

# Participation by Children with Down's Syndrome in Physical Activities

## 1360-10 | Participation by Children with Down's Syndrome in Physical Activities

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Like all children, participation in physical activity is important for children with Down Syndrome to promote and maintain health, encourage social interactions, and to have fun! However, additional considerations need to be made when engaging in physical activity with children with Down Syndrome.

Some children with Down Syndrome may have an instability in the spine close to where it joins the skull, heart abnormalities, or difficult time tolerating increased body temperature.

### Neck/Spine:

Participation in some physical activities by children with Down Syndrome with weakness in the neck can result in very serious injury (atlantoaxial dislocation). Severe injury to the upper spinal cord may result. The following physical activities for students with Down Syndrome with an instability in the spine close to where it joins the skull should be avoided:

- *gymnastics, diving,, butterfly stroke in swimming, diving starts in swimming, high jump, pentathlon and soccer.*

### Heart:

Some children with Down Syndrome are born with abnormalities of the heart. These abnormalities will often be addressed through surgery when the child is very young. Parents or doctors should be consulted regarding physical limitations on cardiovascular activity prior to participating in physical activities.

### Body Temperature:

When planning physical activity for children with Down Syndrome, work in rest periods or water breaks to ensure that body temperature does not rise too high. For some children with Down Syndrome, self-regulation becomes increasingly difficult with rising body temperature and fatigue.

In order to protect students with Down Syndrome, the Board of School Trustees requires that all students with Down Syndrome be properly screened by a medical doctor prior to their participation in physical activities. Students with Down Syndrome shall not be permitted to participate in physical activities without written approval by a medical practitioner permitting participation in physical activities.

1. Students with Down Syndrome may be permitted to participate in physical activities only after approval

by a medical doctor to participate in such activities as defined by Board Policy. The permission shall be in writing.

2. The Administrative Officer is responsible for maintaining a record of the status of each student with Down Syndrome in regard to their possible instability in the spine.
3. The Administrative Officer shall advise staff of which students with Down Syndrome suffer from an instability in the spine or who have not yet been examined by a medical doctor. Such students shall be prohibited from participating in physical activities as defined in Policy.

#### REFERENCES:

1130 Student Support Policy