

Cognitive, Psychological, and Emotional Differences

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## **Down syndrome**

Down syndrome is a condition in which the affected person has an extra chromosome. This condition does not necessarily mean that the individual will look or act any differently than someone who is unaffected by the disorder, but there are some common physical features that are characteristic of down syndrome including: a flattened face, slanted or almond shaped eyes, a short neck, small hands and feet, shorter height, and a tongue that tends to stick out of the mouth (Centers for Disease, 2021). People with down syndrome generally have a lower IQ and slow speech, this characterizes the disorder as a disability in the classroom setting.

### ***Down syndrome as a vehicle for disability awareness***

The study performed by Campbell and their associates (2003) chose to use down syndrome as the vehicle for raising disability awareness (Campbell et al., 2003). There are several reasons for choosing this particular disability as the content for raising disability awareness, but for the purposes of this paper, the author will focus on two distinct advantages: the condition is visible physically, the condition is more easily accepted socially due to limited impact on social integration.

Down syndrome has physical attributes, making those who are afflicted with the condition stand out from a crowd of unaffected peers. Using a disability that is easily physically recognizable is an advantageous route for increasing disability awareness as it is easier to measure perceptions that others have of the disabled individual. The aforementioned study by Campbell and their team (2003) measured the views that student teachers had of

children with Down syndrome prior to intervention and concluded that most held stereotypical views of the disability (Campbell et al., 2003). This revealed that those student teachers were more likely to underestimate the potential of those disabled students just based on the knowledge that they had Down syndrome, something that could be acknowledged as reflecting real world situations where the presentation is physical and the response from educators is similar. The study found that after interventions, the perceptions of the student teachers had changed positively with regard to their attitude of inclusion of Down syndrome students in the classroom. Recognizing Down syndrome can be fairly obvious due to physical presentation and thus, is a good disability to use for modeling the positive effects of disability awareness training.

### **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a learning disability that negatively affects students' ability to be successful in school due to severe attentional difficulties (Kent, n.d.). ADHD is not listed as a disability category across the board but can be listed as "other health impairments" in self-reporting (Becker & Palladino, n.d.). ADHD is significantly underdiagnosed, particularly with women in childhood. This is because girls have a tendency to try harder to cover up the symptoms of their disability and compensate for their difficulties than boys (Sigler & Novotni, 2021). ADHD is also a common comorbidity of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and thus should be recognized as a disability that has the potential to affect a significant portion of the student population (Graetz & Sisson, 2016).

### ***ADHD as a vehicle for disability awareness***

Students with ADHD do not physically appear any differently from their unaffected peers, rather their behaviors and difficulties can "hide" as characteristics of a student who lacks intrinsic motivation. These students have working memory issues that significantly

impact their ability to learn (Jacobsen, 2020). Additionally, these students often have difficulty adhering to traditional classroom expectations of behaviors such as sitting still for longer periods, and refraining from interruption during lectures (Millennium Medical Associates, 2019). It is because of the nuanced characteristics of ADHD that the author presents this disorder as the vehicle for raising disability awareness.

Using ADHD as the model disability for raising awareness benefits teachers in several ways, the most pervasive being that when teachers can recognize symptoms of the disorder as a disability rather than a behavioral problem, the solution to rectifying that behavior will positively rather than negatively impact the student's learning. Using ADHD as the model for disability awareness about inclusion will allow educators to realize that disability can present invisibly. Methods for managing ADHD in the classroom are mostly focused on behavioral management strategies, rather than physical accommodations (Pfiffner & Haack, 2014). Thus, the disability inclusion awareness will incorporate those disabilities that can be "silent killers" to academic success and provide solutions that are less obvious.

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