

UPSIDEDOWNS EDUCATION TRUST

Johansson Programme:

As Down Syndrome has become better understood there has been more and more research across many disciplines devoted to identifying the strengths and difficulties children with Down Syndrome have when learning and developing. A general search on the internet will soon overwhelm you with articles and books written about the physical, social, language, gross, oral-motor and fine motor and cognitive development of children with Down Syndrome when compared with typically developing children. In brief though, children with Down Syndrome are generally good at remembering visual information and not as good at processing auditory information. They learn best if the learning environment is errorless, as unlike typically developing children, they are prone to give up after one failed attempt. Children with Down Syndrome are also identified to be very socially aware children but to lag behind in expressive language/talking.

In order to provide effective early intervention for children with Down Syndrome which capitalises on visual learning strengths the UpsideDowns Education Trust funds children to participate in the Johansson Programme. This comprehensive Speech and Language Therapy programme was developed by Irene Johansson, a Speech and Language Therapist from Sweden.

Specialist Therapy Services in Auckland owned by Sarah Goodall has therapists trained in the Johansson programme techniques. Children participating in the programme generally have a 45 minute fortnightly session and are expected to continue to learn through 20-30 minute “homework” sessions during the weeks between Johansson programme sessions. The programme is comprehensive and children can start to learn vocabulary including shapes, colours, letters and maths concepts from a very early age. Flash cards, sign language/Makaton, pictorial sound cards and visual and auditory memory tasks are all part of the programme to help our children learn and communicate. Children as young as two months old can start on the programme although it is more common to start around age one. The programme is often continued into the kindy and school environment and continues to be tailored to each individual child’s learning needs.

The UpsideDowns Education Trust recognises that the early years (1-5) are crucial for laying foundations for learning for children with Down Syndrome. Parents are thankful to have access to a fun, structured, comprehensive and intensive educational programme so that their children can lay great foundation for life long learning and development.

For further information do check out the following links:

Specialist Education Services New Zealand: <http://www.stsnz.biz> (Will be live in the next 6-8 weeks).

The Downs Syndrome Education Trust, (UK), <http://www.dwonsed.org> or <http://wwwdown-syndrome.info/library/dsii/01/01/>

Spiker,D; Hopmann, M.R.; Chapter 13 The Effectiveness of Early Intervention for Children with Down Syndrome in *The Effectiveness of Early Intervention*, edited by Guralnick, Baltimore, Paul H Brookes Publishing Company, 1997. Down loaded on <http://altonweb.cust.he.net/cs/downsyndrome/eieffective.html> on 08.05.08

Other Resources:

Kumin, Libby; “*Topics in Down Syndrome: Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome: A guide for Parents and Professionals*”, Bethesda, Woodbine House, ISBN 1-890627-27-5

Bergland, E; Eriksson, M; Johansson, I: Parental reports of spoken language skills in children with Down syndrome, *J Speech Lang Hear Res*, 2001 Feb; 44(1):179-91.

Abstract downloaded on

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11218101?ordinalpos=20&itool=EntrezSystem2.P>
E. On 25.02.08