



# Back To School: Best Practices For A Great Start



The start of the school year is always a time filled with both excitement and trepidation for our little ones.

With the added layer of a pandemic and extended home schooling, we've compiled our best tips from our in house expert, mum of Bridget and Director of Inclusion, *Miriam Philomena*, to support you and your family to have the very best start.

- For those students who have been in lockdown, going back to school may be difficult as their familiar routine is learning at home. The more social ones may do ok – but for most it will mean learning or re-learning, how to negotiate rules, social skills, making friends and fitting into the school routine all over again.
- Students with Down syndrome are often not given credit for their emotional intelligence. Most will work the teachers out way before the teachers figure them out and then they'll play it. So parents be very aware of this without giving your child's power away.
- Be aware that your child is an emotional sponge, so if you are apprehensive, uptight or giving way too many instructions as you drop your child/children at school, you may be unwittingly starting them off on the wrong foot. Try to be organised and calm, which is sometimes difficult if you have other children who are also apprehensive, pushing your buttons and generally doing what kids do – our kids with Down syndrome, although quite resilient at times, need that little extra in these first few days/weeks of a new school year or new school.

- As parents of a child who has Down syndrome, we can often feel like we constantly enter school environments with cap in hand. Remember your child who has Down syndrome has a right to an inclusive, equitable, quality education. Your child is a unique individual with his/her own strengths, passions and challenges just like every other child in the school.
- It is essential that all teaching staff, including support staff, have an understanding of the learning profile of a student with Down syndrome – this will make all the difference.
- An important note on behaviour – at the core of all behaviour is communication. When we see it that way, it really changes our response from reaction to inquisitive problem solving, which has a lasting impact. As part of our inclusive approach, we work with families and teachers to ascertain what the student is trying to communicate (rather than disciplining the behaviour that is actually the result of the symptom) and how we can best respond and support this through a range of strategies.

If you are needing additional support, advice or in-school sessions, reach out to Down Syndrome NSW. We offer expert information, resources, behaviour support, inclusion workshops, school consultations and training.



☎ 02 9841 4444  
🌐 [dsansw.org.au](http://dsansw.org.au)  
✉ [admin@dsansw.org.au](mailto:admin@dsansw.org.au)

