



## Elizabeth

Hi, friends! I'm hoping to share some information with you today about me ... I was born with Down syndrome. I'm not sure if you've heard this word before, but I thought it might be helpful to share some details with you about it. Please know Down syndrome does not define who I am; it is only a very small part of me actually. I'm really just like all of you in every other way ... except for this one extra chromosome!

I have been going to school with some of you since preschool at West District ... and look at us now, we're 3<sup>rd</sup> graders! Amazing how time flies when you are having fun! My mom and dad found this school for me when we moved here from New York. There are incredible teachers here which have helped me a lot over the years ... just as you, all my friends, have helped me too.

I am so grateful for getting to learn and play with all of you every day. I just love it when you ask me to sit by you at lunch, or play with me at recess, help me with something when I ask. The best is when you treat me like all your other friends. I do not want any special treatment or attention. I know sometimes I'm really shy and need a little bit of time to get comfortable with a situation or activity, but please don't look at me funny, get frustrated or worst of all do the task for me. I'm a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader just like you and will eventually come around and do what I need to do. Sometimes it just takes me longer.

Smiles,  
Elizabeth

## Questions About Down Syndrome (DS) That Kids May Ask

### **Why does Elizabeth have Down syndrome?**

Elizabeth was born with DS. Our bodies are made up of cells and every cell has 46 chromosomes. People with DS have an extra chromosome.

### **Can I catch Down syndrome?**

No. If you weren't born with DS you will never get it. You can't catch DS from Elizabeth.

### **Is there a cure for Down syndrome?**

No. There's no medicine to make DS go away. Elizabeth will have it for the rest of her life.

### **Why does Elizabeth seem so tired in class?**

All the muscles in Elizabeth's body are very soft and flexible. She has to work extra hard to do the things you can do easily. This extra work makes her tired.

### **What should I do if I can't understand what Elizabeth is saying or doing?**

Ask Elizabeth to repeat what she said, have her show you what she is talking about or ask your teacher to help you understand each other.

### **Why does Elizabeth leave the classroom with adults?**

Elizabeth works with some adults to get extra practice with her speech, math and handwriting. Some days she may have a helper here with her in class to explain what is being taught and help her understand everything.

### **Why does Elizabeth sometimes get upset?**

Elizabeth has feelings just like you. Sometimes when she is upset she can't find the exact words to tell someone how she is feeling. When this happens she might want to be alone. Giving her personal space or encouraging her to stay calm can help Elizabeth feel better and join the group again.



September 2012

Dear Parents,

Many of you know our daughter, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is a third grader in Ms. Anderson's classroom and she has Down syndrome. Elizabeth has been fortunate enough to have been at West District since she was three in the preschool peer modeling program offered by Charmington. Chances are, your son/daughter has been in Elizabeth's class over the years and/or will be in the years to come.

Elizabeth is a sweet and bright child/student who enjoys school and loves to learn and spend time with her classmates! Much like you, we have the highest expectations for Elizabeth. She doesn't get any "free" cards in life due to her extra chromosome J ... in fact, it's much the opposite really. We constantly challenge her out of her comfort zone and push her past her limits and she continually rises to the occasion and impresses us with all she continues to achieve and learn. While we have a long way to go and the gaps may become larger with each passing year we are constantly reminded with how she's gotten where she is today ... it's largely due to the incredible Harmony staff and the great group of peers at Harmony she gets to spend her days with. We've said it before, but we marvel at the compassion, patience, kindness, understanding, etc. Elizabeth's peers have exhibited throughout the hallways at Harmony. It has exceeded our every expectation and dream. We cannot thank YOU enough for teaching and guiding your kids to be the caring, wonderful friends she has needed. Their ability to treat and accept her as 'just one them' is a gift like no other.

We wanted to let you know your child's role modeling and positive interactions with kids with Down syndrome (and all other special needs) help them to learn to be successful and have good social relationships. Today your child was part of a brief presentation which highlighted and explained some of the challenges Elizabeth and others with Down syndrome face. Your child was presented with some truths and myths about Down syndrome. The presentation gave some insight into Elizabeth's similarities and difference to others, including your child. Hopefully this was helpful to answer some of their concerns and/or questions about people with Down syndrome.

Please feel free to contact us if your family has any questions. We believe that all children with Down syndrome have unlimited potential given the opportunity and support. Thank you for your help in challenging and supporting Elizabeth reach for the stars!

Sincerely,  
The Quinn Family

## Myths & Truths About Down Syndrome

**Myth: Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder.**

Truth: Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 633 births is a child with Down syndrome. We anticipate 6,000 children being born with the condition each year. There are currently 250,000 people in the U.S. with Down syndrome.

**Myth: Most children with Down syndrome are born to older parents.**

Truth: Eighty percent of children born with Down syndrome are born to women younger than age 35 due to higher fertility rates. However, research has shown a link between the incidence of Down syndrome and maternal age.

**Myth: Down syndrome is hereditary and it runs in families.**

Truth: Most cases of Down syndrome are sporadic, chance events. In general, Down syndrome does not run in families and a sibling or aunt has no greater chance of conceiving a child with Down syndrome.

**Myth: People with Down syndrome struggle with severe cognitive delays.**

Truth: Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate. IQ is not an adequate measure of the functional status of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome have great potential if given opportunities.

**Myth: The life expectancy of a person with Down syndrome is 30.**

Truth: Thanks to advances in medical or clinical treatment and increased community inclusion and acceptance, The average lifespan for a person with Down syndrome is now 55-60 years of age.

**Myth: Behavior problems and depression are just part of having Down syndrome**

Truth: Often, medical or mental health problems go untreated due to the assumption that it is typical of having this genetic condition. Complete examinations by appropriate health care professionals should always be pursued.

**Myth: Children with Down syndrome should be placed in segregated education settings.**

Truth: Children with Down syndrome are experiencing success when included in regular academic classrooms across the country. Inclusive education is beneficial to ALL students.

**Myth: Adults with Down syndrome may be unable to work.**

Truth: Businesses seek young adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are employed by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry. People with Down syndrome bring enthusiasm, reliability, loyalty and dedication to their jobs.