

EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR LEARNERS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

Down Syndrome South Africa



By die plaas en by

ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME SOUTH AFRICA



Allow me to introduce you to my
inspiration and why I do what I do;

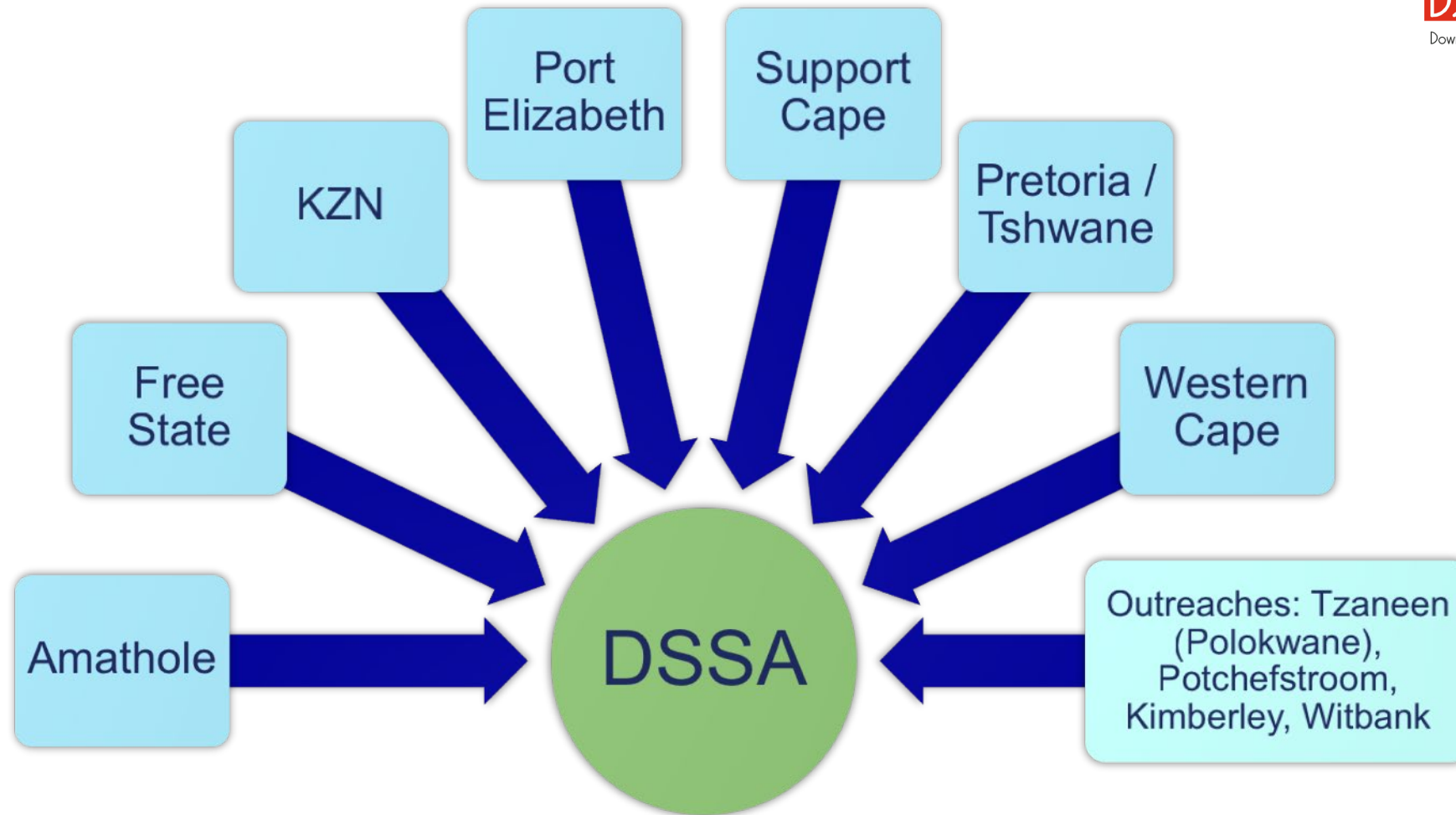
My daughter Thameez Ramjas



DOWN SYNDROME SOUTH AFRICA AS AN ORGANISATION

- Various parent support groups were formed in the 70's & 80's countrywide
- Found a need for a National body and DSSA was formed in 1986
- Umbrella body to 12 regional associations/ support and outreach groups throughout South Africa





KEY FOCUS AREAS



- Establish outreach and support groups in areas where needed
- Capacity building of all affiliate members, empower persons with Down syndrome and their families through workshops, awareness events and sharing of updated information
- Advocate on Human Rights Issues
- Collaborate with different Government Departments to encourage change in policies/programmes and to ensure implementation of all legal instruments, specifically the UNCRPD
- Develop programmes and resources that are beneficial to persons with Down syndrome and their families



MISSION OF DSSA



DSSA is committed to finding ways to improve the quality of life for all persons with Down syndrome and other developmental delays, promoting that they have a right to live with independence, dignity and security as valued adults and full citizens in society

MAIN CALENDAR EVENTS

In 2011 the United Nations declared 21st March World Down Syndrome Day – Theme chosen for this year was **“INCLUSION MEANS”**. DSSA launched the #QualityInclusiveEducationForAll campaign

20th October is National Down Syndrome Day, declared by our late President Mr Nelson Mandela. Celebrated under the theme – **“IT’S ALL IN THE GENES”**



What is Down syndrome

Down syndrome is the most common occurring genetic condition caused by random error in cell division, which results in an individual having a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21, commonly referred to as Trisomy 21.

Typically the nucleus of each cell contains 23 pairs of chromosomes making up 46 chromosomes, half of which is inherited by each parent. Persons with Down syndrome have an extra chromosome, thus having 47 chromosomes.

This additional genetic material results in certain distinct facial characteristics, and leads to both physical and intellectual impairment. It occurs equally amongst all races, religions and socio-economic backgrounds.

The prevalence of Down syndrome in South Africa is 1 to every 500 live births. With the correct support and interventions persons with Down syndrome can lead long and fulfilling lives.

Some Background to the education for Learners with Down syndrome



- The manner, in which the news is given to new parents – you want to make sure that you get it right the first time, as words can have a lifelong impact;
- Due to many medical challenges, negative attitudes, perceptions and lack of accurate information parents never considered education as a priority for their child with Down syndrome
- If they are informed of the right to an education, they are only told that their child belongs in a special school;
- Despite the medical information that cognitive impairment ranges between mild to moderate for persons with Down syndrome, most learners with Down syndrome are placed in schools for severe to profound intellectual disability or care centres;
- Parents do not see progress in their child and therefore do not dream big for their child and so the best option for them is to remove them from school.

SOME STATS



- The national prevalence of disability in South Africa is estimated at 7,5%;
- Approximately 500 000-600 000 children with disabilities are out of school, the DBE is now refuting this figure despite reporting this figure in their South African Baseline Country Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- In the DBE report to the disability sector in September 2021 “The Status Of Inclusive Education – Every Learner matters – No Child Left Behind, the department reported that 121 461 learners with Disabilities were placed in ordinary public schools and 133 055 learners in special schools and 10 034 in care centres;
- According to the department the budget for full implementation special schools requires R34.370 Billion, the budget allocated for the 2020/2021 period is R10.074 Billion, leaving them with a shortfall of R24.295 Billion;
- There was no mention of funding or resourcing for ordinary public schools.

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION



COVID-19 crisis highlighted the inequality in education:

- Universality of education does not exist
- Free compulsory education does not exist
- Non-discrimination and zero-reject principles can be overlooked

ATTITUDE AS A BARRIER



“The lives of many people with disabilities are restricted and diminished more by the negative attitudes, beliefs and prejudice of their neighbours and local community than by their own limitations (Buckley, Bird : 1992).

Experience shows:

- One of the most important ingredients for successful inclusion is the will to make it succeed / a positive attitude;
- Good teaching is about teaching all and embracing diversity;

Pity leading to
overprotection and
special treatment

Patronage leading to:
Knowing best, failing to
listen or speaking for the
child

The Child

Discrimination leading to:
Denial of access to
opportunities, activities
and events

Victimisation leading to:
Bullying or being
subjected to painful or
undignified treatment

BARRIERS TO LEARNING



Socio-
economic
Systems

Biological
System

CHILD

School
System

Home
System

BARRIERS TO LEARNING

- **Vision**

Vision problems are common in children with Down syndrome, therefore it is vitally important that parents, educators and health professionals are aware that persons with Down syndrome do not see the world as clearly as the typical population.

- **Hearing**

Majority of learners experience hearing loss, this is due to conductive loss as a result of Otitis media (glue ear) which affects about 68% of school learners. This has a negative impact on speech development and requires treatment and speech intervention.

- **Speech, language and Communication**

Most children and adults with Down syndrome have language and speech impairments. It is important to note that language learning difficulties varies between individuals.

BARRIERS TO LEARNING



- **Health issues**

About 55% are born with heart conditions, they could have thyroid related problems, may tire easily as a result of sleep apnea. They might give off the impression that they have a high pain threshold but this is only because they have difficulty in expressing their pain or identifying where the pain is located,

- **Fine and Gross Motor Development**

Their gross motor development is delayed compared to typical children and the delay is more greater with more complex physical movements. Early intervention therapy is important;

- **Memory and Cognition**

The learning profile includes verbal processing difficulties (that is understanding what they hear associated with verbal short term memory), so they have difficulties with short term working memory but their long term memory seems to be in tact.

Their receptive language is better than their expressive language

WHY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

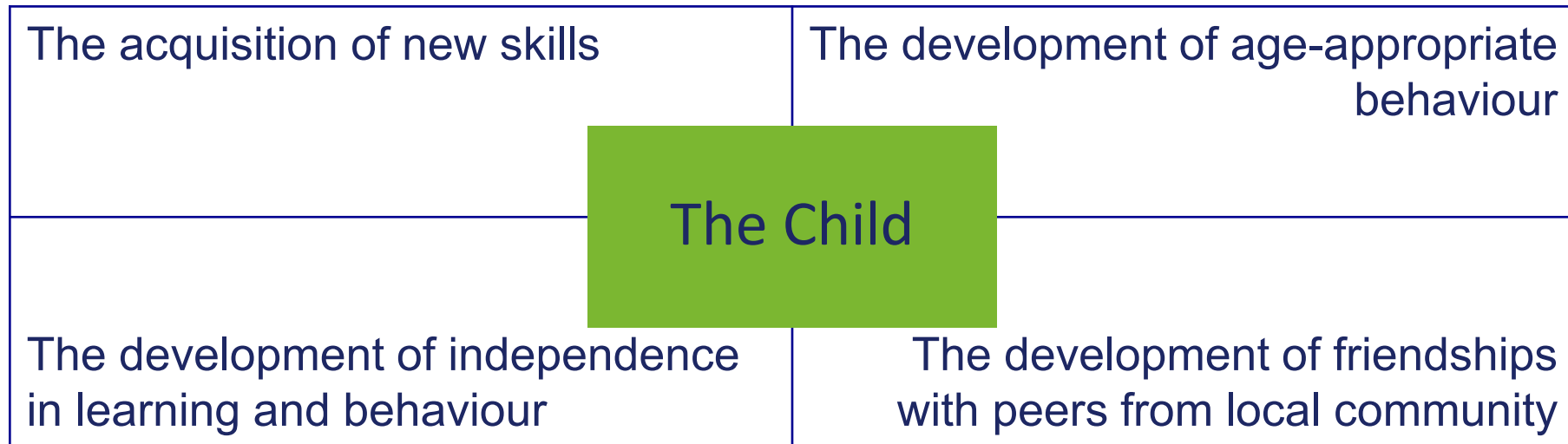


Universal design for learning is the main pillar of inclusive education as it works on an approach that works to accommodate the learning needs and abilities of all learners and eliminates the barriers;

Inclusive education (in its broadest sense - for all) is the only possible response to a learning crisis, because the existing systems, including WP6 have not been able to respond adequately to the needs of learners with disabilities

- Inclusive education focuses on those who have been left behind, it is the only way to ensure **non-discrimination**
- **It is the only way to ensure equity and meet our obligations in terms of our Constitution, the SDG's no 4, the NDP agenda 2030 and our commitment by signing and ratifying the UNCPRD**

WHY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?



So how does this inform our work?



Key considerations in the inclusion of learners with Down syndrome

- It is a HUMAN RIGHTS concept;
- That special schools are not the only option as they are not inclusive, but we do acknowledge that this might be the only option in some contexts;
- Having a common understanding of what inclusive education means – that all learners are welcomed into their local neighbourhood school. They are supported to learn, contribute and participate in the whole learning process and receive the appropriate support relevant to their needs so that they can be active contributors to society;
- There is growing research showing that those children attending ordinary schools together with their siblings are performing better than those taught in segregated settings especially in terms of their emotional and social development.

What we do



It is important to understand the:

- Condition
- The barriers that impact learning; and
- **Understanding the Learning profile of persons with Down syndrome: Strength based**
 - They have strong visual spatial awareness and visual learning skills;
 - Tendency to model behaviour;
 - Ability to use sign, gestures and visual support materials;
 - Ability to use the written word;
 - Ability to learn from pictorial, concrete and practical materials;
 - Keen to communicate and socialise with others;
 - Benefit from structure and routine

What we do

DSSA has developed an Education Support pack – why do we need a specific Education Pack

Because learners with Down syndrome have specific learning style and profile. Parent, educators and learning assistants need to know what these are. This education pack will enable you to understand what this learning style is, how it impacts learning and how best to support the learner during his school years.

The Education Support Pack is divided into 10 units:

Unit 1: Introduction to Down Syndrome

Unit 2: Effective strategies for inclusion

Unit 3: Developing language Skills

Unit 4: Accessing the curriculum

Unit 5: Learning to read and getting started

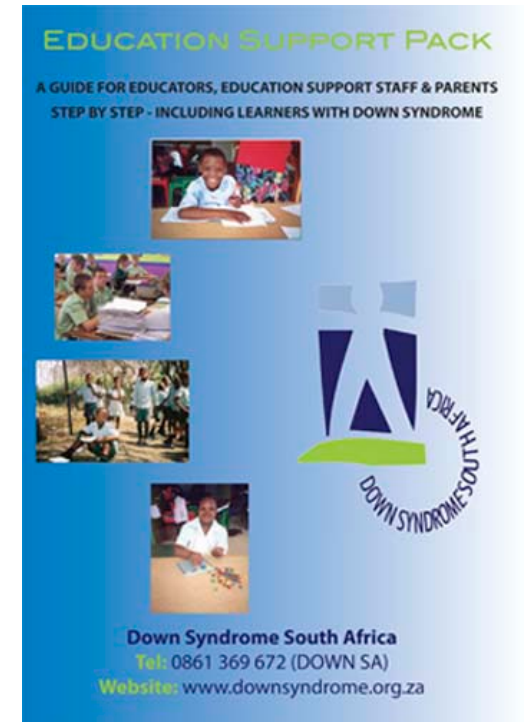
Unit 6: Developing writing skills

Unit 7: Acquiring mathematic skills

Unit 8: Promoting Positive Behaviour

Unit 9: Transitioning

Unit 10: Computers as an aid to learning



What we do

- DSSA also provides support to parents by issuing them with a list of schools in their areas;
- We assist with placements;
- We provide workshops for parents on early intervention and on the Education Support Pack;
- We provide training to schools;
- We assist with onsite interventions;
- We assist with curriculum adaptations.

LIFELONG LEARNING



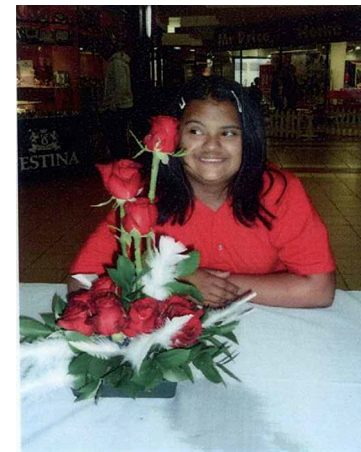
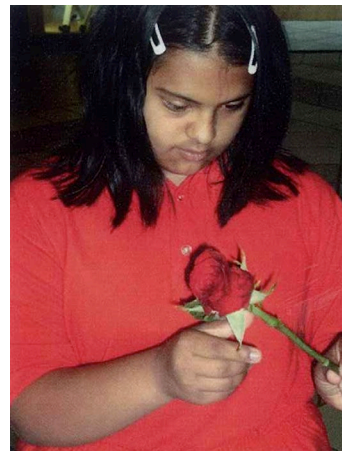
The second key consideration is the recognition, that learning is a lifelong activity, which means that education occurs throughout life beyond the formal years of schooling

- Many persons with Down syndrome are living longer, with an average life expectancy of 60. This means that seeking opportunities beyond formal schooling is becoming a necessity, which includes the acquisition of skills that will equip them with opportunities within the mainstream employment sector
- DSSA has developed **the World of Work -supported employment**
- **Manual** for persons with Down syndrome;
- Employment is one of the most important changeovers to an independent life, most adults have indicated they are ready, abled and willing to work with real support and real pay.



CONCLUSION

Inclusive education to my daughter and I was not about reaching a destination but rather the journey travelled in order to discover her talents and inspire me to find my purpose.



Centurion Flower Show, Grade 6, 2011



Question time?