

# Classroom behaviour, language competence, and the acceptance of children with dow...

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Here Here Here Here Children With Downs Syndrome Article Summary The article of interest was the result of an experiment by Glynis Laws and colleagues (100) and investigates the impact of classroom behavior and language abilities on peer acceptance of children with Down syndrome. The authors imply that this study arose as a result of the mainstream integration of children with Down syndrome in the school system, and propose the examination of peer relationships as an appropriate measurement of the success of the integration project. Further refining this notion, the experimenters identify a sociometric measure of popularity/acceptance to be their primary dependent variable. As well, language competence and classroom behavior are supported by evidence as effectors of popularity in mainstream relationships, and are accordingly selected as the independent variables. The researchers predicted that children with Down syndrome would be have more behavior and language problems than other children, and that these variables would lead to a lower overall popularity.

Sixteen children (eight girls, eight boys) with Down syndrome took part in this study. They were matched with children of the same gender without Down syndrome but from the same class. All of the participants were in the range of seven to eleven years old. To obtain popularity scores, children answered questionnaires (which were pretested) about their friendships. Behavior (destructivity, withdrawnness, aggressiveness, etc.) was measured using an existing scale as well as reports from teachers, and language scores for children with Down syndrome were attained with a set of four scales and tests. The results of these tests were statistically analyzed. During this process, popularity Z scores were used to divide the students into three

groups: high, low, and average acceptance.

It was found that there is no significant difference between the popularity of children with Down syndrome, that of mainstream classmates. This level of acceptance was not expected by the researchers and offered an interesting result to be further investigated. Behavior problems were more common with children who have Down syndrome, but the predicted connection between these problems and acceptance was only seen in mainstream relationships. Reasons for this result are offered, such as sympathy towards students with Down syndrome, or other positive aspects of their personality making up for behavior issues. Additionally, the language skills of children with Down syndrome were unrelated to their popularity.

This study concludes with the optimistic outlook that, even though they tend to have more behavior and language problems than mainstream students, acceptance of children with Down syndrome is not a significant problem in school children of the given age group. However, there is still evidence that these children are less likely to be chosen to bring home, or to be invited to events by other students. The authors state that this may be the result of parental interference and not a sign of the true feelings of school children. Further research is required to clear up this matter.

#### Reference

Laws, Glynis, et al. "Classroom Behaviour, Language Competence, and the Acceptance of Children with Down Syndrome by their Mainstream Peers." *Down Syndrome Research and Practice* 4. 3 (1996): 100-109. Print.