
A Specific Learning Profile

Students with Down syndrome are not just generally delayed in their development and therefore merely in need of a diluted curriculum. They have a specific learning profile with characteristic strengths and weaknesses and so they learn **differently**. A knowledge of the learning profile is therefore essential, so that teachers can work towards the strengths of the student and work around their barriers to learning.

Factors that facilitate learning:

- Strong visual learning skills.
- Ability to use sign and gesture.
- Ability to learn and use the written word.
- Ability and desire to learn from peers.
- Learning best from pictorial, concrete and practical materials.
- Keen communicators despite language problems.
- Structure and routine.

Factors that inhibit learning:

- Delayed motor skills – fine and gross.
- Auditory and visual impairment.
- Speech and language delay – the biggest cause of frustration for teenagers and adults with DS.
- Short term auditory memory – listening, processing, storing/remembering and sequencing.
- Shorter concentration span.
- Consolidation and retention problems.
- Generalisation, thinking and reasoning.
- Avoidance strategies.

Not all students with Down syndrome have all of these factors, but they are very common. Also, there are many students who do not have Down syndrome who exhibit many of these traits.