



Elementary School Presentations

Presentations will differ based on grade level

Kindergarten – third Grade

Introduction of speaker by teacher

Greet the children, keep content very simple.

Hello Class! My name is _____ and does anyone know what I am here to talk to you about today?

Varied answers...

I am here to talk to you today about Down syndrome. Has anyone ever heard about Ds before?

Sometimes children respond that their cousin, or another relation has ds, or that they know your child has ds. If you get a positive response ask questions about what they know about it... What things are harder for that child or adult, AND what things that person can do just like everyone else.

When a person has ds, it means that their body works a little differently than your body or my body. It may be harder for them to do things like run as fast, or talk as much as you do. Sometimes they need extra help to learn how to walk, or how to talk well. *(I often give an example of my daughter using a walker when she was young to learn how to walk, and how she used sign language to talk before she was able to communicate verbally)* Point out that even though it takes kids with ds longer to learn some skills, that they are still able to learn them, and that kids with ds are **JUST LIKE THEY ARE**

I have a couple of activities that I show, and I will do 2 or 3 depending on the time allowed, and the attention level of the children.

1. Just like you list

I tell the kids that I will be reading a list of things that a child likes to do, and ask them to participate by raising their hand if they like to do the same thing. I list off things like:

This person has two dogs, this person's favorite color is red, this person likes to go camping, this person likes rollercoasters, etc. I encourage the children to look around and see their classmates that like the same things they do during the activity.

At the end, I ask if they know who I am talking about, and they most often say that they don't, so I reveal that I am talking about my daughter, who likes all those things. We discuss that many of the things she likes to do, they like to do. We talk about how those commonalities show that a child with ds is just like them.

2. Sweatshirt and oven mitt

In this exercise we talk about some of the challenges that people with ds have. I will ask a child to volunteer to help me, and bring them up. I put a zippered sweatshirt on them, and ask them to zip it up. Before they start, I stop them and talk about how someone with ds has a harder time with their hands and fingers, it is

like wearing mittens all the time. So I put oven mitts on them and ask them to zip the sweatshirt up. As the child struggles to complete the task, I ask the class how we could help him. Immediately, children say they should zip it up for them. I ask if those kids always want people to do things for them, or if they want to be able to do it themselves. I then suggest that the friends ASK the child if they need help to zip up the jacket. *It is fascinating to watch the lightbulbs go off as kids are "getting it"*

I then open it up to questions, and I tell the kids that I want them to ask any questions they have, and if they have one later, to please ask me, or their teacher... we are always able to help. The questions I have gotten are amazing, here are a few, and my responses:

- Will she always have ds, and what does it feel like to have ds? *What does it feel like to be tall, or to have brown hair, or blue eyes? You don't know, because you always have had blue eyes. That is who she is, she will always have ds.*
- Can I catch it?? *A TOTAL honest question*
- Did it hurt to have her in your tummy? *That was an interesting one*
- What will she do when she grows up? *Anything she sets her mind to*

And lots more!! Q and A is the BEST part!!

I end with the marshmallow experiment because it gets the kids excited and loud, and they ALWAYS remember it!

3. Marshmallow experiment

We talk about how speech is typically harder for children with ds, and I tell them that doctors used to think not so long ago that people with ds were dumb (shocked eyes) because they couldn't talk. But then, the doctors discovered that along with leg muscles that needed to be worked on so kids could walk, mouth muscles need to be exercised so kids can talk. I tell them that just like wearing mittens on their hands, talking with weaker muscles is like talking with a marshmallow in their mouth. I tell the kids that I did an experiment at home with my son and my daughter. I closed my eyes and had my daughter talk to me, and then I had my son put a marshmallow in his mouth and say the same thing. I SHARE THAT THEY SOUNDED EXACTLY THE SAME!!! I ask the kids what that taught me, *(they usually need help with the answer)* and share that I learned that my daughter has to work extra hard to talk, so when their friends with ds are talking, they should try hard to understand them, and ask them to slow down, or repeat what they said if the child couldn't be understood at first.

We then do the marshmallow experiment in class. I ask their teacher to put a marshmallow in her mouth and talk to the class. Prior to the teacher doing this I ask if it is ok to laugh, and they ALWAYS say NO!! which I respond, of course it is, your teacher is talking with a MARSHMALLOW in her mouth!! BUT, is it ok to laugh at a friend with ds trying to talk? No.

I then thank the class, and repeat my request to ask any question them have at any time

