

From: [Karen Matthews](#)
To: [Karen Matthews](#)
Subject: FW: Supporting Inclusive Education for Learners with Down Syndrome
Date: October 21, 2021 8:46:53 AM

From: Tamara Taggart <>
Sent: October 15, 2021 1:32 PM
To: Trustees BoardChair <TrusteesBoardChair@sd68.bc.ca>
Subject: Supporting Inclusive Education for Learners with Down Syndrome

CAUTION: External Message

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October 15, 2021

Ms. Charlene McKay, Board Chair
School District No.68, Nanaimo-Ladysmith,
Via email: TrusteesBoardChair.bc.ca

Dear Charlene McKay,

We are a non profit organization working to share information that supports the health and wellbeing of individuals with Down syndrome.

We know that going back to school is an exciting time for students and teachers. It can also be a very stressful time for students with Down syndrome and their families.

We understand that it may also be challenging for some principals and teachers with students who have Down syndrome as they try to determine the best practices for teaching learners with Down syndrome.

There are evidence based guidelines for promoting success of students with Down syndrome in academic settings. You may already be familiar with [International Guidelines for the Education of Learners with Down syndrome](#), published by Down Syndrome International in June 2020 and the Canadian Down Syndrome Society's 2013 [Educator Package: A guide to inclusive education for students](#)

[with Down syndrome](#), but we are providing links to them for your convenience and consideration.

We also want to draw your attention to the Down Syndrome Resource Foundation's [Educator Webinar Series 2021](#), an 8-part series running this November and December. All of these links are available on our website, at downsyndromebc.ca/education.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified by Canada in 2010, states in Article 24 that persons with disabilities should have access to “inclusive, quality and free” education, with reasonable accommodation, and the supports needed to realize effective education, with the goal of full inclusion. The rights of students with disabilities to receive inclusive and effective education is well recognized by the BC Ministry of Education.

We would like to see all of the recommendations in the linked reports internalized by BC's public school system, including the following key points drawn from the **International Guidelines for the Education of Learners with Down syndrome**:

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- Early intervention in inclusive settings leads to greater learning and better social outcomes than
- programs undertaken in segregated settings. Support children to engage in typical experiences known to promote development.
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- Learners with Down syndrome should be placed in mainstream classes appropriate to their age. Students
- should be withdrawn from those settings as infrequently as possible.
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- Speech and language therapy and other activities which promote good speech clarity and fluency
- should be available to learners with Down syndrome.
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- Occupational therapy can support the continued development of fine motor skills throughout life.
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- Leaders should provide opportunities for all staff, including learning support assistants (called

- 'Education Assistants' in BC), to undertake professional development on aspects of inclusive practice.
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- Teachers should be responsible for the learning of all students in their classes and must guide
- the work of assigned teaching assistants ('Education Assistants').
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- At the point when a teacher is assigned a class including a student with Down syndrome, targeted
- professional development should be provided.
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- Students must be encouraged to attend inclusive secondary classes and be supported to remain there
- until the end of secondary school.
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Please share this letter and information with your fellow trustees.

If there is anything that we can do to support principals or teachers of students with Down syndrome, please let us know.

Best Regards,



Tamara Taggart
President, Down Syndrome BC



Rebecca Rubenstein
Vice President, Down Syndrome BC

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