

Dear Parents,

Some of you already know our child, _____. For those of you who do not, our child has Down Syndrome and is excited to be in class with your child!

We understand that you and your child may have questions about Down syndrome. Children with Down syndrome are now included in mainstream classrooms and achieving great academic and social success. It is only through supportive environments that these individuals will meet with success beyond the school setting. We have the same expectations for our child as you do – we all hope our children will learn to the best of their ability, make lasting friendships, follow school rules, and be contributing members of the classroom and, ultimately, the community. Your child's role modeling and positive interactions will help our child to be successful in these areas.

Research on inclusion has shown that forming friendship with children who have Down syndrome or other special needs will have a positive effect on your child as well, including meaningful friendships, increased appreciation and acceptance of diversity, and respect for all people. Research further shows that this can translate to greater academic outcomes for typically-developing students, as they gain additional mastery over subject areas by practicing and teaching others.

We have shared information with the children's teacher about Down syndrome and some challenges our child and others with Down syndrome face, along with some truths about Down syndrome. We hope this will give your child insight into the similarities of all children and help answer some of the questions your child may have. We encourage you to talk openly with your child about these similarities to ensure a positive classroom environment for each and every student.

We are including some information for you, and we hope you will contact us if your family has any questions. Children with Down syndrome have unlimited potential when given the opportunity and support.

Our child has really enjoyed the class so far, and hopes to become fast friends with all of your wonderful children.

Sincerely,

P.S. For more information on Down syndrome you can visit the Down Syndrome Association of Houston website at www.dsah.org or call their office at (713) 682.7237.



DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON

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MYTHS & TRUTHS ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME

Myth: Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder caused by older parents and/or genetics.

Truth: Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 733 births is a child with Down syndrome. There are currently 350,000 people in the U.S. with Down syndrome, with 5,000 to 6,000 births per year. Eighty percent of children born with Down syndrome are born to women younger than age 35. However, research has shown a link between the incidence of Down syndrome and maternal / paternal age. Most cases of Down syndrome are sporadic, chance events. In general, Down syndrome does not run in families, and a sibling or aunt has no greater chance of conceiving a child with Down syndrome.

Myth: People with Down syndrome have severe cognitive delays.

Truth: Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate. IQ is not an adequate measure of the functional status of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome have great potential if given opportunities. Thanks to laws governing public education and greater opportunities, more and more individuals with Down syndrome are graduating with their peers and attending college.

Myth: The life expectancy of people with Down syndrome is 30.

Truth: Thanks to advances in medical and clinical treatment and opportunities to thrive, as many as 80 percent of adults with Down syndrome reach age 55, and many live longer.

Myth: Behavior problems and depression are just part of having Down syndrome

Truth: Often, medical or mental health problems go untreated due to the assumption that it is typical of having this genetic condition. Complete examinations by appropriate health care professionals should always be pursued.

Myth: Adults with Down syndrome may be unable to work.

Truth: Businesses seek young adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are employed by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry. People with Down syndrome bring to their jobs enthusiasm, reliability and dedication.

Myth: People with Down syndrome are always happy.

People with Down syndrome have feelings just like everyone else in the population. They respond to positive expressions of friendship and they are hurt and upset by inconsiderate behavior.

Myth: There are no effective treatments for Down syndrome.

Research on Down syndrome is making great strides in identifying the genes on chromosome 21 that causes the characteristics of Down syndrome. Scientists now feel strongly that it will be possible to improve, correct or prevent many of the problems with cognition that are associated with Down syndrome in the future. Particularly encouraging is the recent establishment of the Stanford Center for Research and Treatment of Down syndrome, whose mission is to conduct research and develop treatments related to the cognitive disabilities related to Down syndrome.

Myth: Having a sibling with Down syndrome will be a hardship for “typical” children.

Most families report that their “typical” kids are more compassionate, patient, and tolerant of all people because of the experience of having a sibling with Down syndrome. The sibling relationship is generally a typical one – full of love, arguing, and just being together.



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