

Education Questions

Your younger brother, James, has to repeat the first grade. James has Down syndrome, but you're still not sure as to why he has to repeat a grade because you never had to do that. What can you do to get some answers to your questions?

You may notice that your younger sister with Down syndrome only sits with two other kids who have various disabilities at lunchtime. You also notice that no one really seems to want to be their friends. You're a big advocate for inclusion, so you want to make sure your sister and her friends feel included. What can you do in this situation?

Imagine you're a parent of two sons, one of whom has Down syndrome and the other does not: Miguel, your son with Down syndrome, has just started twelfth grade. Your younger son, Juan, who is a freshman, wants to know if Miguel is graduating this year. How do you respond?

Here are some notes on these questions:

- For more information on education, check out Dr. Brian Sktoko's and Sue Levine's book, *Fasten your Seatbelt: A Crash Course on Down Syndrome for Brothers and Sisters*, Chapter 2, Road Test: how people with Down syndrome learn!
- Repeating grades is not uncommon for people with Down syndrome. Explaining Down syndrome in the context of this situation and reiterating that Jami is very capable of learning, but sometimes it takes her a little bit longer, will be very helpful for Mariah to understand Jami's educational needs and potential!
- Sometimes people with Down syndrome would rather sit with other people who have disabilities because they may be around them more in classes or because they understand each other better because they're more similar—ask Naveah what she thinks! Is she happy sitting there? Does she want to sit somewhere else? The important thing is that Naveah has the option and opportunity to sit wherever she likes. If you feel like other students aren't welcoming or inclusive of Naveah and her friends, you may want to talk to some teachers or the principal about how students with disabilities are viewed at school. You could even start programs like Spread the Word to End the Word, Best Buddies, or Special Olympics Unified Sports to increase awareness and attitudes of respect and inclusion at school.
- You can tell Juan that people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities are eligible to go to high school through their 21st birthday. You can include Juan and Miguel in family discussions about whether or not Miguel should continue in school for some more time or if he should graduate and pursue college or a job.