

Inclusion Solutions

Mark your calendars: DSG hosting second “Reaching for Opportunity” Conference Saturday, May 1

As you read this issue of Inclusion Solutions we are planning our second Conference on helping all students “Reach for Opportunity”. The conference will take place Saturday, May 1 at the University of Michigan Dearborn Campus. Educators, parents, professionals, and others interested in helping our students excel will meet for a day of exciting national speakers and breakout sessions centering on improving student success. To receive a conference brochure or learn more, go to our website at www.dsgsemi.org or email dugginsp@comcast.net.



We are pleased to welcome as our Keynote Speaker Dr. Brian Skotko. Dr. Skotko is a clinical fellow in genetics at Children's Hospital Boston, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Brigham & Women's Hospital, has dedicated his professional energies toward children with cognitive and development disabilities. He is one of the specialists in the Down Syndrome program at Children's Hospital Boston. In

2001 he co-authored the national award-winning book, Common Threads: Celebrating Life with Down Syndrome, and, most recently, Fasten your Seatbelt: A Crash Course on Down Syndrome for Brothers and Sisters. He is a graduate of Duke University, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Brian recently authored major research on how physicians deliver a diagnosis of Down syndrome to new and expectant parents. He has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The L.A. Times*, NPR's *On Point*, and ABC's *Good Morning America*. Brian serves on the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress, the National Down Syndrome Society, and The Band of Angels Foundation. He further serves on the Professional Advisory Council to the National Down Syndrome congress.

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Strategies to Improve Student Motivation

Many students with disabilities appear to be unmotivated when it comes to school work. The reality is they are likely overwhelmed, over stimulated, can't keep up or may have issues with low self-esteem or lack confidence. Teachers and parents can improve the motivational level of students if they step back and assess the situation and make some changes to teaching techniques or the student's environment. Remember that everyone wants to succeed and do their best but your students with Down syndrome may need some extra motivation to make the attempt. Try the following techniques to help develop a **can do** attitude, which will set your student up for success.

- Always build on prior knowledge to set the student up for success
- Praise and recognize ALL efforts to improve. Give verbal and non-verbal reinforcements.
- Provide opportunities for peer mentoring.
- Buddy up for social skill development and cooperative learning whenever possible.
- Use graphic organizers to assist the student.
- Give feedback for being on task, task completion, solid efforts and demonstrated improvement.
- Encourage independence and provide positive feedback when the student works well independently.
- ALWAYS focus on the student's abilities NOT disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for the student to take risks in new learning situations.
- Give students opportunities to provide feedback on why he/she thinks you're happy with them.
- Always provide opportunities throughout the day for the student to experience success.
- Find what the student is passionate about and wrap the curriculum around that. (i.e. if he loves wrestling then have math problems focus on the number of wrestlers in the ring/match)



Universal Design for Learning Online Modules Available

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for designing curricula that enable all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. UDL provides rich supports for learning and reduces barriers to the curriculum while maintaining high achievement standards for all. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is now offering free online modules which introduce the theory, principles and application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to teacher candidates and inservice teachers. They provide higher education faculty with a multimedia, interactive online-learning environment that can be embedded in instructional methods courses. The Modules offer the following features:

* **Multiple Means of Representation**

The content is represented in multiple ways including text, audio clips and video. This provides learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge.

* **Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

Online activities, discussion questions and lesson plan assignments allow students to express their understanding in different ways. This provides learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know.

* **Multiple Means of Engagement**

Text, audio, video, activities, additional resources, information, links to more information and to other web sites allow students multiple ways to engage with the content. This allows educators to tap into learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

Visit <http://udlonline.cast.org/home> to view the presentations and the online Modules.

Ten Tips for General Educators

With collaboration and focused efforts, all students can actively participate in the classroom.



Promote socialization!

Seat students with students! Adults sitting with students may discourage peer interactions. Encourage paraeducators or classroom assistants to sit off to the side or away from students.

Share your lessons and plans.

You are not alone. When you share your teaching plans, the special education team can modify the content to meet the needs of students with disabilities.



Speak directly to students!

Resist temptations to talk through paraeducators who accompany students. Direct greetings, explanations and questions to the student.



Vary your instructional methods!

Make learning an active experience for ALL students. Create cooperative learning groups and encourage partner learning. Provide a variety of resource materials, workshop formats, and experiential activities. Have students demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways.



Get to know your students.

Greet students as they enter the classroom. Saying hello teaches social and communication skills. Ask about their home, pets, or social life.



Ask content questions daily.

When students respond to content questions they are practicing social and communication skills as well as learning the content. Your informal assessments and teaching observations can provide useful insights into possible curriculum modifications.



Expect success!

Expect ALL students to learn and participate in your classroom. Tell students what you expect. Adjust the demands of activities or assignments to match the student's abilities.



Establish learning goals!

Work with the special education team to clarify learning goals for students with IEP's. Check to see that your students are continually working toward their learning objectives. Assess student knowledge no matter their level of ability.



Treat students equally!

Maintain behavior expectations and disciplinary methods for ALL students in your classroom. Share your expectations with other adults.



Share ideas and feelings!

Express your fears and opinions. Phrase concerns in specific terms. Instead of saying, "I don't think this student belongs here!" Try, "How can I make Shakespeare meaningful for this student?"



Model Me Kids

Videos for modeling social skills

Looking for social skill strategies specifically designed to help kids with developmental delays? Model Me Kids® developed a library of videos where kids model and narrate behavior during school, on a playdate, building friendships, confidence, understanding emotions, and birthday parties. Each skill is detailed and put together in short clips, using real situation then broken down step by step and reviewed using a storyboard. These videos are helpful for teacher, parents, and therapist alike.

Model Me Kids® was founded by Susan Klein, an ABA Therapist trained by Community Services for Autistic Adults & Children, and staffed with professionals with experience in Speech Language Pathology, Psychology, Early Child Development, Counseling, and other professional who work with the developmental disability community.



Social Smart Kids

www.socialsmartkids.com

Many kids struggle with issues such as bullying/teasing, shyness, anger and frustration management, personal space issues, or general social awkwardness. This web site is designed to support kids of all abilities who struggle with these issues. Social Smart Kids was created with the objective to provide online support for kids, including those with special needs, who have challenges in social development. Social Smart Kids has a philosophy that making and keeping friends involves three participants, the child, the potential friend, and the parent or other adult in the child's life. Parents who become involved in their children's social lives have an opportunity to teach social skills and can make a major difference in helping to solidify friendships. Parents can: provide social opportunities, coach your child prior and during social event, provide structured activity, encourage group play, guide fantasy play, and more. The founder, Nadine Briggs, a mother of a child with Down syndrome and typical developing son, believes parent involvement in developing social skills can improve social appropriate behaviors. Some of the services and products offered by Social Smart Kids are seminars, social skill plans, discussion cards, advocacy, online advice, books, videos, and e-newsletter.

Who We Are

Mission Statement

The mission of our 501(c)(3) is to provide support, resources and advocacy with the aim of increasing awareness and opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and their caregivers.



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Opening a world of opportunity for
people with Down syndrome

Vision Statement

The DSG will provide support, resources and advocacy for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and caregivers with the goal of increasing opportunities and awareness.

Specifically:

- * Promote the development of programs that enrich the lives of individuals with Down syndrome
- * Increase public awareness and understanding about the abilities of individuals with Down syndrome
- * Encourage inclusion of individuals with Down syndrome in our neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, recreational activities, and places of employment
- * Provide education, resources and support to parents and educators to ensure quality education which will prepare individuals with Down syndrome for further education, employment and/or independent living
- * Create a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences