



COVID-19: e-Learning & Down syndrome

*PLEASE NOTE: These are **excerpts**, this is not a complete download*

[Down Syndrome Program at Massachusetts General Hospital](#) spoke with [Sam Johnston](#), Ed.D., the Director of Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development at [CAST](#), a non-profit pioneer on universal design for learning. Here are some practical tips for caregivers from Dr. Johnston and our team:

- For your first week quarantined at home, the priority should be teachers, parents, para-professionals, and specialists communicating their presence, not sending out volumes of content. Once your school has established remote learning, request a video chat so that your son or daughter with Down syndrome could see their educators and know that everyone is okay.
- Caregivers could share [these practical tips](#) about supporting e-learning for students with intellectual disabilities with their son/daughter's administrators, special education teachers, general education teachers, and educational technology directors.
- The [National Center on Accessible Educational Materials](#) also provides practical solutions for educators.
- The school should provide students with Down syndrome a structure for how communication and e-learning are going to happen. This includes the delivery mechanism, expectations by role, who and when students will be meeting with, what support person at home is needed. It will be important for general education teachers, special education teachers, para-professionals, and specialists to agree to a consistent structure.
- If possible, schools/teachers should give students with Down syndrome and parents a choice in how to participate in both live and not-live communication. (For example, will they use the chat function or raise-hand function if using a virtual conferencing technology such as Zoom?) There should be one primary point of contact at the school for technology-related questions.
- Whether creating a video, connecting with students live, or recording a webinar, each teacher or student should use her/his webcam and have good lighting so users can see them speaking.
- Educators should introduce themselves before they speak and have students do the same. This can help the teacher, paraprofessionals, and students all keep track of the conversation and may also allow teachers and specialists to assess if a student with Down syndrome is experiencing barriers to participation.
- Educators should pace the delivery so that students with Down syndrome have time to digest what is being said or sent.
- Know the educational rights of your son or daughter while they are quarantined. The U.S. Department of Education has developed this [comprehensive fact sheet](#) explaining what educational rights are maintained for students with disabilities who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) during the COVID-19 outbreak.

These are unprecedented times. Being a parent is hard enough; learning the new role of parent-educator is very demanding. Educators should keep in mind that families are juggling multiple responsibilities. Parents should give themselves a break if the educational lessons do not go as smoothly as they would have liked! Flexibility will be key in these coming weeks.