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Don't walk behind me  
I may not lead  
Don't walk in front me  
I may not follow  
Just walk beside me  
and be my friend

Insert photo here



Hello Fellow Parents,

Can you believe our kids are in 2nd grade?! Many of your children have been in school here since kindergarten, so we already know you. Some from Mother's Day Out Preschool before kindergarten started. Some of you may be new to this school or this is the first year our kids have been in the same room. We thought it might be helpful to write to you parent to parent. As our kids grow and change, they notice more, ask more questions, and understand more.

Our daughter, Kendle, is a member of this class. She is 8 years old, loves to dance, cheer, do gymnastics, sing, swim, and the list goes on and on ..... Besides being a "typical" kid she has Down syndrome. Your child might come home with questions about Kendle that you might like a little help answering. We get questions a lot and that is wonderful. We want everyone to realize that she is more like you than she is different. After all no two people are the same! On the back page are some common questions and answers that we hope will be helpful.

Research has shown that children with Down syndrome benefit from being placed in a regular education class, receiving their education alongside typically developing children their own age. Your children are great role models for Kendle!! They help encourage the ability to acquire new skills, encourage age appropriate behavior, develop independence, and friendships.

It is also important to your child. Inclusion of everyone helps to build compassion, patience, and the realization that we are all different. Everyone has something beneficial to bring to the classroom as well as to the world. More than anything Kendle just wants to have friends, be loved, and do the things that everyone else does.

We are truly blessed in the support that Kendle has received at Wills Valley Elementary. We are so thankful to be a part of a school system that teaches understanding and embraces and values differences!!

We look forward to a great year in Mrs. Simpson's class and can't wait to share this school year with all of you and your precious children. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask. Having Down syndrome is not at all what I thought it would be so we want to change those notions one person at a time and the way to do that is with information. Call or text me anytime 256-996-4933 & we LOVE play dates!!!

Kenneth & Jamie Larson

## **What is Down syndrome?**

Our bodies are made up of cells, which are so tiny we need a microscope to see them. Inside the cells are even tinier things called chromosomes. They carry the directions that tell our body how to grow. People with Down syndrome have an extra chromosome. That means that their growing plan is different than other people. If someone has Down syndrome, they have that extra chromosome before they are born. It is not a disease or sickness, so you can't catch it. If a person is born with Down syndrome they will always have it. Often people with Down syndrome look a little bit like each other, but they also look like their moms and dads and brothers and sisters also.

## **What does Down syndrome mean to someone who has it?**

Kids with Down syndrome will be able to do nearly all the things that other kids do. They just may take a little longer to learn them. They may also have to work harder to learn them. Some kids may have to work harder to talk clearly. Please just try to figure out what she is saying and if you can't just say, "Show me what you are talking about" and she will take you to it!!

Having Down syndrome also means that the muscles in your body don't work like other peoples muscles. That makes everything harder to do but not impossible. Kendle just has to work really hard at some things. She has to practice a lot!!!!

Kids with Down syndrome sometimes have extra teachers to help them. They may go to different classrooms to visit these teachers and work on things that may be hard for them. Kendle has a helper with her when she goes places in the school. Mrs. Ashley Jackson is her helper and she helps Kendle with whatever she may need. She will be glad to help you too!!

## **What can you do to be a friend to someone with Down syndrome?**

The most important thing you can do is remember that kids with Down syndrome are KIDS FIRST! They feel happy, sad, and excited just like you do. They love to laugh and learn and love just like everyone else. People with Down syndrome want to be treated just like you treat all of your friends. They may not do all the things that you do but they are not babies and it would hurt their feelings to be treated that way. Many times Kendle likes to watch other children playing and when she feels like she can do what they are doing she may join in.

It is ok to help people with things if they ask you to but please don't do everything for them. We all learn by doing things by ourselves. Kendle may not understand the rules or the instructions about what to do. She may want to see you read first or do a math problem first.

You can be a good friend by being patient and kind. Kids with Down syndrome may not be as quick or as good at something as you are but make sure they get a turn. Give them a chance to show you something they are good at or maybe something you can help them with. She loves to dance and do gymnastics! Maybe you could share some dance moves with her!!!

## **Different & Same**

Look around your classroom...you will see that all of us look different. Here are some things you might notice: different color eyes or hair, different shapes of faces and body sizes. Some kids learn quickly others need extra practice. Some kids like to run while others might like to read a book. Some kids are loud and some are shy. We are all unique! You don't have to be exactly the same to like being together or to be friends.

There are also ways that make kids the same! Kids with Down syndrome are actually more alike you than they are different. You both like to laugh at funny things, you both may cry when you are sad, you both may get upset when you make mistakes, you both like it when kids are nice to you and want to be your friend. We are all alike in many, many ways!!

***We hope this is helpful to you! Thanks for spreading awareness about Down syndrome!!***