

# Partner with whānau, parents and caregivers

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Identify needs and how to provide support'  
from the Guide: [Down syndrome and learning](#)

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## **Includes:**

Take the initiative to make contact

What to ask

Support information sharing

Discuss health conditions

Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Down syndrome and learning](#)

Strategy: [Identify needs and how to provide support](#)

Suggestion: [Partner with whānau, parents and caregivers](#)

Date

16 September 2025

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/down-syndrome-and-learning/partner-with-whanau-parents-and-caregivers](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/down-syndrome-and-learning/partner-with-whanau-parents-and-caregivers)

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## Take the initiative to make contact

Prioritise connecting with whānau so they can share their insights and expertise.

The first thing I do is spend some time getting to know them personally and what works for them having communication with their parents, making those phone calls, having those meetings.

Also having discussions with other teachers who have taught them in the past. Getting information about what works for them.

**Brooke Houghton, Onslow College**

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# What to ask

Connect with parents, whānau, and caregivers to understand the strengths and needs of ākonga.

### The people in the learners' lives:

- parent and whānau hopes and priorities
- important people in the learner's life
- best methods and times to communicate with the family
- professionals working with the family
- questions they have and support they would like from the school.

### Practical elements:

- the language(s) spoken at home
- medications and allergies
- equipment used at home
- what they do at home to support learning

### Learners' likes and dislikes:

- likes, interests, strengths, what they're good at, can do independently
- dislikes, what can upset them, how they express this, calming skills
- favourites (TV programmes, hobbies, books, songs, sports)

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## Support information sharing

Build regular times for communication.

- ✓ Encourage parents and caregivers to share what they have noticed or assessments they have had done outside school.
- ✓ Build on any programmes or materials used at home, to maximise consistency and support for the learner.
- ✓ Develop systems for passing on information about a learner's needs, progress and next steps.
- ✓ Share information about out-of-school programmes that may help boost the learner's self-esteem, for example, classes or groups for music, art, dance or sports.

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## Discuss health conditions

Many students with Down syndrome have associated health conditions.

Discuss with parents and whānau:

- ✓ the implications of any specific health conditions affecting the heart, respiratory system, eyesight or hearing
- ✓ your role in helping the student to stay active, healthy, and well rested
- ✓ whether the student needs a rest on days following a night of broken or too little sleep.

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## Useful resources



### New Zealand Downs Syndrome Association

National advocacy and support group that offers resources, events, community connection, and local groups to help support teachers and parents.

[Visit website](#)



### Down Syndrome Education International (UK-based)

Evidence-based learning and development strategies for parents along with free articles and downloadable resources.

[Visit website](#)

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