



SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES

DSAN Objectives:

- To advocate for people with Down Syndrome in places of Learning, Health Care and Work through all available communication channels, DSAN website, electronic and printed media coverage, outreach events, etc.*
- To establish a model for the roll out of the Inclusive Education Policy of the Government of Namibia, starting in Windhoek;*
- To assist Government of Namibia in the roll-out of the Inclusive Education Policy along international best practice;*
- To reach out to parents of people with Down Syndrome and provide practical support to them in terms of Health Care, Education and Work opportunities.*

As parents and caretakers we all hope to find a safe, caring and stimulating place of learning for our child or young adult with Down Syndrome.

The most important message DSAN wants to give you is that irrespective of what model of learning is available where you live, **learners with DS can and should go to school**. Starting at pre-school/kindergarten to learn what all toddlers need to learn – potty train, be social, eating skills, playing together, listening and talking! Then onto primary school to learn more relevant academic skills and possibly further onto secondary or vocational school. People with DS can learn and should be allowed to learn in Namibia.

In most cases school heads need some encouragement to agree to take in your child as a learner. You may need to agree on certain conditions, possibly an assistant (who could be an older family member or a nanny) to accompany your child or your commitment to additional support for your child outside school hours (for example speech and/or occupational therapy). A strong argument for placing your child with DS in a mainstream educational facility is that the children without a challenge learn a lot of socio-emotional skills when learning together with a co-student who is less able. Your child is likely to learn more faster as well – both academically and socio-emotional.

Please contact DSAN for additional information and how to get into contact with parents/caretakers of people with DS who have indicated willingness to share their educational experiences with you.

Learning can be achieved through **special education**. Here children with challenges are educated in special facilities with no connection to the mainstream learning system.

Another model is **integration**. In this model children with DS (and other challenges) are educated in a special classroom and undertake certain activities together with the children who are not faced with challenges. These would include general assembly, sports, arts, drama and other non-academic activities.

A third model is **inclusive education**, whereby our children with DS join the local school and participate fully in the class – often guided by an Individual Education Plan.

These are different models for learning with their own advantages and disadvantages. However, our children with DS – as research has demonstrated – function just so much better and learn so much more, reaching their own best potential, when in school with other children who are not faced with a challenge such as DS.

In Namibia we have only just started the dialogue with the Government and educational facilities on inclusive and integrated education for learners with DS.

The founders of DSAN have drafted a Concept Paper “Pilot for the Promotion of Inclusive Education in Windhoek District”. Please [click](#) here for download.