

The ZoomTimers Project

Canadian Youth with a Creative Voice: Down syndrome & Communication



Cape Breton University
Department of Education

Presenters: Dr. Lynn LeVatte & Ms. Rhiannon Hickey

IURN Symposium 2025-Acadia University

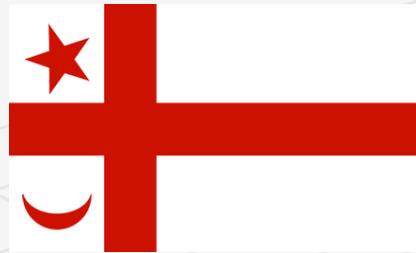
Contact Information: lynn_levatte@cbu.ca



Land Acknowledgement

This project was researched and written in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people. The "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" covering this territory, first signed in 1725, recognized Mi'kmaq & Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title to land/resources and established rules for ongoing relationships between Mi'kma'ki and the British Crown.

We would like to further recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched Nova Scotia for over 400 years.



Thank you for joining us today !

Introductions, Research and Teaching Interests

Dr. Lynn LeVatte -Vice Chair Education Department

- Inclusive Education Practices and Down syndrome
- Social Emotional Learning and Well Being
- Communication and Social Inclusion
- Leadership, Inclusivity and Ice Hockey Coaching
- Inclusive Education, HPS, Student Health & Wellbeing / Teacher Well Being

Ms. Rhiannon Hickey-Bachelor of Education

- Graduating May 2025 BEd. Secondary
- Volunteer Cape Breton Down syndrome Society
- Research Assistant –Inclusivity, Diversity & Leadership

Project Overview: Research Question

SSHRC PEG Funded

IURN Funded

How can we create opportunities for youth with Down syndrome to enhance communication practices through creativity & engagement ?

- Social Inclusion
- Inquiry Based
- Experiential Learning
- Participatory Action Research Project
- 6 Youth with Down syndrome



Down syndrome

Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always existed and is universal across racial, gender, and socio-economic lines.

One in every 781 babies born in Canada has Down syndrome.

Down syndrome is associated with an extra copy of chromosome 21. There are three types: Trisomy 21 (98%), Translocation and Mosaicism.

...they will have their own strengths, likes, dislikes, talents, personality and temperament.

Think of your student first ...

Down syndrome is just part of who they are.

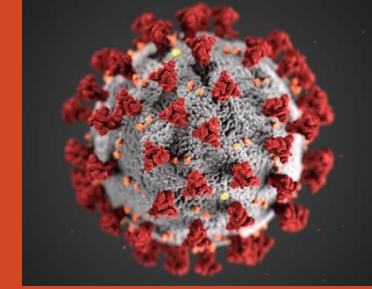
(Canadian Down Syndrome Society, 2020)



Members of Cape Breton Down Syndrome Society

Project Rationale

Canadian Youth with a Creative Voice: Down syndrome & Communication



As a result of COVID-19, schools across the world closed in March 2020. This impacted traditional schooling methods for students with DS who were educated within either:

- General Education Classroom
- Learning Centre Classroom
- Blended LC and GC

Before COVID-19, supports for students with DS may have included:

- Teaching Assistant
- Resource Teacher
- Speech Language Pathology Sessions
- Literacy Coaching
- Peer Support Learning Groups
- SchoolsPlus Facilitator

Supporting Students with Down syndrome during COVID Isolation

Students were feeling socially isolated during COVID-19 and due to school closures, many activities were cancelled and family –friend visits were also restricted. This resulted in limited school connection and supports.

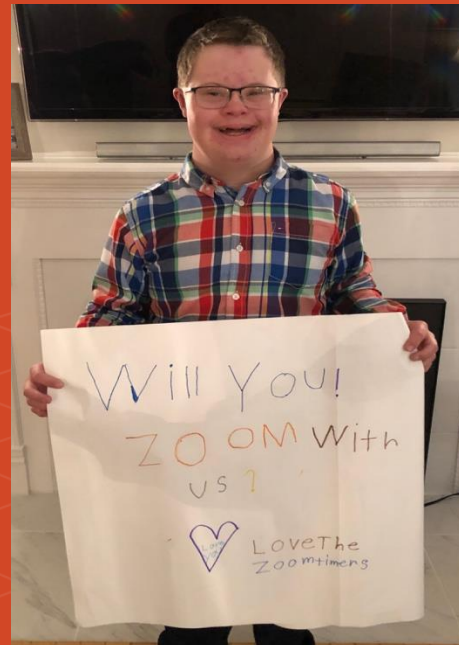
Learning Digital Technology –ZOOM Platform

THE ZOOMTIMERS

March 2020 - 3 times a week

45-minute sessions for 16 weeks

WHY



Social supports and communication were directly aligned with being at school.



Research Methodology

Approach

Participatory Action Research prioritized the active involvement of those impacted and aimed to generate knowledge to engage actions & social change.

- Collaboration
- Reflection
- Implementing Solutions
- Empowerment

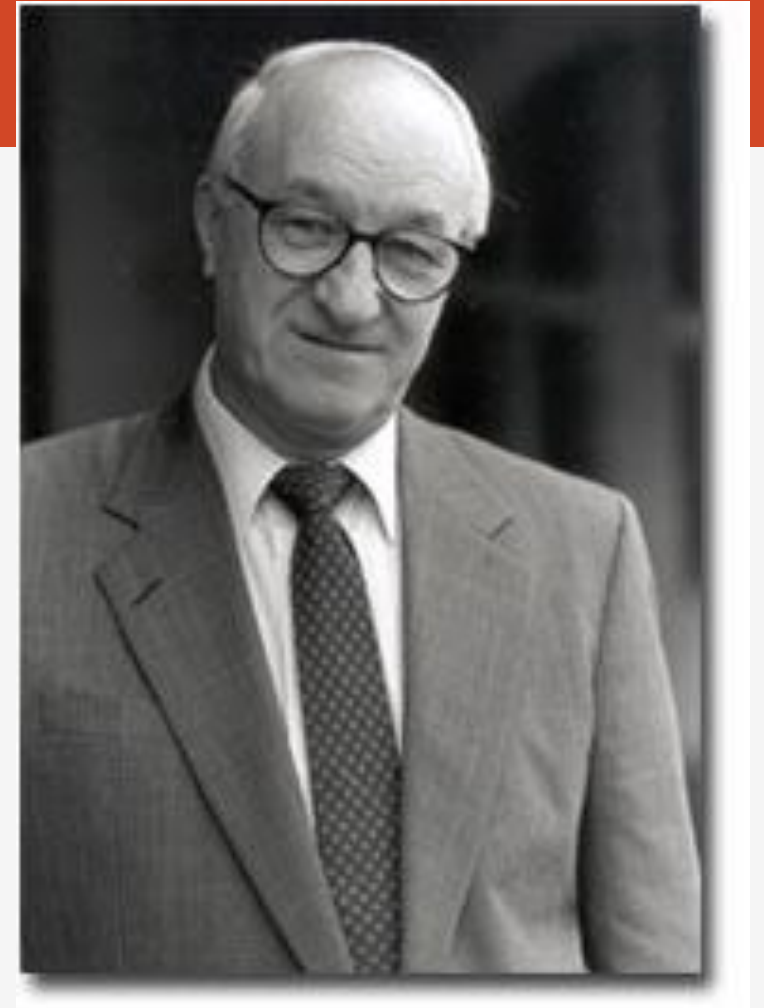
Participants

6 Students Enrolled Public School System

- Students with Down syndrome
- 5 male / 1 female
- 12-16 years old
- Grades 9-12

Socia Learning Theory

This research was framed through a social learning theory lens and with such, determined that participants in this research would learn from one another, their guests, and team members via modelling, observation and imitation.





Emphasis on Social Inclusion-Communication Development

Individuals with DS may demonstrate delayed language development, communication challenges, and may find it more difficult to express themselves referred to as expressive language.

Additionally, as many as 2/3 of individuals with DS have hearing loss. (Roizen, 2007 & Martin et al., 2009).

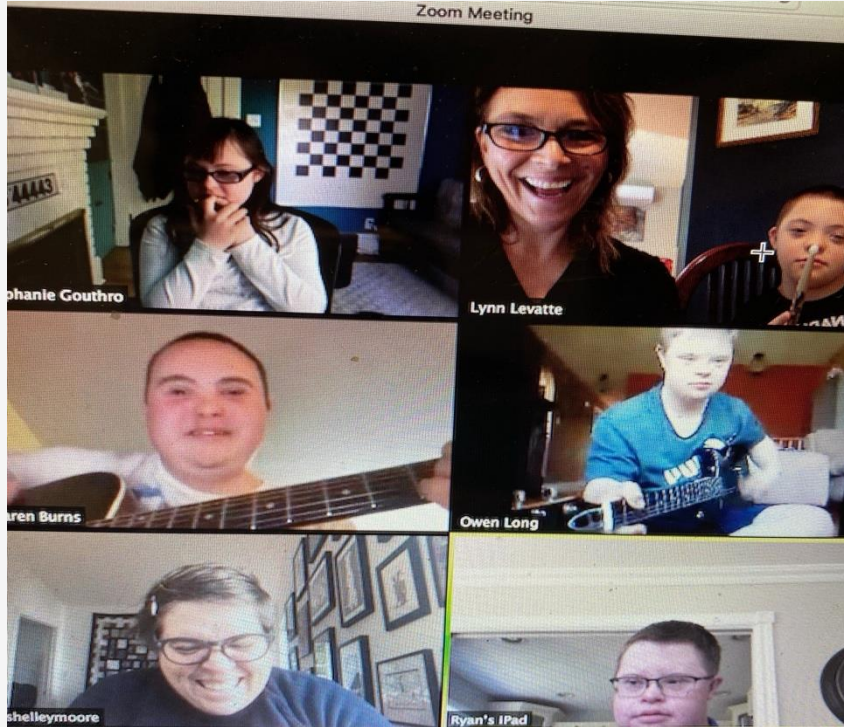
Approximately 80% of individuals with DS have moderate intellectual disability (Pueschel, 1995).

Children with DS have poorer speech intelligibility than younger typically developing children of similar age (Kay-Raining Bird, 1998).

Social Skill Development & Communication

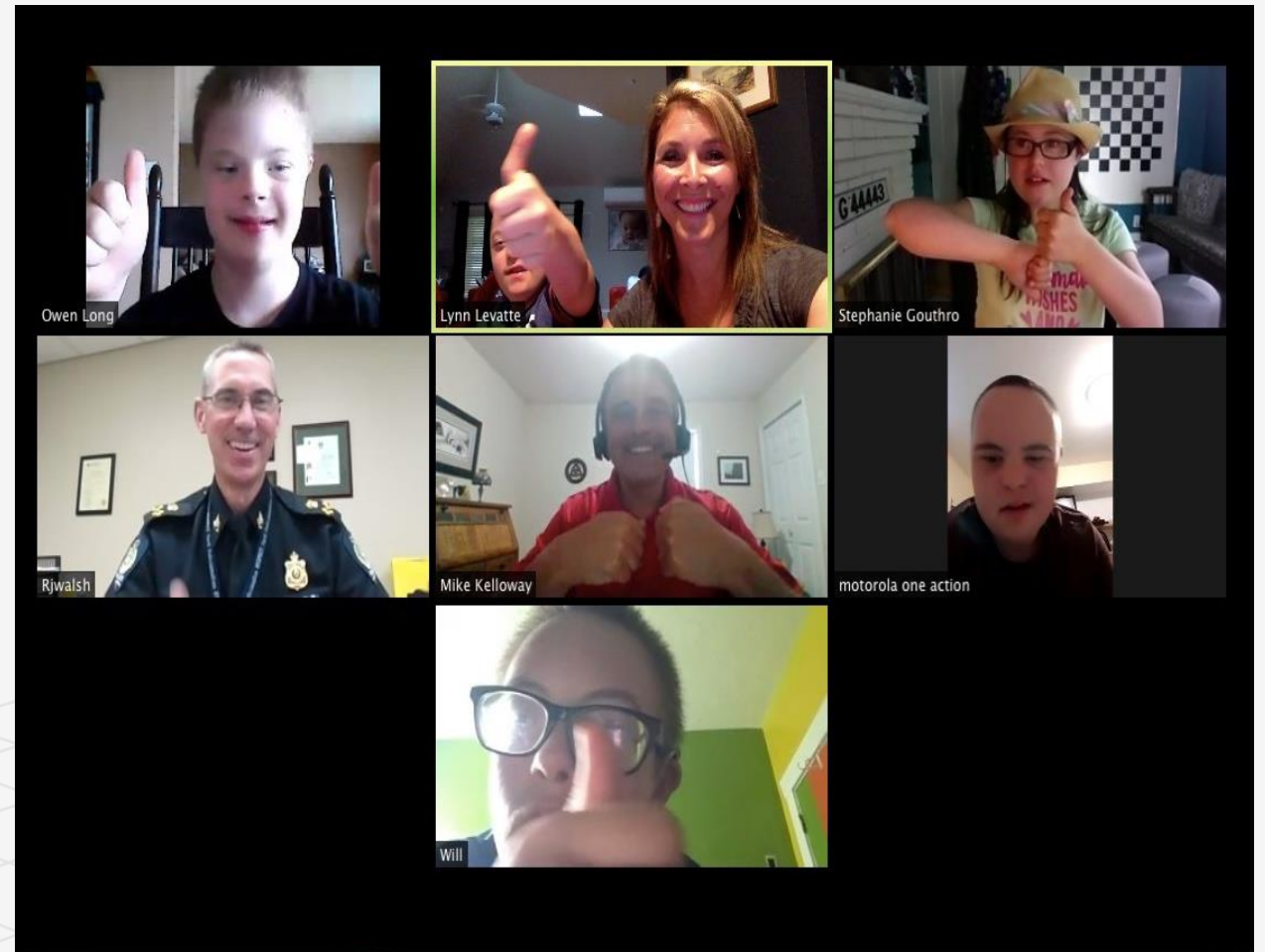
- Critical precursor to language acquisition
- Socialization is a strength for individuals with ID

Creative Voice –DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY and ZOOM



**Dr. Shelly Moore, Inclusive Education
Specialist**

**CBRM Chief of Police
MP Mike Kelloway**



Question Development – Initiated by Students

1. Where do you do your work?
2. When are we going back to school?
3. When do we wear masks?
4. Where will you get your paycheck?
5. How much does it cost to go on TV?
6. What is your favorite sandwich?
7. Do you argue with your wife ?

Our Guests – Afternoon ZOOM with Dr. Tim Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics



SEL Competencies



FIGURE 2. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

**SELF-MANAGEMENT AND
SELF-DISCIPLINE**



**INTERPERSONAL AND
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**



**SELF-EXPRESSION
AND IDENTITY**



Farrington, C., Maurer, J., Aska McBride, M., Nagaoka, J., Puller, J., Shewfelt, S., Weiss, E., & Wright, L. (2019). Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes in K-12 Students: Developing a Theory of Action. Consortium On Chicago School Research. 10-35. Retrieved from: <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2019-05/Arts%20Education%20and%20Social-Emotional-June2019-Consortium%20and%20Ingenuity.pdf>



Project Results

Technology:

Creating User
Accounts, Zoom,
Passwords,
Microphone, Video,
Camera....

Social Emotional Learning:

Friendship, Turn
Taking, Relationship
Building, Creating
Supportive Group
Environments

Communication:

Spontaneous
Speech, Literacy,
Writing, Composing,
Language, New
Vocabulary

What did we learn?

- Routine is critical
- Social connections were HUGE!
- Student centered = Student engagement
- Students valued independence
- Transition planning (Explaining and demonstrating the why, how, when)

Connecting Research with Curriculum Outcomes



Nova Scotia Curriculum Documents

Next Steps: Transitioning to University

CBU Inclusive Program: Post Secondary Programming for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Max has enrolled in this program. He loves Cape Breton University and the opportunities that it provides for him to continue learning after his 2021 high school graduation.



**Max and his student
assistant**

Dissemination....CASEL Conference Atlanta, Georgia Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee and Dr. JH Gillis, Antigonish, NS



Conclusion Highlights from Participants

What did we learn?....What did we like?

Max: I loved meeting Derek and calling him on the phone.

Owen: I liked to show my grandparents how to use computers during COVID...I had to show them about Zoom"

Charles: I liked the doing ZOOM with Max

Jenna: " I liked music and singing on stage with Owen"

Will: "I liked meeting friends and going to the conference"

Ryan: "I learned about Zoom and the computer "

Thank you to IURN for the generous support to continue with this important research in supporting students with intellectual disabilities



Activity: Project Video Production





QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?
THANK YOU

References available upon request.