

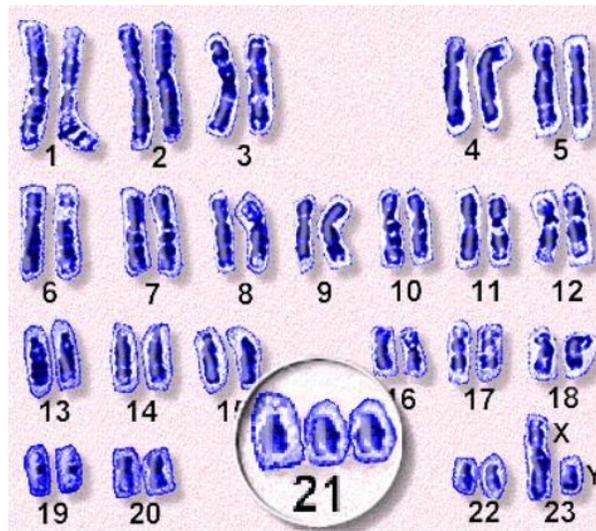
Observing Down Syndrome Day 2019 – See Their “Able” Not Their “Label”

21st March of every year marks World Down Syndrome Day. On this day, people with Down syndrome and those who live and work with them throughout the world organise and participate in activities and events to raise public awareness, as well as creating a single global voice for advocating for the rights, inclusion and wellbeing of people with Down syndrome. But how much do you know about Down Syndrome?

What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a term used to describe the chromosomal disorder that a child is born with. Typically, the nucleus of each cell contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, half of which are inherited from each parent.

Down syndrome occurs when an individual has a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21.



This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the distinct facial features we commonly see among individuals with Down syndrome. An accurate description of a person with Down syndrome was first published by John Langdon Down, an English physician in the late 19th century. While some will have visual or hearing difficulties, others may possess motor impairments and medical conditions like a heart defect or bowel problems. Some children will be more challenged to learn, while others will appear to be more like their typically-developing peers.

Do children with Down syndrome go to regular schools?

In Brunei, children with Down syndrome can be included in regular academic classrooms in schools. In some instances they are integrated into specific work/life skill courses such as the Pre-vocational programme in the 28 secondary schools across the 4 districts, while in other situations students are fully included in the regular classroom for all subjects.





There are currently 71 students with Down Syndrome studying in primary and secondary schools in Brunei Darussalam. These students receive learning assistance from the Special Education Needs Assistance (SENA) teachers together with the support of the School-Based Team (SBT) members which includes Subject Teachers, Parents and Service Providers. Their learning goals are differentiated according to their Individualised Education Plan (IEP) which is planned and agreed upon by members of the School Base Team committee.

Who provides training and sharing for teachers, parents of student with Down syndrome?

The Special Education Unit under the Ministry of Education in Brunei Darussalam assists in the planning, coordinating and implementation of special education programmes and support services for students with special needs, including students with Down syndrome. Officers in SEU has continuously organised professional development sessions in special education for teachers and parents such as developing Individualised Education Plan; Teaching Functional Skills; how to Differentiate Instruction; and Providing Support for Students with Special Needs. These sessions are designed to help teachers refine existing skills and knowledge and develop new strategies.

A recent initiative by SEU was the development of a curriculum guideline package for students with high support needs which is planned to be fully implemented in early 2020. There is a need for an enhanced curriculum guideline to support students with high support needs who have been diagnosed with Down Syndrome, as well as Autism, Cerebral Palsy and multiple disabilities. This will further serve to maximise the students' learning potential by developing their functional academic skills, social communication skills

as well as fine and gross motor skills thereby ensuring that they will become independent lifelong learners who will be able to participate and contribute to society. Such provision is in line with the National Education System for the 21st Century (SPN 21) in promoting equality and quality education for all.



Down syndrome occurs in people of all races and economic levels. Quality educational programs, a stimulating home environment, good health care, and positive support from family, friends and the community enable people with Down syndrome to develop their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. Observe Down Syndrome Day by wearing non-matching socks to show that people with Down syndrome are different but the same, and engage everyone to reach out and see their “Able” instead of their “Label”.