

Talk It Out: Messages for K–2

Companion to the Lower Elementary Teacher Guide



Six ready-to-go mini-lessons that expand the “More messages to teach” page of the Lower Elementary Teacher Guide. Each one has what to say, what kids might say back, a quick activity, and ways to keep it going all week. Six classroom posters are included.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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HOW IT WORKS

How to use this guide

Each message is a 5–10 minute conversation for morning meeting, before recess, or a teachable moment. Use one per day, or return to a message when it fits what’s happening in your room.

1. Say it

Read the **SAY** lines or put them in your own words. Keep it short and concrete.

2. Talk it

Ask one question, then use turn-and-talk so every child gets to answer.

3. Try it

End with the quick activity so kids practice the idea right away.

TIPS FOR GREAT CONVERSATIONS

- Sit in a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Use the poster as a visual anchor and point to it all day.
- Turn-and-talk beats hand-raising. Everyone gets a turn.
- **Catch them doing it:** “You waited for Sam to finish. That was patient!”
- Welcome honest questions. “Great question” keeps curiosity kind.

IF A STUDENT IN YOUR CLASS HAS DOWN SYNDROME

- Talk with the family before your 3.21 week. Ask how they’d like it shared.
- Keep the focus on everyone. Never use one child as the example.
- Let the student lead only if they want to. Many kids just want to celebrate like everyone else.
- If classmates ask about a specific child, answer simply and kindly and follow the family’s lead.

A SAMPLE WEEK OF TALKS

Mon

We all learn in different ways

Tue

Everyone is good at something

Wed

Friends, not just helpers

Thu

Use names + Ask kindly

Fri

Patience is kind + Rock Your Socks!

THE LINE TO REPEAT ALL WEEK



“Different is good, and everyone deserves to belong.”

MESSAGE

1

We All Learn in Different Ways

Students understand that everyone's brain works a little differently, and that learning at a different speed is okay.

8 MIN

MORNING MEETING

CHART PAPER • MARKER

STEP BY STEP

1

Draw two columns

Label chart paper "Easy for me" and "Hard for me." Add one of your own to each.

SAY

Reading is easy for me. Drawing horses? Really hard for me!

2

Turn & talk

Partners share one easy thing and one hard thing. Add a few to the chart.

SAY

Tell your partner one thing that's easy for you and one thing that's hard.

3

Notice the pattern

Point out that everyone has things in both columns, and that the columns are different for everyone.

SAY

Look! Everybody has easy things AND hard things. And they're not the same for everyone.

4

Connect to Down syndrome

Keep it simple and strengths-based.

SAY

Some people with Down syndrome need more time or practice to learn some things. That's okay. Everybody learns in their own way, and everybody keeps growing.

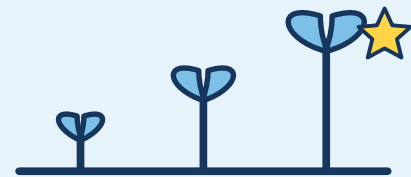
5

Wrap it up

Point to the poster.

SAY

In our class, it's okay to learn at your own speed. We cheer each other on!



We all learn in our own way!

Poster #1 (last pages)

IF A STUDENT SAYS...

YOU CAN SAY...

"Reading is easy. Why can't he do it?"

Everybody's brain works differently. He's learning in his own way and his own time, just like you are with other things.

"I'm bad at math."

Math is hard for you *right now*. You're still growing. What's one thing in math you can do now that you couldn't before?

"She gets extra help. That's not fair."

Fair means everyone gets what they need to learn. You get help with things too!

QUICK ACTIVITY: "NOT YET" SWITCH

Practice turning "I can't" into "I can't... YET!" Say a few together. Students add a "yet" sticky note to the chart.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Keep the chart up all week. When someone learns something new, move a sticky note from "Hard" to "Easy" and celebrate.

Home connection: Ask your family: "What was hard for YOU to learn when you were little?"

MESSAGE
2

Everyone Is Good at Something

Students notice strengths in themselves and others, including people with Down syndrome.

10 MIN

MORNING MEETING

INDEX CARDS • CRAYONS

STEP BY STEP

1 Define a strength

Write “strength” on the board.

SAY

A strength is something you’re good at. It could be drawing, running, being funny, or being a great friend.

2 Brainstorm

Make a quick list of kinds of strengths: art, sports, music, kindness, building, helping, making people laugh.

3 People with Down syndrome have strengths too

Share simply.

SAY

People with Down syndrome can be amazing dancers, artists, athletes, actors, helpers, and friends. Everybody has strengths!

4 Strength cards

Each student draws a name and writes or draws one strength of that classmate on an index card.

SAY

Look for something real that you’ve seen them do.

5 Share & give

Students hand their cards to their classmate. Everyone gets one!

SAY

How does it feel when someone notices what you’re good at?



Everyone is good at something!

Poster #2 (last pages)

IF A STUDENT SAYS...

YOU CAN SAY...

“I’m not good at anything.”

I see lots of strengths in you! I noticed you... Let’s find more together.

“People with Down syndrome can’t do sports.”

Lots of people with Down syndrome play sports: swimming, basketball, soccer, and more!

“His strength is being nice. That’s not a real one.”

Being kind is one of the BEST strengths there is.

QUICK ACTIVITY: STRENGTH SHOUT-OUTS

End the day with two or three “strength shout-outs”: “I noticed Maya is great at...”

TAKE IT FURTHER

Make a “Strengths Wall” with everyone’s cards. Add new ones all week.



Home connection: Tell each person in your family one thing they’re great at.

MESSAGE
3

Friends, Not Just Helpers

Students understand that friendship is two-way. We play with people, not just help them.

8 MIN

BEFORE RECESS

CHART PAPER

STEP BY STEP

1 Helping vs. friendship

Draw two circles: "Helping" and "Friends."

SAY

Helping is kind. But a friend is someone you play with, laugh with, and share with. Friendship goes both ways!

2 Sort examples

Read examples and have students point to a circle: carrying someone's tray, playing tag together, sharing a joke, building a fort together.

3 Why it matters

Connect it to classmates with disabilities.

SAY

Sometimes people only help kids with disabilities instead of being their friend. Everyone wants friends who play WITH them.

4 Brainstorm together-things

List things to do together at recess: tag, the swings, building, a game of four square.



IF A STUDENT SAYS...

YOU CAN SAY...

"I help her every day, so we're friends."

Helping is kind! Do you also play together? What do you both like to do?

"He can't play our game."

Can we change the game a little so everyone can play? What would work?

"She always wants to play with me."

That means she really likes you! You can say yes, or say "maybe later" kindly.

QUICK ACTIVITY: RECESS CHALLENGE

Challenge everyone to play one game WITH someone new at recess today. Check in afterward: "Who tried it?"

TAKE IT FURTHER

Set up a "Buddy Bench" or friendship spot where anyone can sit if they want someone to play with.



Home connection: Share one game you played WITH someone new today.

MESSAGE

4

Use Names, Not Labels

Students learn to use people's names instead of labels like "the kid who..."

8 MIN

MORNING MEETING

A BALL OR BEANBAG

STEP BY STEP

1

Ask a question

Start with a feelings check.

SAY

How would you feel if people called you "the kid with the glasses" instead of your name?

2

Names matter

Keep it simple.

SAY

Your name is YOURS. Everybody wants to be called by their name, not by something about how they look or learn.

3

Person first

Model person-first language.

SAY

If we ever need to talk about Down syndrome, we say "a person WITH Down syndrome." The person comes first!

4

Name game

Toss a beanbag around the circle. Say the catcher's name and one thing you like about them.



Everyone has a name!

Poster #4 (last pages)

IF A STUDENT SAYS...

YOU CAN SAY...

"The kid in the wheelchair took my spot."

What's his name? ... Let's use Jaden's name. Can you ask Jaden about the spot?

"I don't know her name."

Great! Go ask her. That's the first step to being friends.

"Is he a Down syndrome kid?"

We say "a boy with Down syndrome," and his name comes first. Down syndrome is just one part of him.

QUICK ACTIVITY: NAME DETECTIVES

Challenge students to learn the name of someone new (in another class, at lunch, on the bus) and report back tomorrow.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Make a class name wall with a photo or self-portrait and one fun fact for every student.



Home connection: Ask your family how they chose your name.

MESSAGE
5

Ask Questions Kindly

Students learn that curiosity is okay, and practice asking questions in a kind way.

8 MIN

ANYTIME

QUESTION CARDS (OPTIONAL)

STEP BY STEP

1 Curiosity is good

Start positive.

SAY

Being curious is a GREAT thing. It's how we learn!
The trick is asking in a kind way.

2 Kind or unkind?

Say a few questions and have students show thumbs up (kind) or sideways (could be kinder): "Why do you talk funny?" vs. "What games do you like?"

3 The "I wonder" switch

Model turning a blurt into a wondering.

SAY

Instead of "Why does he look like that?" try "I wonder..." and ask a grown-up quietly.

4 Practice

Students practice turning 2-3 questions into kind ones with a partner.



It's okay to be curious!

Poster #5 (last pages)

IF A STUDENT SAYS...

YOU CAN SAY...

"Why does she talk like that?"

Everyone's voice is different. Some people talk in different ways, and that's okay. What do you like to talk about with her?

"What's wrong with him?"

Nothing is wrong with him. Everybody's body is a little different. Is there something you're wondering about?

"Is Down syndrome catching?"

Nope! You can't catch Down syndrome. People are born with it. It's not a sickness.

QUICK ACTIVITY: WONDER BOX

Put out a "Wonder Box" where students can drop questions about differences. Answer a few together (kindly and simply) the next day.

TAKE IT FURTHER

When a question comes up in the moment, thank the student for being curious, answer simply, and redirect to what people have in common.



Home connection: Share one "I wonder" question with your family tonight.

MESSAGE

6

Patience Is Kind

Students practice giving others time to talk, move, and answer, and see waiting as a way to show respect.

8 MIN

MORNING MEETING

TIMER OR SAND TIMER

STEP BY STEP

1

What is patience?

Ask for ideas, then define it.

SAY

Patience means giving someone the time they need without rushing them.

2

Wait-time practice

Ask a question and have everyone silently count to 5 before anyone answers. Talk about how it felt.

3

Why it matters

Connect to classmates.

SAY

Some friends need more time to say what they're thinking, or to finish a job. When we wait, we're saying: "I want to hear YOU."

4

Don't finish their sentence

Role-play: one partner speaks slowly, the other waits and listens without jumping in. Switch.

5

Wrap it up

Point to the poster.

SAY

Patience is kind. We can wait for our friends!



1...2...

I can wait. Patience is kind!

Poster #6 (last pages)

IF A STUDENT SAYS...

YOU CAN SAY...

"He's taking forever!"

He's taking the time he needs. Let's count to five and give him a chance.

"I already know the answer!"

Awesome! Hold onto it and give others a turn to think. Your turn is coming.

"I can just say it for her."

That's nice of you to want to help. Let's let her say it herself. She can do it!

QUICK ACTIVITY: 5-SECOND CHALLENGE

All day, practice silent 5-second wait time after questions. Keep a tally of how many times the class did it.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Use a sand timer at centers or group work so students can see what "waiting" looks like.

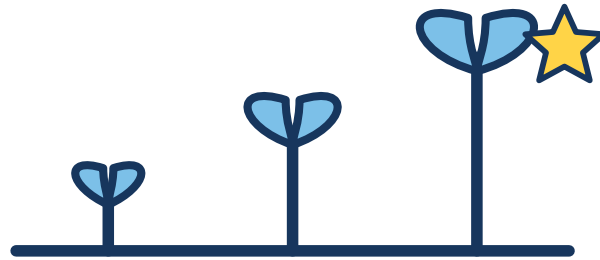
♥ **Home connection:** Practice waiting 5 seconds before answering at dinner. Was it hard?

Classroom posters

Print on cardstock, cut in half, and post the message you're teaching that day. Point to it whenever you see a student living it!



POSTER 1 · WE ALL LEARN IN DIFFERENT WAYS



We all learn in our own way!

What's easy for you? What's hard? Everybody has both!

POSTER 2 · EVERYONE IS GOOD AT SOMETHING



Everyone is good at something!

What's a strength you see in a friend?

Classroom posters

Print on cardstock, cut in half, and post the message you're teaching that day. Point to it whenever you see a student living it!



POSTER 3 · FRIENDS, NOT JUST HELPERS



We play **WITH** each other!

Friendship goes both ways. What can we do together?

POSTER 4 · USE NAMES, NOT LABELS



Everyone has a name!

We call people by their names, not by what makes them different.

Classroom posters

Print on cardstock, cut in half, and post the message you're teaching that day. Point to it whenever you see a student living it!



POSTER 5 · ASK QUESTIONS KINDLY



It's okay to be curious!

Try "I wonder..." or ask a grown-up.

POSTER 6 · PATIENCE IS KIND



1...2...

I can wait. Patience is kind!

Count to 5 in your head. Give friends time to talk and try.