

20 Years of 
Believing
GiGi's Playhouse



**Practical IEP Strategies for Including your
Student with Down syndrome**

Presented by:

GiGi's
Playhouse™

Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.



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- Our “WHY” at GiGi’s Playhouse
- “I” stands for Individualized
- How I Learn
- Physiology and Learning Styles
- Brain Break
- Strategies for Classroom
- How does all this relate to your student’s IEP
- Educator Symposium

AGENDA

Agenda





OUR "WHY"
AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE





GiGi's Playhouse is an international network of Down Syndrome Achievement Centers that offer FREE therapeutic and educational programming to individuals with Down syndrome of all ages, their families and the community!

Locations

61 physical GiGi's Playhouse locations and startups across the US and in Mexico, with **hundreds of inquiries** to open more worldwide.

Now serving families in **88 countries** with our **FREE** programs!



GiGi's locations not only serve their community, they give their community a place to serve.



First Playhouse Opens!



First GiGi's Awareness Calendar



Opened second Playhouse

Created GiGi's Awareness Traveling gallery



2003



2004



2005

2006



Opened First international Playhouse in Mexico and launched GiGiU

2013



Launched Generation G campaign & Received CNN Heroes Award



First GiGi's 18-Wheeler



Opened Hugs + Mugs Career Studio



2014

2015



2016



Launched #GenerationG Book!

2018

Created GiGi's At Home to bring FREE therapeutic program to our families virtually

Step to Accept challenge draws participants from around the world!



Opened 55th Playhouse

GiGi's at Home reaches families in over 81 Countries!

2014



2015



2016



2020



2021



2023



= # of Playhouses



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Mission statement:

Our Why – To change the way the world views Down syndrome and send a global message of acceptance for all.

Our How – We change lives and provide hope through consistent delivery of free educational, therapeutic and career development programs for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community, through a replicable playhouse model.

Our Goal – GiGi's is recognized as the global leader in creating opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome while building a more accepting world for all.

Our 3 Uniques



Our Guarantee – A lifetime commitment to families

**FREE Purposeful
and Progressive
Programs**

GiGi's Playhouses empower families and provide free therapeutic, educational and career programs for children and families for all ages of development.



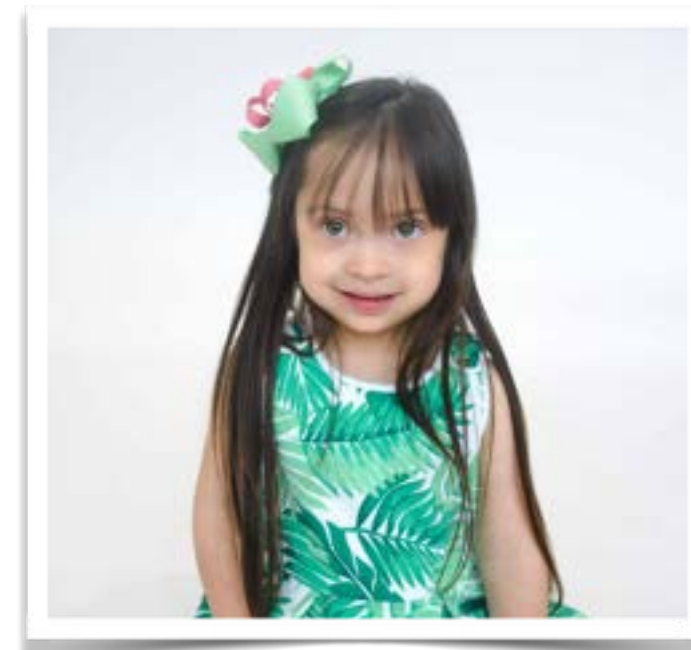
Prenatal



Infants



Toddlers



School Age



Teens



Adults

From prenatal diagnosis through career skills, families are never alone

GiGi's Signature Programs



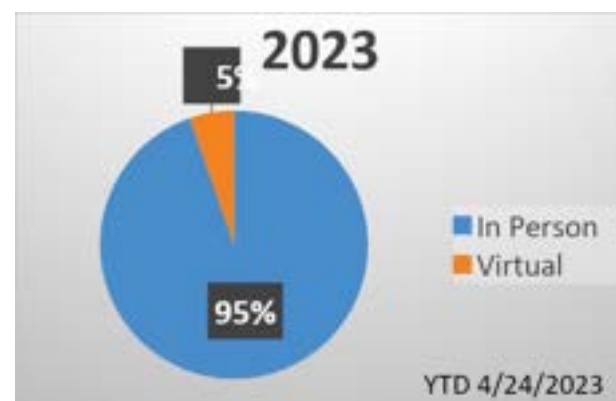
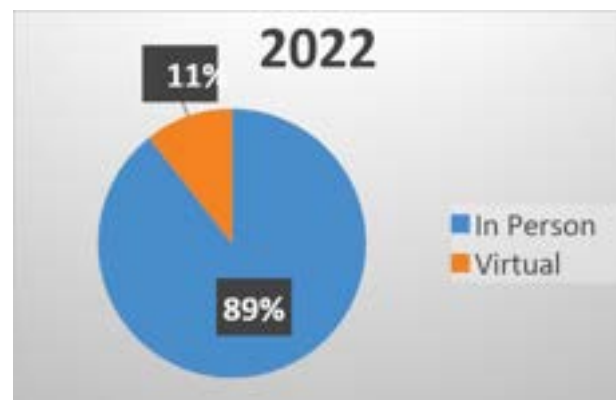
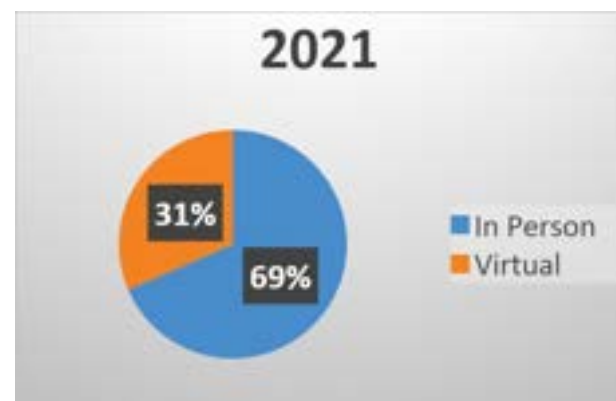
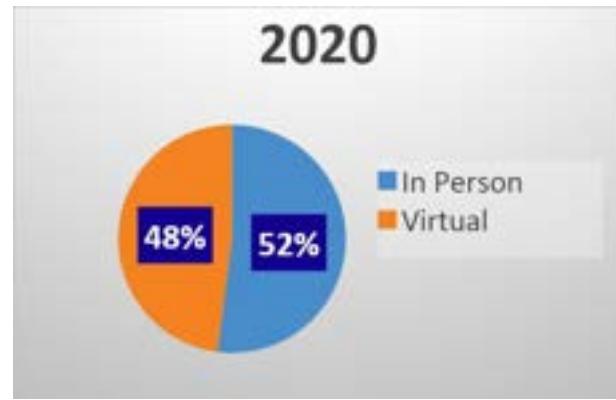
	Infants and Toddlers (Ages 0-4)	School Age Learners (Ages 5-12)	Teens (Ages 13-17)	Adults (Ages 18+)
G r o u p P r o g r a m s	LMNOP (0-3) Leaps & Bounds (3-5) GiGiFIT Infant GiGiFIT Toddler GiGiFIT You & I Destination Discovery	Playhouse Pals (5-8) Kids Club (8-12) GiGiFIT Kids GiGi's Kitchen Kids (6-12) Destination Discovery	Teen Tastic GiGiFIT Teen GiGi's Kitchen Teen Destination Discovery	Fantastic Friends GiGiFIT Adult GiGi's Kitchen Adult GiGi Prep GiGi University GiGi Professional
1: 1 P r o g r a m	Literacy Tutoring (Ages 3+)	Literacy Tutoring	Literacy Tutoring	Literacy Tutoring
	Math Tutoring (Ages 3+)	Math Tutoring	Math Tutoring	Math Tutoring

All programs are therapeutic or educational in nature and are held year-round.

They are built and designed by GiGi's Playhouse, for the unique needs of individuals with Down syndrome.

Programs

GiGi's programs are now facilitated both virtually and safely in-person



“GiGi’s not only serves families, they also give our communities a place to serve.”

This happens both virtually and in our Playhouses.

GiGi’s is a community space.

Many organizations use their local GiGi’s for meetings and events.

Dreams are built and fulfilled at GiGi’s beyond our own programming!

GiGi's Empowers Communities to Make a Difference

- Volunteer opportunities
- Business partnerships
- Gen G School clubs
- Neighborhoods
- Social Media leaders
- Events
- GiGi's semi trucks spread the love across the country



GiGi's RIPPLE EFFECT



Reaching & Affecting Thousands of Lives Each Day!

Volunteers • Families • Donors • Parents • Siblings • Friends • Grandparents • Teachers • Communities • And More!



Lives are getting better, because of our programs and our volunteers!

In the 1980s, the life expectancy of people with Down syndrome was 25...

Today, with the right support, they are living beyond 60!

The leading cause of death for people with Down syndrome is Alzheimer's.

Programs like ours help curb early-onset Alzheimer's ...

Our therapeutic and educational programs are a key to living a long and healthy life!

- GiGi's makes sure those lives are **fulfilling** too, as we focus on the **whole person**.
- GiGi's keeps their brains and their bodies **moving!!**
- Our GiGi U philosophy of "**Confident U. Healthy U. Whole U.**" is a game changer!



iacceptyou.org

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives for schools, corporate and the community

The movement has begun! #GenerationG is growing through the pledge at iacceptyou.org.

So far, more than 250,000 people have taken the pledge and companies are making the commitment to become GenerationG certified!





“I” in IEP STANDS FOR
INDIVIDUALIZED



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- IEPs should always be individualized specifically for your student
- There is no "one size fits all", not every strategy needs to be in every IEP
- Just as every individual with Down syndrome is unique – every IEP should also be unique

“I” stands for
Individualized





7 Minute Video

HOW I LEARN TEACHING STRATEGIES





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How I Learn



“Ability and Possibility”



First of all, set expectations high.

Set Expectations HIGH

- See Ability and Possibility
- Change the question
 - Don't ask can they do this?
 - Ask how can we break this into steps and eventually get there.
 - “Let's be realistic”
 - Should mean “let's figure out where to start and how to move forward with that goal”
 - NOT we shouldn't consider that a valid goal
- Everyone goes farther when the dream bigger!!

Beautifully Unique



Differences Make Us Who We Are

- Being unique is the one thing we ALL have in common
- Use multi-sensory and multi-modal approach
 - Fancy way to say teach using all the senses in a variety of ways
 - Good for the whole class
- We will talk in-depth about physiological differences and learning styles in the next section

“Show More Talk Less”

Use Visuals and Clear Instructions

- Show more talk less
 - The pathway from the eyes to the brain is stronger than from the ears to the brain
- Literal learners
 - Clear instructions are best
 - Errorless learning – leave little room for error



Show more, talk less.

“Break things down
for me.”



Break things down into steps

Use explicit teaching method:
I Do, We Do You Do
(Archer and Hughes)



I Do, We Do, You Do

When working with students, use this language to guide their efforts:

I Do

Watch me
Listen to me as I
I'll show you
This is how I
The way to do this

We Do

Help me
Let's
We can
Tell me how I can
Together we can
Look with me at
You help me do it

You Do

Now you try
You can
You are going to
While you do... think
about
When you complete
I'll watch you do it



Fun is Engaging



Incorporate Interests and Make it FUN!

- Builds engagement
- We all learn faster when we are engaged
- Instead of promising fun after the learning – make the learning the fun!
- Examples
 - Use favorite sports, characters, even the student's name in homework/classwork questions
 - Incorporate music (stay away from lyrics just use the instrumentals)

“Just a little help...”



Know When to Help

- Behavior is a form of communication
 - Maybe I don't really understand what you are asking
 - Maybe it's too easy or I just don't want to
 - Maybe I don't need your assistance and prefer to do the task independently – assume competence
 - Teaching your student to ask for help when they need it is an important advocacy skill
- Behavior can also illuminate lack of a basic need not being met
 - I am tired so I am not participating
 - I am hungry so I can't focus
 - I am not comfortable with you, so I am not speaking.

“Wait for it...”



Give Time for A Response

Let's think for a minute...

if I ask, "What is your name?"

You have to perform quite a few steps before saying your name...

1. hear me
2. understand the words
3. recognize there is a question
4. find the answer,
5. and then articulate the answer

YES - all that happened in those microseconds

now make that a math problem...

“Pass it On!”



Promote Independence

- Teaching independence will help your student throughout their entire adult life
 - Establishing routines will be a life saver. Routines help organize "what comes next" knowing that gives them a chance to take charge.
 - But be aware that disrupting that routine can and more than likely will cause issues. So be prepared!
 - Teach coping strategies

CHARACTERISTICS OF DOWN SYNDROME



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PHYSIOLOGY AND LEARNING STYLES

Ligaments, Tone and Feet

- Flexible joints and ligaments
 - Easier to bend
 - Harder to slow down or grade movements
- Low muscle tone
 - Whole body impact
- Flat feet
 - Walking and standing can be very fatiguing



Impacts keeping up, standing in line, handwriting, tool use, articulation, etc. Impacts participation which impacts learning.



THE
**OVEN
MITT**
C H A L L E N G E



The low tone and laxity in hands and wrists make it much more difficult to perform everyday skills like writing, tying shoes, fastening buttons, or cutting, and this is just one body part!

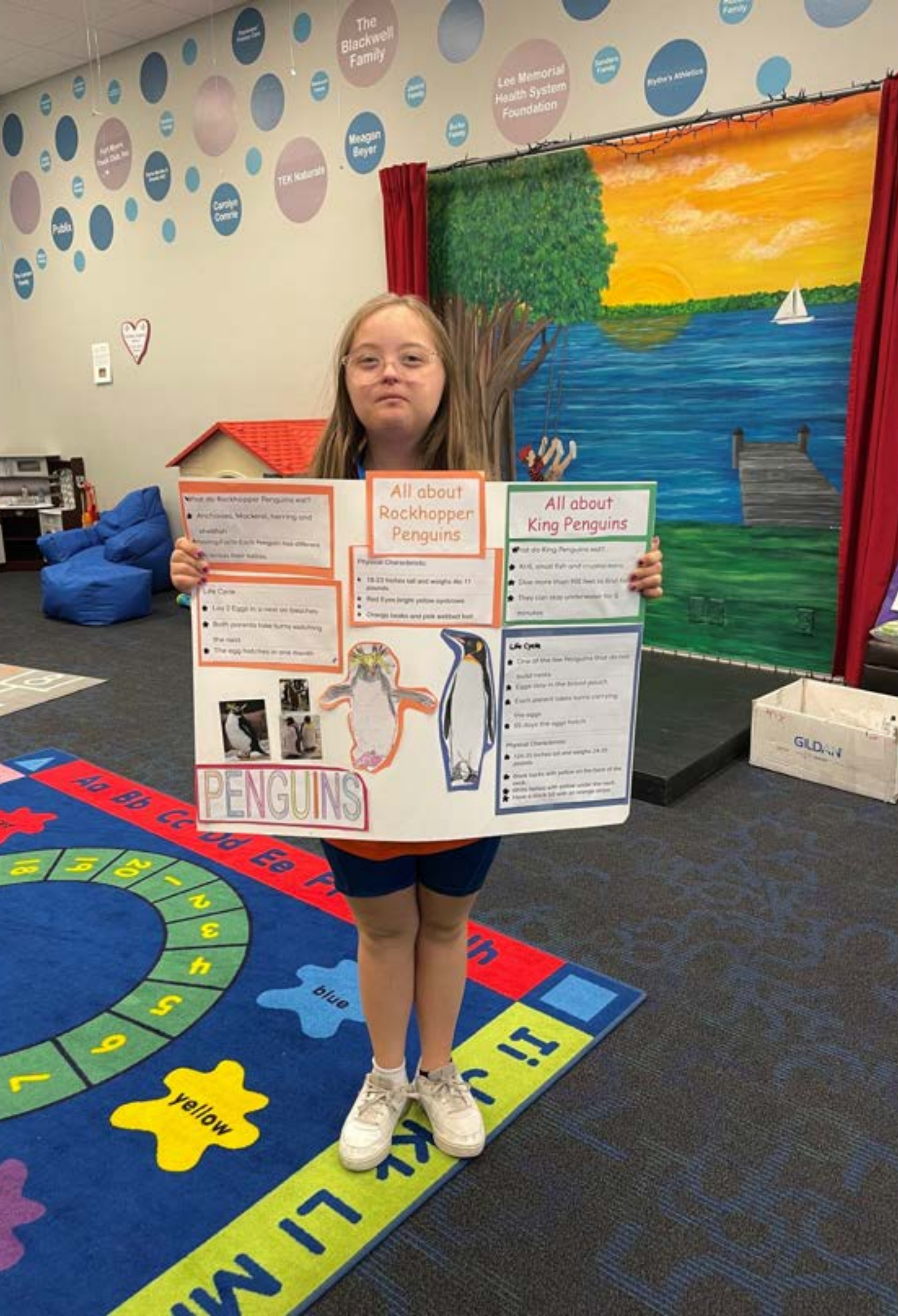
...Put on oven mitts and try these everyday skills. Think how much harder our kids work than typical peers just getting ready for school in the morning: getting dressed, zipping zippers, fastening buttons, tying shoes, brushing teeth, eating cereal--all with oven mitts!



Visual Vestibular Coordination and Sensory Systems

- Hearing Impairment
 - Increased hearing loss
 - Inner ear fluid
- Vision
 - Decreased visual acuity
 - Increased strabismus and nystagmus
- Balance
 - Decreased proprioception
 - Decreased postural control
 - Decreased balance reactions and overall balance

Impacts hearing instructions, copying from or seeing board, reading, visual search, tracking and balance.



Learning Styles

- Brain development and memory
 - Need extra processing time
 - Working memory not as strong
 - When information gets to long term storage, they don't forget it
- Great visual learners
- Stronger receptive language skills as compared to expressive language skills
 - Affected by low tone and processing delays

Impacts response time required to participate in classroom activities.



BRAIN BREAK

Brain Break!!



- Brain Breaks help **EVERYONE!**
- Build them into the classroom routine
 - Use movements that facilitate strength and endurance such as squats, penguin waddles, lateral tilts, etc.
 - The entire class should be allowed to join in – will help everyone **AND** make the student with DS feel included
 - Teach appropriate way to ask for a break using visuals

Make Movement Breaks Purposeful and Structured - Visual Vestibular Coordination and Sensory Organization



Marches

Hip strength
Core strength
Weight shift
Lateral balance
Endurance



Lateral Tilts:

Hip strength
Lateral weight shift
Single leg balance
Visual tracking
Stairs
Walking



Rainbows

Core strength
Seated weight shift
Cross body patterns
Visual tracking
Reaching



Over-Unders:

Coordination
Visual tracking
Sagittal plane
weight shift
Large vestibular
input
Visual vestibular
coordination





STRATEGIES FOR CLASSROOM

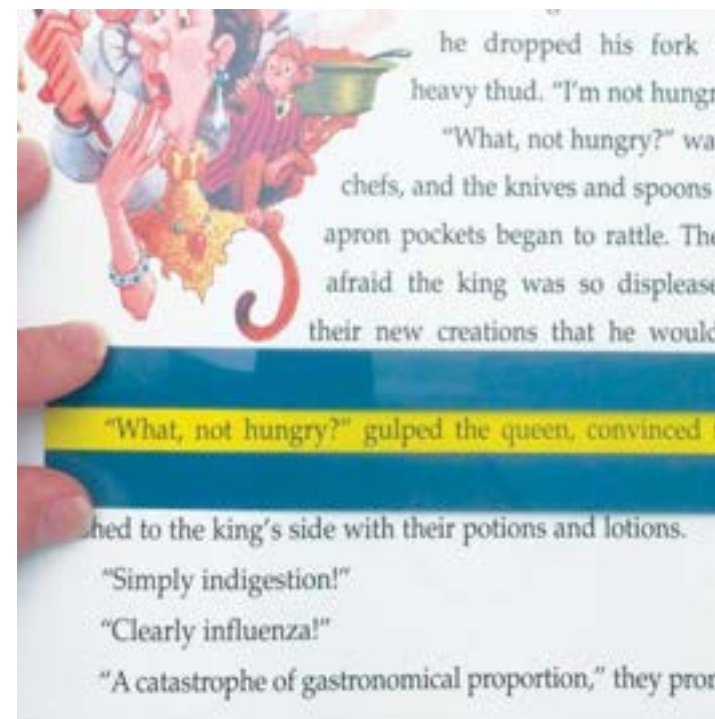
Supporting Gross Motor and Postural Control

- Supportive seating with good posture support
- Inclined surface/slant board
- Purposeful movement breaks
- Transition
 - Can be from sit to stand or moving between areas in the classroom or school
 - Allow for increased time to process the request
- Consider where classes/locker are located
- May need to allow extra time to change classes if needed



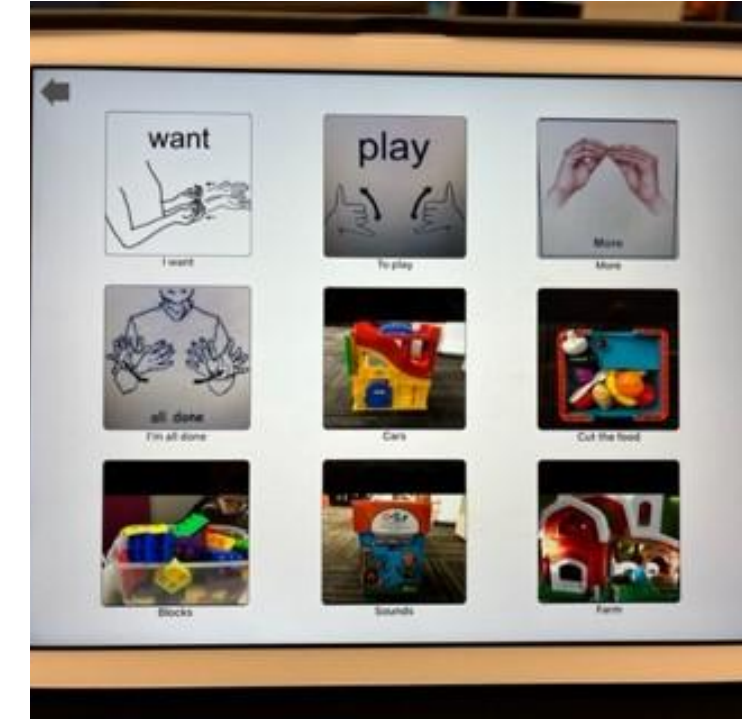
Supporting Fine Motor and Visual Vestibular Coordination

- “Repetition without Repetition”
 - Practice same skill using a variety of activities
- Adaptive Equipment
 - Adaptations should be specific for each student and each activity – consult with OT
- Preferential seating
- Visual Tracking guides
- Provide copies of presented materials
- Organization of printed materials
 - Increase size and contrast of text
 - Use sans serif fonts such as arial
 - Reduce visual clutter
 - Color code and pair text with images



Supporting Articulation and Language Learning

- Supporting Articulation
 - Be a good model
 - Focus on speech sounds
 - Highlight target sound in text
 - AAC device? Get familiar
- Supporting Expressive Language
 - Pre-teach vocabulary
 - Pacing boards
 - VISUALS
- Supporting Receptive Language
 - Break down multi-step directions
 - Give longer response time
 - Clear/direct language
 - VISUALS





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Supporting Academics

- What is the most important part of the lesson?
 - Break things down for me
- Give me alternate ways to show what I know
 - Fill in the blank instead of writing a whole paragraph
 - Let me teach it to friend
- Math
- TouchMath and Numicon
 - Word problems are tricky, provide a vocabulary reminder that links words to their process
 - I can do computation; but I may not understand which word means "add" in this word problem.
- Literacy
 - Matching/Selecting/Naming
 - Raising Robust Readers
 - Multi-sensory approach to teaching phonograms
- Ties Center helps educators, parents and administrators create and support inclusive school communities.
 - <https://tiescenter.org/>





HOW DOES ALL THIS RELATE
TO THE IEP?

Accommodations change how the student learns the material



Teachers can incorporate accommodations for the whole classroom!

- Freeze jars
- Brain breaks
- Multiple choice instead of open-ended
- Word wall
- Color coding
- Class schedule
- Classroom Set Up

Examples from How I Learn

- Use Visuals and Clear Instructions
 - Work with fewer lines on the page
 - See an outline of a lesson
- Wait for It!
 - Give extra time to process information
 - Allow for responses in a form that is easier for them
- Multi-sensory learning

Modifications change what the student is taught or expected to learn



Examples:

- Complete different homework problems than peers
- Same text written to their reading comprehension level or a comparable companion text
- Answer different test questions
- Create alternate projects or assignments
- Learn different material (should supplement missing pieces)
- Get graded or assessed using a different standard than other students
- Be excused from some projects or parts of a project
- Specific Example from Math class:
 - Teacher gave her multiplication problems
 - Are you looking for her to learn a strategy or are you looking for her to do a computation
 - If you can't do 5 then I don't want to give you 20
 - If you can do 5 and then 2 more, you have proved you can do 20

IEP Goals should be SMART

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Results-oriented
- Time-bound

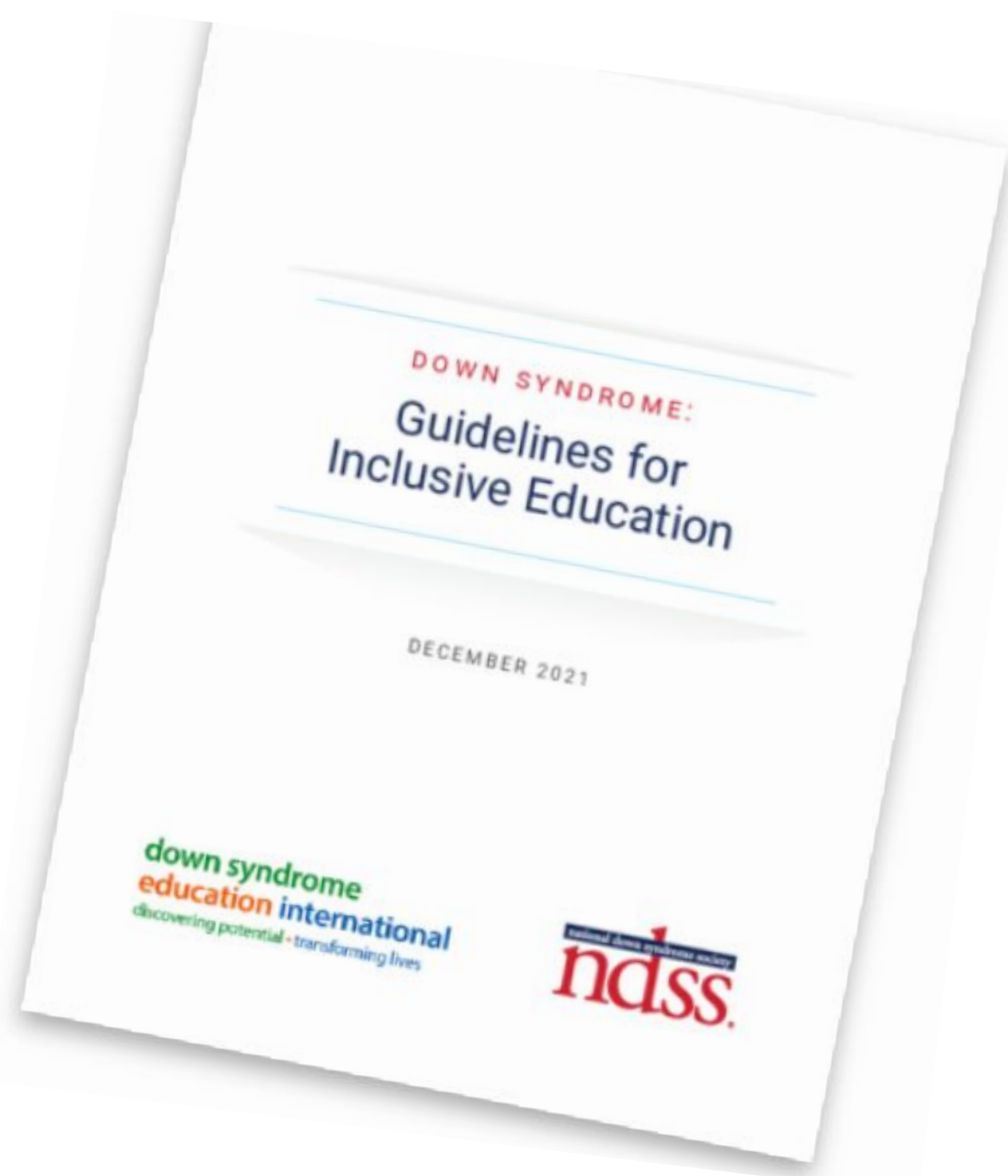


Break things
down for
me....

Collaboration is needed for success

- Parents and Teachers
 - Parents are the experts on their child
 - Teachers and therapists are the experts on Special Education strategies
 - Filter strategies through the lens for your student's strengths and challenges
 - Use common language to bridge learning between home and school
- School Staff
 - More in-class learning requires collaboration with general ed teacher and special ed teachers (Marilyn Friend, Inc. coteach.com)
 - Teachers and therapists work together to implement strategies throughout the school day – incorporate into daily routines
- Everyone works together to find the “just right” supports to create an IEP that fully supports the student's growth and independence





The National Down Syndrome Society and Down Syndrome Education International recently published a new resource for enhancing inclusive education for students with Down syndrome. Down Syndrome: Guidelines for Inclusive Education aims to improve the development and educational outcomes for individuals with Down syndrome using evidence-based practices surrounding the unique learning profile of students with Down syndrome.

The guide also includes an extensive list of resources to help support you.

The publication is available for free on the NDSS website <https://www.ndss.org/inclusive-education-guidelines/>.



GIGI'S EDUCATOR
SYMPOSIUM
SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

GiGisPlayhouse.org/educator-symposium

GiGi's Educator Symposium

Teaching Strategies for Individuals
with Down Syndrome
September 9, 2023

gigisplayhouse.org/educator-symposium/



CPE credits generously offered
by our education partners:



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO



Thank you for helping us change the world!



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