for the year, while the professionals and parents share wisdom on how to help your student accomplish their objectives.

The school community is broad, encompassing many who interact with students, and it is good to remind ourselves that there are teachable moments for everyone. The return of school presents fresh opportunities to reconnect with neighbours, schedule group activities, participate in sports teams, and educate our larger communities about inclusion and Down syndrome. Let's get creative this fall – particularly during Canadian Down Syndrome Week, October 23-29 – and make the whole country our classroom.

We would love to hear from you! Drop us a line at 321DSMagazine@gmail.com and tell us what you're excited about as you start a new school year.

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We are proud to announce that 3.21: Canada's Down Syndrome Magazine has been awarded **Silver** in the **Magazine**

Excellence Award category at the 2022 Ma Murray Awards, presented by the British Columbia and Yukon Community NewsMedia Association (BCYCNA).

We are thrilled to share this honour with our outstanding designer, Kerry Slater of [Curve Communications](http://CurveCommunications.com). Yay, us!



READY to START

Preparing for Kindergarten Success

*By Hina Mahmood, M.OT; Riley Rosebush, RSLP;
Sara Peralta, BCBA; Danielle McKinney; Jeni Carcamo*

Starting school can be both an exciting and daunting experience for any family, and all the more so when student has Down syndrome. School is a new adventure, and like any adventure, it goes best when we are prepared. The transition to kindergarten is most successful when it is thoughtfully planned out over the entire pre-kindergarten year.

The Down Syndrome Resource Foundation recently launched Kinder Kick-Off, a kindergarten readiness program, to equip students and families entering this

new stage of life. Kinder Kick-Off is a collaborative effort spanning DSRF's various disciplines with coaching from occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, behavioural consultants, and teachers. Together, they assess the school readiness of students in the areas of classroom basics, literacy basics, and life skills, and provide strategies for each of these spheres.

On the following pages, the team provides their best advice for preparing your child with Down syndrome to get their school career off to a great start.



PHYSICAL SKILLS

Success in the classroom setting is achieved when there is a balance between the person, the environment, and the occupation (the task). Keeping in mind the person with Down syndrome, how they learn, what motivates them, and how they best function are all components that need to be considered.

In many cases, simple environmental adaptations can enable students to participate in all school activities. Students with Down syndrome may require supported seating in the classroom, adapted equipment at their desk, a safe and accessible toileting setup, or a plan for safe feeding strategies. They may also need various tasks and activities to be adapted to create the just-right-challenge and promote independence. Occupational therapists can assist with all of the above.

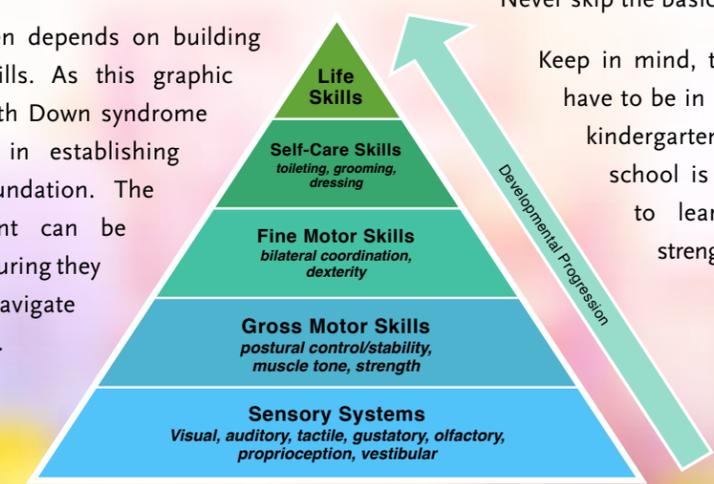
Success in kindergarten depends on building upon foundational skills. As this graphic illustrates, students with Down syndrome first require support in establishing a strong sensory foundation. The classroom environment can be overstimulating, so ensuring they have the right tools to navigate that space is important.

Once the sensory piece is in place, students can then start to work on developing and improving their gross motor skills. Due to low tone, students with Down syndrome require more work to activate their muscles to walk, run, and stay seated at a table.

As the gross motor stage is emerging, fine motor skills can be introduced. A strong base of support is required before fine motor movements can be executed. Hand strength, dexterity, and grasp are all areas that can be targeted by OTs.

Finally, with these foundations in place, students can become more proficient in their self-care skills, such as feeding, dressing, and toileting. Whenever a new skill is being taught, it is important to remember that every skill has its own set of basic steps. Never skip the basics!

Keep in mind, these skills don't all have to be in place before starting kindergarten. That first year of school is a great opportunity to learn new skills and strengthen existing abilities.





SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

There is a lot we can do for kids before school starts to help them communicate successfully in kindergarten. Many children with Down syndrome need support to understand information and follow directions in a busy classroom environment, and most children with Down syndrome need extra support to express themselves to others clearly.

Providing visuals can help children understand, process, and remember information and directions. Classrooms are busy and distracting places, and well-used visuals can help children feel more confident in tackling classroom tasks with greater independence. Visuals can be anything you can see, including objects, photos, picture symbols, signs, or demonstrations.

Consider how you will help your child express themselves to everyone they will meet at school. Many children will benefit from a form of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) that can help them say what they're thinking and get their needs met. Research shows that AAC doesn't limit verbal speech, and in fact often helps develop verbal language skills while allowing children to communicate successfully with others.

Along with your SLP, practice giving your child an effective way to communicate that they're all done with something, that they need a break, that they want more of something, and that they need help. Mastering all these important communication functions will help your child participate and succeed when they hit the classroom.

BEHAVIOUR

School is a new environment for kindergarten students, full of new routines and expectations. This presents opportunities to learn positive new behaviours, many of which can be practiced in the years leading up to school entry to smooth the transition.

Although learning looks different for everyone, one thing we know is that children learn through play. Many kindergarten classrooms incorporate play into their daily schedules. At home, parents can use play as a learning moment by playing in a way that is child-led, focusing on what the child is highly motivated by and allowing this to be a positive and engaging interaction for both parent and child. During child-led play, we can focus on creating a time where there are no obvious instructions or expectations from the child, except to have fun interacting with the parent.

Sometimes as parents, it is tempting to use play as a teaching opportunity wherein we want our little ones to practice the things we know they can do or that we want them to improve. This leads us to ask many questions or instruct the child to play a certain way. Conversely, when

we focus on child-led play, playing does not become a task for the child.

Think about how it may feel for you to be engaging in your favourite hobby, only to have someone constantly telling you to do it differently or peppering you with questions. Not fun! Instead, get down on the floor and join in the fun, focusing on your child's preferred way of playing and interacting.

If your child is practicing new skills, consider practicing strategies during times that you know you can commit to. For example, if Wednesday morning is too busy because you are on your own with multiple children and a busy schedule, it might not be the best day of the week. If Thursday is a little calmer, start there.

Positive reinforcement is critical. When you see your little one do something that you would like them to do again, provide descriptive, but simple praise, and pair it with something they like. For example: "Your jacket is on, yay!" along with a high five tells the child they have done a good job and makes it more likely they will do it again next time you're going out.

READING

As you prepare for your child to enter kindergarten, it can be beneficial to focus on shared reading and play to help your child with Down syndrome develop the skills they need to make their kindergarten year a successful one.

Read with your child and help them to be the storyteller. Shared book experiences that promote interactions and engagement have a direct, positive impact on later conventional literacy skills.

Dialogic reading is an effective framework for creating an interactive shared reading experience. With dialogic reading, the adult uses a variety of prompts to increase the child's attention, engagement, and comprehension. They provide feedback and modelling to promote language development.

Often, the experiences that parents share with their children allow them to make unique connections to stories and to form a bridge between books and the real world, which can help with narrative and conversational skills. For learners with Down syndrome, receptive language is often stronger

than expressive language. Sharing books that are rich in language and pictures provides an additional avenue for children to express what they think, feel, and know about the world.

Play is a big part of the kindergarten experience. Through play, children work on language development, thinking skills, creativity, and physical and social-emotional skills. Children are given ample opportunity to engage in play throughout the school day, including play centres, exploration tools, dramatizing, observing, building, exchanging ideas with peers, solving problems, asking questions, and more.

Opportunities can be set up in the home environment to emulate what will happen at school so that your child knows what to expect and has some practice in similar situations. Observe how your child plays on their own and with other children, how long they sustain play, and what interests them during play, and share this information with the school team. Most importantly, remember that play is about having fun! Explore and enjoy all the enriching experiences that play brings your child, and celebrate the progress your child makes as they engage in reading and play.

RESOURCES

DSRF's Kinder Kick-Off Program:
<https://www.DSRF.org/kinder>

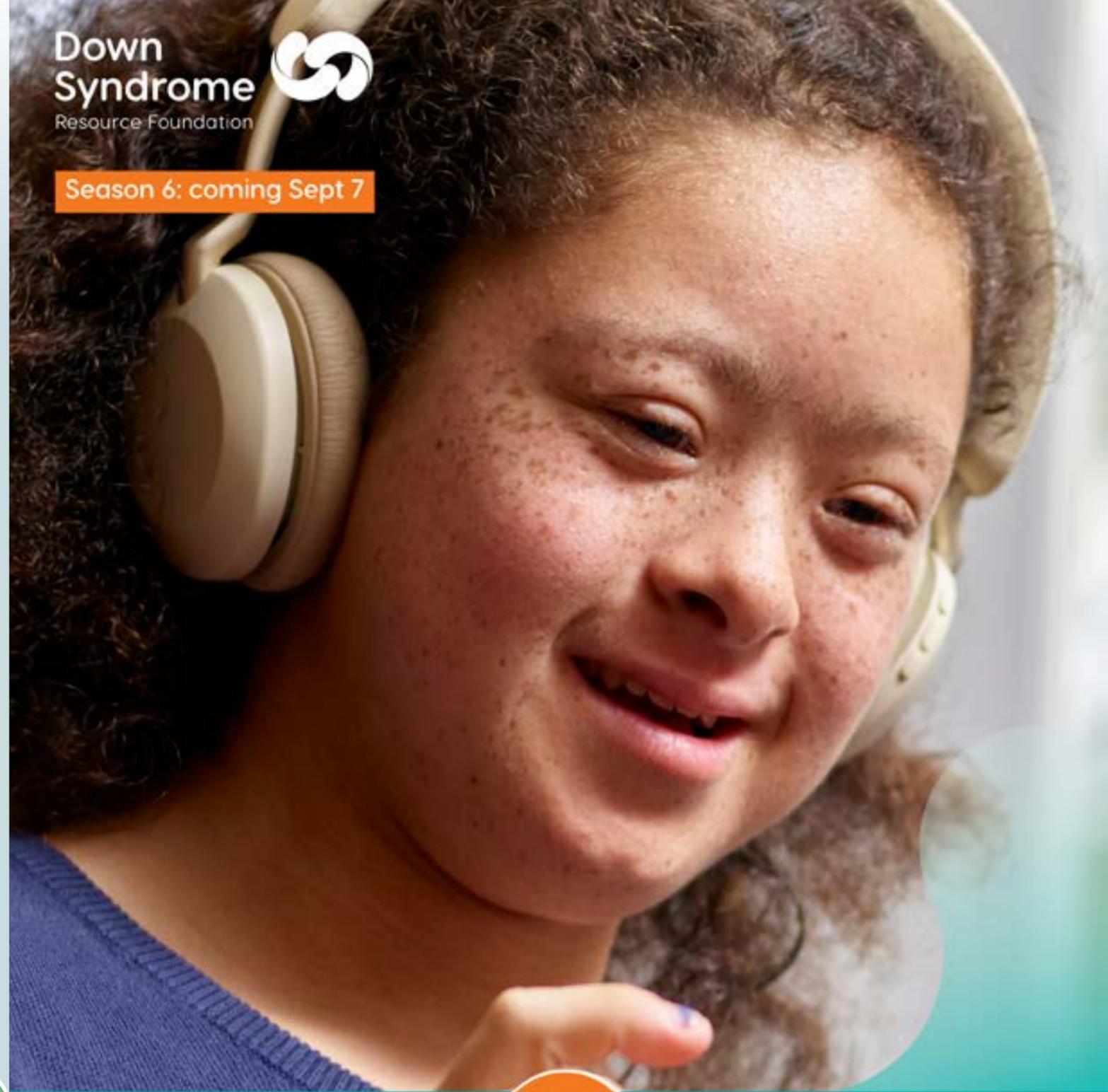
Dialogic Reading:
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/dialogic-reading-effective-way-read-aloud-young-children>

Hanen Program - Fun Ideas for Play:
<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Fun-Activities.aspx>

Hanen Program - Fun Ideas for Reading:
<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Early-Literacy-Corner/Literacy-at-Home.aspx>



Season 6: coming Sept 7



[DSRF.org/podcast](https://www.DSRF.org/podcast)



Hosted by Marla Folden, SLP
+ Hina Mahmood, OT

The LowDOWN
A Down Syndrome Podcast



DOGGED DETERMINATION

Zamaan's Quest for the Dogwood

By Shein Poonja
with Glen Hoos



Completing high school is a major achievement worth celebrating for every student. For some, it's an extra-special accomplishment.

In British Columbia, the standard high school diploma is known as the Dogwood Diploma. To earn the Dogwood, students must earn a minimum of 80 credits and write the Grade 10 Numeracy Assessment and Grades 10 and 12 Literacy Assessments. The 80 credits must include 52 credits for required courses and a minimum of 28 elective credits.

Students who do not meet the requirements of the Dogwood graduate with a school completion certificate, also known as the Evergreen Certificate. The Evergreen is awarded to students who do not complete the full high school curriculum, and whose learning outcomes are modified and set forth in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Historically, virtually all students with Down syndrome in BC graduate with the Evergreen, rather than the Dogwood. Indeed, it is almost universally assumed that students with Down syndrome will follow this path. Educators, parents, students – very few give any thought to an alternative.

Zamaan Jivraj is not one to take the easy path. His mom Shein tells his story.



When Zamaan was born, I took him to my GP for his doctor's appointment. She asked how I was feeling. I replied, "I'm doing great; it's everyone else who seems to be having trouble adjusting." The doctor told me that the reason people didn't share my sentiment was because Zamaan was not going to follow the 'normal trajectory.' She said, essentially, "You're not going to have a kid that goes off to university and leaves your home and does all those things. That's just not going to happen for you."

I knew immediately that was the end of the line for me with that doctor.

Shortly thereafter, I visited with the doctor who had delivered Zamaan. He provided much needed perspective, assuring me that I was no different than any other parent. Every parent and every child has dreams, and each one faces challenges along the way. We just happened to have a name for something that may be challenging for our child. Start with love and go from there.

For me, and for our family, education is a huge thing. It's the key to opening doors and having options in life. It's the reason my parents and my husband's parents migrated to this wonderful country: to give us all opportunity through education. We always approached Zamaan's journey with the question, "If he didn't have Down syndrome, what would we do?" Making sure my child has a good education is how I would parent a child who didn't have Down syndrome, and I wasn't going to parent Zamaan any differently.

Right from the beginning, I taught Zamaan his alphabet and his numbers. By the time he got to kindergarten, he was reading better than some of his peers. So, we just decided to let him lead the way and go along on this journey with him. We weren't going to remove possibilities from him. Just as our parents had done for us, we would put opportunities in front of him, and if he's rolling along, we would roll right along with him.

Unfortunately, not all educators shared this viewpoint. In the first grade, we ran into our first problem – and a sign of things to come.

Zamaan knew how to read, and he was a good speller. His teacher was doing spelling tests and she said that Zamaan didn't have to do the tests. When I asked why, she said that his writing was very slow and she couldn't wait for him to finish while the rest of the class was waiting for the next word.

I suggested that Zamaan could type his

words on an iPad, because he was pretty quick with that. In fact, he could probably type more quickly than some of the other students could write. The teacher wasn't too keen on it, but I forced the issue like I did for a lot of things after that. And Zamaan did great. He got 100% on every spelling test.

That's just one example of what we faced time and time again through Zamaan's grade school years. People assumed he couldn't do things and would approach his journey with that bias. They wouldn't give him the work and at times would actively work to exclude him. At one point, a teacher taped a sign to his desk: "I will not talk, I will not ask the teacher questions." It got so bad that we spoke to a lawyer.

Eventually, the district issued us an apology. That year, I would send Zamaan to school in the morning just to have a routine and socialize, and got a tutor at home for him in the afternoon. The teacher refused to give him the novel the class was studying, so we bought our own copy and worked on what the tutor said would be the learning outcomes.

Despite everyone's best efforts to put Zamaan in a box, we knew he could fly. My training as an occupational therapist came in handy as I have the skills to help break things down for Zamaan in a way that helps him understand. Everyday after school, we sat down and reviewed everything that was covered in school and I retaught it to him, adapting it in a way that fit with his learning style. This allowed him to keep up with the class and follow the typical curriculum.

The one bright spot was Grade 6 and 7. Zamaan had an incredible teacher and educational assistant who valued and believed in him. Zamaan was fully included in everything, and he thrived. It was so amazing, there were times when we had to pinch ourselves. Those two years were the most positive for him.

As he began high school, Zamaan did everything the same as his peers other than French, which he was very good at, but which the learning support teacher said was not required, so they could use that time to help him with other classes. His biggest area of

struggle was math. They worked with him on this during a support block. However, the math that was being covered was far too basic and not in the curriculum.

By Grade 9, the resource teacher came to me and suggested that Zamaan be removed from his English class. Zamaan was getting 80% in English, but the teacher was convinced that Zamaan wasn't keeping up, and his grade wasn't reflective of how he was really doing. I said, "That's not Zamaan's fault; the teacher has full control of how to grade his work and tests. This is the grade the teacher is giving him."

That resource teacher eventually left the school, but not before strongly recommending that Zamaan switch into modified classes – not just for English or math, but for all his classes. Had he done so, Zamaan would not have qualified for the Dogwood, but that wasn't our primary concern. We just wanted him to be in the best learning environment, and one that matched his ability. I wasn't ready to take him out of the classes just because the resource teacher didn't believe in him.

I think one of the issues is that Zamaan's verbal language skills are not at the same level as his comprehension. He has the cognitive abilities to put thoughts together but has a harder time expressing them. As his mom, I know when he understands something and when he does not, but his teachers didn't know him that well.

Just prior to Grade 10, I met with the district principal. He agreed that Zamaan should remain in regular classes and told us that if things weren't working out, we could withdraw him from class as late as the last day of the semester and try again the following year.

We ran into some challenges with Science (10). The previous year, Zamaan got 75% in chemistry, and suddenly he was getting zeroes on tests. The teacher did not communicate with us, didn't let us see the tests and refused to have discussions. In hindsight, I believe she felt he shouldn't be in her class. The solution, which allowed him to stay with the regular

curriculum, was to move him into the ESL (English as a Second Language) class. It was perfect for Zamaan, because they sifted out a lot of the extra stuff that other classes do and just focused on the actual necessities of the curriculum. The language was simpler and slower, and they spent time exploring each of the scientific words. We found it to be a good fit.

The last few years of high school were by far the toughest. Zamaan spent six hours a day at school, essentially just to collect the work and record the lectures. Then he would come home, and I would listen to the lecture, make notes, and teach the material to him. And it worked. His first year taking math in high school, he ended up with 95%.

When COVID-19 hit, things changed. Zamaan began doing some of his classes online through the school district. The teachers overseeing that were very supportive and willing to make the adaptations that Zamaan needed to succeed. So, he finished off his English and socials credits online, and did science, math, and electives at school. He consistently scored over 80% in his classes, and sometimes over 90%. In Grade 11 he received honors with distinction.

If anything, COVID actually made things a little easier for us, because he was no longer having to go to school. We were getting all the work online when school was shut down. We would sit down at 9:30 and finish by 2:00. Zamaan had time to exercise; he started doing yoga, and he was able to watch TV at night to unwind. It was more balanced.

I'm not going to lie; the overall process was exhausting. However, Zamaan was doing the work and earning the grades. We checked in with him regularly to make sure he was alright, that he wanted to carry on, and he would always say, "I am fine, let's keep going. I don't want to leave the class(es)."

The final challenge was the provincial exams. He did his provincial numeracy exam, and he passed. He completed his provincial Grade 10 and 12 literacy exams and passed. He had done everything required.

Zamaan's graduation in June 2022 was the culmination of twelve years of hard work on his part, and twelve

years of perseverance in the face of obstacles that others were setting in front of him. Our commitment was just to do our best, get him a good education, leave every opportunity open for him, and see what happened. And he did it!

We are extremely proud of Zamaan. I've always known that he is a hard worker, but the amount of sweat equity that went into this, it is unbelievable. When we watched him cross that stage and get that diploma, the auditorium erupted.

Zamaan's wonderful seventh grade teacher was also in the audience. The next day, he sent us this note:

A massive congrats to Zamaan and the both of you!!! I say this often... the Grad 2022 class is a special crew of kind, caring, and empathetic kids which I fully credit Zamaan for cultivating. Your boy's positive spirit and energy has shaped and carried this cohort throughout their school years and we are so thankful that our daughter and Zamaan have been classmates all this time. On an emotional night for everyone, Zamaan received the biggest ovation of all which was so deserved. You must be incredibly proud of him for all he has accomplished and for the countless people, students and parents included, that he continues to inspire day in and day out. I can't wait to see what he accomplishes next!

Even though we know what a big deal this is, Zamaan is taking it all in stride. His attitude is, "Of course! All my peers graduated with the Dogwood; why wouldn't I?"



What's next? Whatever Zamaan wants. He has left the door open for himself to do whatever he wants in the future. He'll take some time to figure out what he likes to do and what he may want to pursue. The door is open. Currently he is working on his business, **The Granola Kid**.

Whether or not other families feel the path we took is right for them and their child, I think the big message here is: don't take them out of the game from the start. Leave them in and see where they go. We always taught Zamaan that he was strong, smart, and could do anything he wanted. We used him as the guide and he earned himself a diploma.

UP THE DOWN MARKET



Vancouver Sept 22, 2022
Calgary Oct 13, 2022
Toronto Oct 27, 2022
Montreal Nov 17, 2022



Make a Real Investment Through an Unreal Stock Game



At Up the Down Market, you and your team will go head-to-head with the heavyweights of the financial industry, buying and selling shares in fictitious companies to see who's the savviest and shrewdest. TV news broadcasts fuel the trading frenzy as competing tables brave the ups and downs of the market and vie for the coveted Up the Down Market trophy - and bragging rights for the next year.

As you play, you'll be investing in something more significant than just

stocks and bonds. Through Up the Down Market, a deposit is made toward a brighter future for people with Down syndrome - a compounding investment that pays lifetime dividends to hundreds of families.

Up the Down Market is presented by the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation. DSRF provides comprehensive support, rich social connections, and the best resources available to the Canadian Down syndrome community so each person can thrive.



[DSRF.ORG/UDMD](https://www.dsrff.org/udmd)

THE BRIGHT SIDE

TEACHERS SHARE
THEIR EXPERIENCES
with Students with
Down Syndrome

Here, elementary school educators from across Canada share their positive experiences with having a child with Down syndrome in the classroom. Read on for advice on inclusive classroom environments, ideas for smooth transitions, and lessons they've learned from their students.

A big thank you to all who participated!

Meet the Teachers

Tracey: I have been teaching for 28 years in Vegreville, Alberta. My second year teaching, I had a boy with Down syndrome in my class. He was in grade four at the time. I was very privileged to have another boy in my classroom for two consecutive years, grades three and four.

Connie: I am an Educational Assistant who has worked with a student since Kindergarten in Vegreville, Alberta, and then through grades three, four and six.

Noeleen: I teach in Ontario and have had a student with Down syndrome for three years. Working in a Montessori environment meant he was in the 'Casa' program in early years.

Emma: I teach in Ontario at a Montessori school, and have been a learning resource support for a student with Down syndrome and co-teaching for three years now, in the 'Elementary' program.

Paige: I started working with a student with Down syndrome in 2019, her grade one year at my school in Invermere B.C. I followed her through to grade three.



Would you consider your classroom a 'traditional' learning environment? Please describe.

Noeleen and Emma: We both work in a Montessori school.

Tracey and Connie: We do have a traditional learning environment; however, we recognize that every child is unique, and we need to modify and/or accommodate for them. Our student with Down syndrome had his own space (comfortable bean bag chair) where he could regulate himself if he needed to. He also had a cupboard full of various items that would help with his learning. In the classroom, we allowed all the students to help him to be successful. He would participate in any activities we did. We made sure our classroom was a welcoming, open classroom, where everyone felt welcome.

Paige: My student's grade three classroom was in a portable, which of course has some advantages and disadvantages. It was a traditional learning environment, with 22 students, one teacher, and myself, an education assistant (EA). I have 25 years' experience being an EA.

General Information about Montessori Schools, with some great takeaways for all schools:

<https://www.ourkids.net/montessori-schools.php>

Blog about children with Down syndrome in the Montessori classroom:

<https://amshq.org/Blog/2022-05-25-6-Ways-to-Support-Children-With-Down-Syndrome>

How did you prepare to have a student with Down syndrome in your classroom?

Tracey: I had a student many years ago with Down syndrome, so I used a lot of the techniques that I learned then. He was expected to do the same things his classmates did, with help.

When I had my previous student with Down syndrome, he signed a lot of the time. Our class learned to sign O'Canada while we sang it. I continued this with my second student. The whole class would sign when O'Canada came on. I also learned some simple sign language during the summer. Our division uses a communication device, so we learned how to use it.

We filled a cupboard with many tactile and modified books and resources to help. There were many items to help him regulate himself. In grade two, I made sure to talk to him and make him laugh so when he came to grade three, I was familiar to him.

Noeleen: I had no formal training, but when my student joined the school, many staff already knew him because he had older siblings in the school, which is a very family/school-focused environment. He was already informally a part of the school and class due to the open nature of the classroom, and often was a visitor due to having older siblings in the school.

Emma: I have an undergrad in psychology and studied autism in my post-grad, but working with a student with Down syndrome was a blank slate for me, so I made sure to take the time to get to know him first and foremost.

The head of our Learning Resource program worked hard to get separate funding for one-on-one support for speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy.

Because our school is private, the speech-language therapy funding was more readily available to support him.

Paige: I have experience with Picture Exchange Communication (PEC's), which worked extremely well for my student. Her speech can be difficult to understand, but the use of PEC's gave her independence and choice, thus allowing us to communicate better. Each morning we would sit together and do her schedule on her communication strip, following the same schedule as on the board. This allowed one on one time with her EA to discuss what her day would be like. Her perfect day would include iPad, art, gym, music, and home time. Unfortunately, we also had to add math, reading, science....

Note: One-on-one funding is not provided in all school systems, provinces and territories, but parents should fully investigate what is available for their child in both private and public education settings, and ask teachers and school administration for advice in this area.

How did the parents and school administration support you in having a student with Down syndrome in your classroom?

Tracey and Connie: Our student's mother has been amazing to work with as a parent. We worked together to build a program to help the best way we could. School administration was also very helpful. Our district has a team that works with students with special needs to ensure they are getting the best education.

Noeleen: Parents provided lots of valuable support and research materials via books, websites, resources, and YouTube links.

Emma: His parents are really strong advocates. The Hamilton Down Syndrome Association provided

materials and presentations, and I learned a lot from teachers who had him as a student previously. We incorporated strategies that worked well in their classrooms into ours and adapted some strategies to meet him where he was at in his stage of development.

Paige: My students' parents are amazing advocates for her. They are very supportive of her education and are willing to help wherever needed. They give a presentation every March 21, World Down Syndrome Day, making goodie bags for all the students and teachers. Our presentation for 2022 included mismatched socks, which are the same shape as chromosomes.



Did you do anything special at the start of the year to introduce the student with Down syndrome to the rest of the class? Did you directly promote inclusivity?

Tracey and Connie: Our student with Down syndrome was always treated like everyone else. We did speak about how everyone is different, and, in this class, we accept all those differences. Some students in the class did a presentation about Down syndrome that they shared with the entire school. We taught the class some simple sign language to help them communicate. Since we always treated him like all the other students and therefore, they treated him like any other student.

Noeleen: He was already part of the class, simply by being in the school visiting his older siblings at the school and in class. He had also helped as a greeter at the school previously. I think it is also helpful in the Montessori environment because of the regular flow between classrooms, it never really feels like a 'new grade', changes aren't so drastic.

At the start of the year his mother gave the class a presentation about Down syndrome (a great one for all ages one can be found [here](#)) and also gave an engaging 'presentation' to the class using Lego to describe what Down syndrome is.

Emma: I did lots of work to prepare myself before starting my role as a Learning Resource Guide. We made sure to tell the students simply to speak to him just like you would speak to anyone else. We promoted inclusivity by ensuring that independence was a top priority for him. During the first few weeks of school, we kept a close eye on things and that set the tone for the classroom culture. At one point some of his new peers were putting on his shoes for him, which he was able to do so independently. When I asked, "Who here can put on their own shoes?" everyone raised their hand, including him - at which point I encouraged everyone to be putting on their

Engaging presentations and activities for classrooms are available [here](#), and the broader school community can benefit from this piece.

own shoes. He is very clever and sometimes when he didn't feel like doing something he would get others to do it for him. We explained to his friends that he was very capable and it was not necessary to do things he can do for himself. He was quickly back to looking after his own footwear.

Paige: In 2019, my student's mother gave a presentation to grade one students explaining what Down syndrome is, and she emphasized that her daughter can do anything anyone else can do. The students were very accepting and true to her mom's promise, she CAN do anything anyone else can! In grade one, she and I would leave the classroom to do her reading program. In grades two and three, she left the classroom to do her speech program with DSRF staff. Those were the only times she was out of the classroom. She participated in everything the other students did.

Did you find the other children or young adults in the classroom accepted the student with Down syndrome, just as easily as they accepted other students in the classroom?

Tracey and Connie: Yes, they treated him like any other student. We spoke to the class about how he communicates a little differently than most of us. We taught them how they could communicate. The students loved him and would always want to be his helper. As a class, we worked as a team to ensure all the students in the class were happy and "loved." There was one boy in particular (who was also new to the school), who took the student with Down syndrome under his wing and always made sure he was smiling and happy. All students would include him in what they were doing, or they would go to him and ask what he was doing and help him.

Noeleen: He is a strong reader and often supported other students in the classroom with their reading. He's also extremely talented and strong in French as a second language. While these things have nothing

to do with 'acceptance,' it shows other students how he holds his own and is bright, clever, funny, and kind, just like everyone else.

Emma: Many of the students who had been with him in his previous Casa class had already regarded him as fully capable. He had formed strong relationships with these peers and those followed him into the Elementary classroom.

Paige: She had wonderful friendships throughout her primary years. We were fortunate to have an amazing counsellor in our school, who worked with the class on friendship building. I also did a lot of facilitating with peer groups and wrote many social stories on friendship and kindness. With the help of her speech therapist, she has been very successful with tapping the syllables of each word on either her leg or sometimes her forehead.

How did you facilitate peer relationships within the classroom?

Tracey and Connie: Our classroom is filled with smiles, laughter, and hugs. Everyone in the classroom is an equal member of the classroom and no student in the classroom should ever feel like they don't belong, so it was easy to build peer relationships. As teachers were always including and laughing, the other students followed our lead.

There was one boy who was kind of scared of the student with Down syndrome, so one of us would come and sit with them together and show him that the student with Down syndrome was like everyone else. It didn't take long for them to become friends. The kids in other grades would see him interacting with his classmates and would wave or say hi in the hallway.

During our Christmas concert practice in the gym, he had one line and we weren't sure if he would say it, but he got up to the mic and said his line. The whole school cheered; the smile

on his face was priceless. In gym class, the kids would patiently wait for him to complete the task and when he did, they would high five him and cheer him on. He would look at one of us with a huge smile and giggle. He is very personable and is easy to love.

Noeleen: Our school and classroom environments are designed to facilitate peer relationships. For ages six through twelve we do not have individualized desks; partnering on tasks is completely normal and encouraged, which is a natural for peer relationships. He joined the school with a couple of friends already, and then connected with others quickly. His strong story-telling and story-writing skills also helped him to form strong relationships; his stories and sense of humour really draw other kids to him. Despite these strong relationships he still advocates for himself regularly, of course. I recall a fire drill once where one of his good buddies was checking on him to ensure he was ok, and he quickly responded, "I'm ok." I could tell they both felt really good about that.

Emma: In grades one through three we really watched him evolve as a mentor. This year he was a class rep, and helped younger kids with learning and getting ready for transitions. Sometimes during recess, I would help him socially integrate into the less structured time, and he'd also use this time to hang out with older kids who enjoyed connecting with him. He often could hold his own!

Paige: I wanted to show all classmates how well our student with Down syndrome was doing. I wrote out a short *Encanto* story on the smart board and had her read it to the class, tapping each word. The class was very impressed with her enunciation and speed of each word. The students then started asking her to tap her words when she was speaking to them. When the grade three students were reading their work, I asked them all to tap each word to slow down their speech.



What are some lessons you learned from having a child or young adult with Down syndrome in your classroom?

Tracey and Connie: There is so much we have learned. He wants to be like everybody else and be treated like everybody else. We would tell the students, just because he has trouble talking to us, doesn't mean he can't hear and understand what we are saying. We told the kids to talk to him like any other student, he just has difficulty communicating back.

One time we went swimming and he saw all the other students go down the waterslide, so he grabbed both our hands and took us to the top of the slide. He sat there not sure if he should go. I (Tracey) got in the slide and Connie put him on my lap and before he knew it, we were going down the slide. He loved it, and for the next hour, we took him down the slide.

He gets his feelings hurt fast and he wants to please. If he ever did something wrong, all I would have to do was tell him I was disappointed. He would get close

to tears and give the biggest hug and say sorry. We feel so blessed to know him and have him in our lives. (Tracey) It has been two years since he was in my class, but he will come to my room and say hi or see me in the hallway and hug me or give me a high five.

Noeleen: I learned not to make assumptions, just let him go and he will be fine and do great! I also learned to slow my own pace. And I've also learned to start each day with a hug.

Emma: We originally met when he was just three years old. At the time, I was relocating from Toronto and touring all of the schools in the area. I recall I saw him tracing sandpaper letters (a common Montessori practice). It was eye-opening how capable, bright, and also kind and thoughtful he was and continues to be. I'm so grateful for the experience of working with him and learning from him. He's also taught me to stop and smell the flowers – literally and figuratively!



Do you/will you continue to educate your future classrooms about Down syndrome? How?

Tracey: For sure I will teach my other classrooms about Down syndrome. My former student still comes to my room now, even though he is not in my classroom. The students will say hi and invite him to sit down beside them. I tell them that he is like everyone else and wants to be treated that way.

Noeleen: Canadian Down Syndrome Week in October and World Down Syndrome Day in March will continue to be celebrated and used as an opportunity to educate through Rock Your Socks day, something that the entire school celebrates and gets involved with.

Paige: In grade three we have a leaving ceremony asking the third graders what they want to be in the

future. My student with Down syndrome was very sick and hadn't been at school all week. I sent the form home to her mom to fill out. She said, "In the future I want to be a teacher just like Ms. Paige." When I work so closely with a child for three years, they become family to me. I am going to miss her a lot.

Noeleen and Emma: Yes! In all the ways and using all the tools we have mentioned. Our local Down syndrome group celebrates World Down Syndrome Day and Canadian Down Syndrome Week. These events are always celebrated at the school too, with Rock Your Socks parties. Down syndrome is always a part of the conversation throughout the year.

Please share your favourite story about having a child or young adult with Down syndrome in your classroom.

Tracey and Connie: There are so many stories, he filled our lives with such love and laughter.

All the students in the class did a book talk where the students would come up to the front of the room and talk about a book they read. With our help, he presented the book Crankenstein (his favourite). He was able to stand at the front of the room and, with help, did his book talk. The next book talk, a fellow student went up to the front of the room with him to help with his book talk. He did the book Brown Bear. He was so proud of himself.

He always did the projects we did; sometimes he got a little messier, but that's ok. We decorated eggs and painted; most of the paint was on me, but he had fun and giggled and laughed while doing the projects.

We raised butterflies from caterpillars. Everyone in the class held a butterfly. He was scared to have it on his hand, but all the students showed him that it is ok

and the butterfly wouldn't hurt him. He eventually put the butterfly on his hand (but only very quickly).

Our class learned to sign to the song "A Thousand Years" by Christina Perri (the song that 50 moms with Down syndrome sign to). As a class, we sang and signed the song. The unfortunate part was Covid-19 closed the school on Friday, and we were to perform it on Monday. Whenever we sang it, he would come and hug us when the instrumental part came on.

In the classroom, we have a "brainiac bonk." Students who excel or show growth get called to the front of the room to celebrate their accomplishments and get the brainiac bonk. One time, he did something and the class cheered, he ran and got my brainiac and went to the front of the room so he could have the brainiac bonk. The kids all cheered him on again.

He went to the Snoezelen Room in our school. He wanted to show the other students where he went,



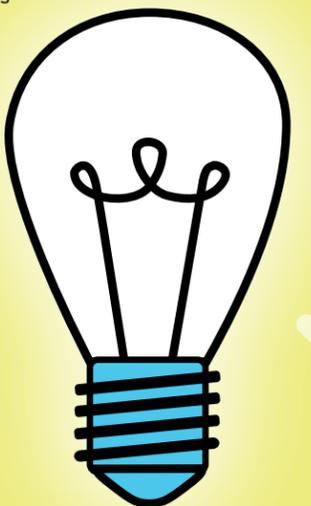
so every day he invited a different student to go to the Snoezelen Room with him. The students loved going with him and he felt so proud to show his fellow classmates what to do.

We have had many laughs and smiles. We will miss him as he moves to a new school.

Paige: At our school we have an amazing ski program allowing grade two and three students to ski three days at our local ski hill, Panorama. Unfortunately, we were not able to participate in 2021 due to Covid-19, but we had the opportunity to participate this year. My student with Down syndrome was a trooper! We had the privilege to have Panorama Adaptive Sports Society (PASS) work with her, skiing down the ski run using a hula hoop around her to slow her down. Eventually it was me skiing backwards down the ski run with her in the hula hoop. We had an amazing time, and she learned very quickly to slow down on her own!

Emma: He's not afraid to be himself. He likes to wear dresses sometimes, he loves fairies, tells lovely, beautiful stories. Even during Covid times during Zoom calls he'd bring life to the class, inspiring dance parties with his favourite song, "Yes sir, I can boogie." He is so comfortable in his own skin, and that allows other kids to be comfortable with themselves. He is definitely paving the way for others.

Noeleen: In grade one, students were given the opportunity to present anything to the class. He chose to present a story he had written. I'm not sure who was more excited, me, the students, or him. His presentation inspired other students to write a story to present later. Incredible – so memorable.



Back to School:

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Hear all
about what
Back to School
looks like for six
students this
September!

HI! I AM ANASUYA, I AM ENTERING GRADE TEN IN MARKHAM, ONTARIO.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL, AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

I like science – mostly about outer space and planets. I also like math, I have been creating a restaurant and menu for a final math project and presentation last year. I had to choose items for my restaurant and create prices. I enjoy baking and cooking. I like baking desserts.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT SCHOOL?

I have work experience in the school library. Sometimes I find it challenging to put the books away in the right place. I have been getting better at this throughout the year though.

TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT THAT YOU LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

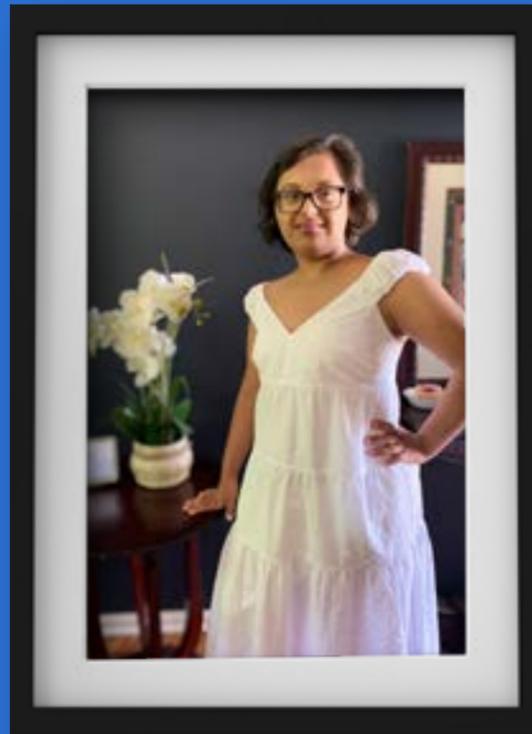
I learned that in the library, there is a whole section for cookbooks. I was also in two plays at school. I learned it takes a lot of time and work to put on a play.

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER.

My favourite teacher is Mr. Stoneman. He is very nice to me. He is kind. He is funny, he makes jokes. He bakes and he cooks. He likes classic rock just like me – *We Will Rock You* by Queen.

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR?

I would like to do more cooking and baking. I would like to make new friends. I would like to work at a store. I would also like to continue to work on my acting skills.



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\$16.95 /pair

100% of profits from Friday Sock Co. directly support CDSS's mission and programs.



Canadian Down Syndrome Society

Société canadienne de la trisomie 21



FRIDAY SOCK CO.

Order NOW in time to celebrate Canadian Down Syndrome Week Oct 23 – 29 in style!

I AM NIC FROM LIVELY, ONTARIO, AND I WILL START GRADE FOUR THIS FALL!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL, AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

I like Gym/Phys Ed because we bounce the ball and play basketball.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT SCHOOL?

Writing is hard because there are lots of letters.

TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT THAT YOU LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

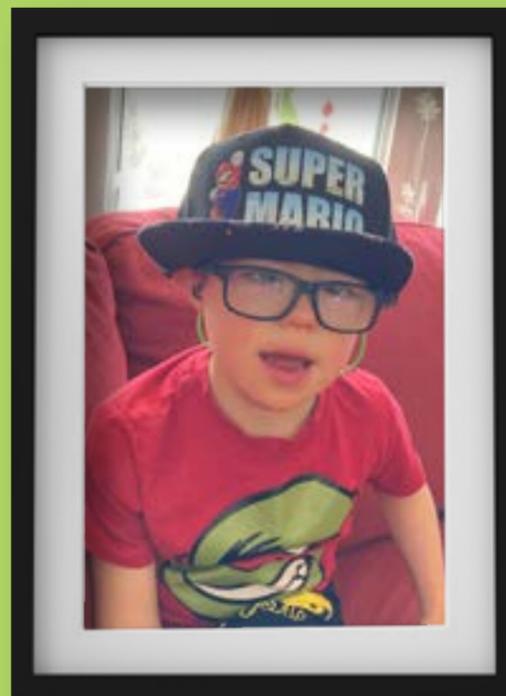
You can use boom whackers to make music.

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER.

Ms. Julie because we do math and reading in her room. She makes books with me in them! She is always happy.

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR?

I want to make friends at my new school.





CANADIAN DOWN SYNDROME WEEK!

Oct. 23 – 29

Visit our website for all your CDSW planning needs!

CDSS.ca



I'M LAUREN FROM VALLEY, NOVA SCOTIA, AND I CAN'T WAIT TO START GRADE TWO!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL, AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

Reading and gym class. It's fun. I love Ms. Aarts and Ms. Marquis.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT SCHOOL?

Listening and sitting sometimes.

TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT THAT YOU LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

I love school. I love spelling and reading.

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER.

Ms. Aarts and Ms. Jollymore, because they are so nice, kind and helpful.



NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M EMMA, AND I AM ENTERING GRADE FOUR IN GUELPH, ONTARIO.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL, AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

Science because I like doing experiments.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT SCHOOL?

When I have to write a lot of things down.

TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT THAT YOU LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

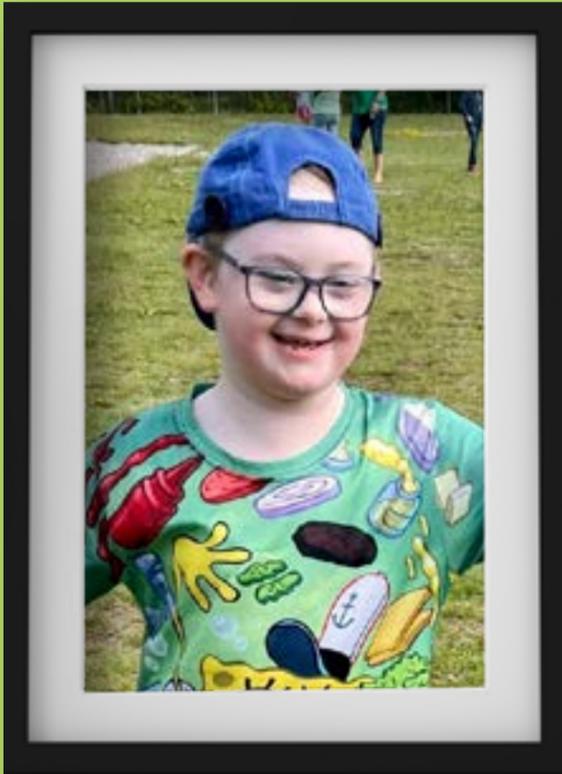
I learned about the Koala bear and it lives in Australia.

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR?

I want to learn more math. I like math!

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER.

My favourite teacher is Mr. Brown because he is proud of me when I do great work.



REUBEN HERE – I MOVED TO CANADA FROM SCOTLAND A FEW YEARS AGO. MY FAMILY AND I LOVE IT! I LIVE IN BATHURST, NEW BRUNSWICK AND START GRADE FOUR SOON.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL, AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

Singing – music.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT SCHOOL?

The school being noisy sometimes. Assembly is very busy with lots of other students.

TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT THAT YOU LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

Learning about dinosaurs and reading Piggie and Elephant books with my classmates.

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR?

(c/o Reuben's dad): To work on his speech and socialising with his classmates. The school is very inclusive and as his speech develops, we hope he will become more engaged in class activities.

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER.

Miss Cassidy is my favourite teacher – she dances with us and is very kind. A very special shoutout goes to an EA that works with Reuben, Miss Laura. She goes above and beyond - even takes me to the school swimming lessons in the evening.

I AM MAIA FROM THE UNITED STATES, I READ ABOUT 3.21 MAGAZINE WHEN I WAS VISITING FAMILY IN TORONTO AND WANTED TO SHARE MY YEAR AHEAD. I WILL START GRADE 11 THIS YEAR.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL, AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

Algebra because it has a lot of equations and I'm really good at getting x and y by itself.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT SCHOOL?

History because it gives me a lot of information, details and homework!

TELL US AN INTERESTING FACT THAT YOU LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

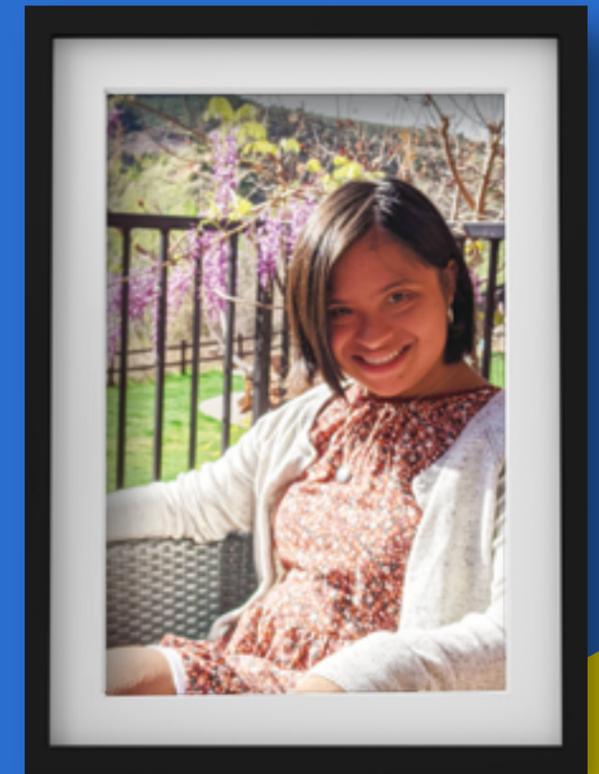
The most interesting fact I learned is that in Venezuela they celebrate Quinceañeras too just like in Mexico. I had a virtual Quinceañera during COVID.

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER.

I really like and enjoy Mr. Karas because he explains Algebra very well. I know it's advanced but I know some of the steps and solving problems.

WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR?

My goal for being a junior is making new friends and getting better at physics. I want to keep learning algebra the best I can. I want to be better at being a journalist and a staff assistant.



CDSS SPOTLIGHT



CDSS socks are back!

CDSS socks are back! See our ad on page 31. These socks always sell out quickly, and it's not too early to start thinking about holiday gifts for family, teachers and friends. Order by Oct 1 to ensure shipping in time for Canadian Down Syndrome Week at www.FridaySocks.com.

Our generous partner, Canadian-based **Friday Sock Co.** donates 100% of profits from all sales to CDSS.



CDSS will be collecting input from adults with Down syndrome on topics like employment, school, relationships, and independence. We will also be gathering advice to share with fellow Canadians. Anyone over 18 is welcome to participate! Email KristenH@CDSS.ca if you'd like more details about this project.

Free Back to School Resources

Visit our Educator Hub for resources to help educate students and staff, raise awareness and celebrate Down syndrome, and most importantly, to support a learner with Down syndrome in the classroom. Links and downloads can easily be circulated digitally to promote inclusivity, used to train administrative staff, and to help welcome a student with Down syndrome.

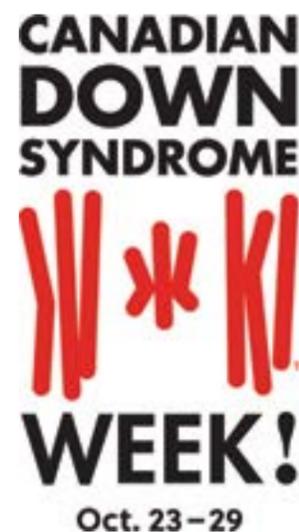
Access all of our free resources [here](#) in both French and English.



Canadian Down Syndrome Week!

Oct 23 – 29 is our week to shine Canada! Visit our website for promotional assets, awareness and fundraising ideas, engaging presentations for schools, workplaces and community groups in both French and English. #SeeTheAbility #CDSW2022

Stay tuned to our social wires and sign up for our e-blasts at CDSS.ca/SignUp for news and opportunities.



DON'T MISS OUT ON OPPORTUNITIES!
Quickly sign up today for CDSS's e-newsletter to stay connected and involved:
CDSS.ca/SignUp



YOUR IMPACT IN ACTION!

Thank you to all CDSS generous supporters for helping to bring many recent initiatives to our Canadian community. Some highlights:

- ! This fall, 125 caregivers and teachers will be supported with online instruction and evidence-based learning bundles to help new readers succeed.
- ! The Digital Divide got a little smaller this summer, with over 60 families receiving tablets from CDSS, along with support for learning and communication-based apps.
- ! From Vancouver Island to Cape Breton, over 400 people coast-to-coast supported the CDSS Walk for Awareness 2022.
- ! 330 amazing conversations with our donors to spread heartfelt gratitude and future plans.



OCTOBER IS DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH #DEAM

Thinking about finding work, discovering what kind of work interests you, or preparing for the interview and hiring process this fall or winter? Don't forget about CDSS's employment resources. Find links to employment agencies, information on life skill programs, volunteer websites, tips about job applications, resumes, cover letters, interviews and practicing common interview questions.

Download them [here](#).

Follow the #31DaysofDEAM campaign on social this October from the **Canadian Case for Supported Employment**.

FIND US / TAG US

@CdnDownSyndrome on all our platforms



CDSS.ca

Over a Quarter Million Dollars Raised as Run Up for Down Syndrome Returns

Following two years of successful virtual events, Run Up for Down Syndrome presented by Eurorite returned in person for 2022 — and even the rain couldn't wash away the smiles or dampen the enthusiasm of the participants.

Records fell by the wayside, as this year's Run goes down as the most successful fundraising event in the 27-year history of the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation.

1,089 runners representing 73 teams took part — both of which are new high-water marks for the Run. The event was DSRF's first ever quarter-million-dollar fundraiser, with over \$291,000 raised.

One parent, whose family attended the Run for the first time, shared, Run Up for Down Syndrome was "such an amazing event. Many people said how terrific it was and most of all how safe and relaxed parents felt at not having to be on guard about their kids. As parents, we don't always get to be out and have our kids/family members not only accepted but welcomed and celebrated."

Along with the runners, the record-setting success of the event is due in large part to our generous event sponsors, including presenting sponsor Eurorite, Upper Canada Forest Products,



LiUNA Western Canada, CTV, Prospera Credit Union, Return-It Express, Allwest Insurance, The MacKenzie Room, Spirit Ridge Resort, Kintec, KPMG, Save on Foods, Starbucks, Memphis Mikes, GO GO Gelato, B Fit Personal Training, Outback Team Building and Training, and the City of Burnaby.

Special thanks as well to our incredible volunteer team including SFU Hockey, which provided serious muscle for set-up and tear down. And as always, Run Up for Down Syndrome wouldn't be the same without emcee extraordinaire John Crosby, who was ably assisted on stage by DSRF Ambassador Chris Sayer.

To each and every individual and organization who contributed in any way, thank you for supporting people with Down syndrome to flourish and thrive. We look forward to seeing you back at the start line in 2023!



Let's Get to Work

DSRF students are rolling up their sleeves and getting to work! We recently launched a new Employment Support program offering one to one, personalized support for adults with Down syndrome who are seeking employment, need support in their current job, or are working toward specific employment goals. Our objective is to help each individual obtain and maintain meaningful, fulfilling paid employment.

Led by teacher Aja Masters, employment preparation focuses on identifying skills and interests, resume building, applying for a position, and interviewing. We also provide hands-on support and training to prospective employers, including assessing the work environment and suggesting appropriate modifications and adaptations. Once employment commences, we work with both parties to ensure a smooth transition into the workforce and a positive, fruitful employment experience for all involved.

As part of the Employment Support program, we are engaging at a deeper level with our front desk assistants, providing them with hands-on work experience and developing transferable skills that will allow them to flourish in other positions in the future.

Just a few months into the program, we already have our first success story, with DSRF Ambassador Andrew Bingham gaining employment at Vancouver café, Marché Mon Pitou. Andrew (or Tank, as those in the know call him), works as a barista and server assistant. His new employer loves what Andrew has brought to the table: "Tank, your bright smile and sense of humour has brought a new light to our team — we're so thankful to have you!"



UPCOMING AT DSRF

- Up the Down Market Vancouver – September 22, 2022
- Up the Down Market Calgary – October 13, 2022
- Up the Down Market Toronto – October 27, 2022
- Action 21 Montreal – November 17, 2022

FRIENDS OF DSRF

Thank you to every runner, donor, sponsor, and volunteer who contributed to the record-setting success of Run Up for Down Syndrome. In particular, thank you to presenting sponsor Eurorite and top fundraisers Geoff Gates, George Klukas, and Bill Longman. A heartfelt thank you as well to Macquarie Group, which generously matched the \$33,000+ raised by Geoff Gates.

Also at Run Up for Down Syndrome, DSRF Board member George Klukas and Eurorite Founder Bill Longman announced a two-year pledge to donate \$100,000 in support of DSRF's new Employment Support program for adults with Down syndrome. We are so grateful for their commitment to helping our students launch their careers.

Long-time supporters the Ames Family Foundation has kindly donated \$15,000 in support of DSRF's Pre-Employment Skills program, while the Vancity Community Partnership Program has provided \$10,000 for the same program. We appreciate their investment.

Our new website, launched in May 2022, was made possible in part by RBC Foundation, which supported the project with a very generous \$10,000 tech grant. The reimagined **DSRF.org** marks a major step forward for DSRF, improving our ability to deliver high quality virtual programs and services, and delivering our cutting-edge Down syndrome resources to families and professionals around the world. We are grateful to RBC Foundation for their impactful contribution.

DSRF's Summer Camp program is supported in part by a \$2,510 grant from Kiwanis Club of Vancouver. In addition, HRDC provided grants that enabled us to hire two summer students to run Summer Camp.

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DSRF.org





THE CONNECTION

The CONNECTION is a passionate, generous group, invested in creating a better future for Canadians with Down syndrome.

\$25/month

Provides an evidence-based literacy program, created specifically for new readers with Down syndrome.

\$50/month

Allows families to connect with our Resource Coordinator to provide life-changing resources.

\$100/month

Gives access to employment readiness resources and supports for those entering the workforce.

Your monthly donation is a catalyst for change, and gives us the ability and security to plan for the future.

Join us today:

CDSS.ca



Canadian
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