How One School Is Learning About Children With Autism

As parents of children with special needs, we sometimes get caught up in the negative things that happen at school. We at times believe that they are against us and don’t understand our children and us.

One school in Georgia and particularly one class made a difference recently when they hosted Exceptional Children’s Week. The week included a music presentation and awards day and a day in which parents came into the classroom to help children try to feel what it is like to have a disability. The amazing thing about this week was that we thought we were going to be doing the teaching, but in the end we learned so much from these kids as well how much the school actually loved our son.

As the parents of a child with autism we were invited into the class room to speak to our son’s class. In Collin’s typical classroom where he spends part of his day, the kids learned about Loss of hearing, loss of sight, and autism. The room was set up into stations and the kids rotated to spend 15 minutes with a parent at each station to learn about these disabilities. My wife and I worked the autism station. The teacher had provided an activity which included sand paper and the kids felt how rough the sand paper was and it was explained that this is what something as simple as a tag on a shirt could feel like to a child with autism.

We also brought our own ideas and demonstrated with a couple activities as well. We took the children to think of something that smells really great to them (like chocolate chip cookies) and helped them to understand that to a child with autism, this could smell really awful. We rearranged sentences to make nonsense out of them and explained that sometime when you talk to a child with autism, the sentence may sound like nonsense. We talked about how loud noises can really bother children with autism and a couple of other activities.

Kindergartners are hilarious. One kid diagnosed his dog with autism because the dog hates loud noises like fire alarms and trucks. Many of the times when we would describe something, the kids would say “just like Collin does”.

I could feel tears well up in my eyes a couple times but I was not sure if it was because of that overwhelming feeling I get every once in a while of “why my child?” or was it that these kids were so great. They never make fun of Collin. They think he is cool. They like that he is different and think it is great to help him with his lunch or point him in the right direction is PE. They tell their mom’s that they can’t have chocolate cake at their birthday parties because Collin can’t eat it. They really find him interesting.

What made the experience in the school some much more for us was that we found out so many things about Collin and how his school as a whole treats him. I have been in the classroom many times and the kids don’t make fun of him and enjoy helping him out. Collin has a typical kindergarten, a special ed kindergarten, an adult facilitator, kids assigned to help him at places like lunch and he receives OT and Speech each week.

We call Collin the Mayor of his school because it seems like every body in the school of 600 knows him. The front office staff knows him by name. (we are late frequently and they always walk him to his classroom). Many different kids, parents and staff throughout the school know Collin and they know he is autistic or has some sort of disorder, but they welcome him and treat him like they should. I am very happy with his situation and hope it continues in the future.

Exceptional Children’s week was to celebrate children with disabilities but I found that the kids without the disabilities really have been exceptional too.

Garrett Butch is the father of a 6 year old with autism and the founder of Maximum Potential. Maximum Potential has developed video based courses that enable parents and school systems to develop affordable and effective ABA programs, www.maxmumpotentialkids.com

Having a learning disability is exhausting. Whether your child has ADHD, or a Nonverbal Learning Disability, or a Language Based Learning Disability, or Asperger Syndrome does not matter. Learning differently from the way school is taught is hard work.

In order to obtain proper educational services for a child, one must define the difference or deficit. The child needs to fail to make progress in order to qualify for services. This is simply how the law is written, but it means that a smart child often has to experience frustration and failure before appropriate services are put into place. Even if the services are helpful, their delivery distinguishes the child from other learners - the child has to leave the room for support in reading or math, or a special teacher comes in. It is a situation that can grind down self esteem.

What to do? Where are you child's strengths? Perhaps you have some excellent teachers in your school who know where your child has particular talent. Perhaps you know and can encourage her to take a chance on a non-academic pursuit. These are the parts of life that teachers and parents can encourage so that the child feels competent, even gifted.

I once knew an art teacher who had a depressed teenager with nonverbal learning disability in her class. She raved about his skill and originality. His parents had no clue. The boy had been so down on himself that he demagnified everything he did, including his drawing. With the teacher's encouragement he took some drawing classes and produced some fine work. It helped turn his life around.

Another student I knew who had nonverbal learning disability was on the chunky side. His parents wanted him to play sports to get exercise and to practice social skills, but his poor coordination made it impossible for him to enjoy any sport with a ball. His Dad got him involved on a swim team where he excelled. He was on a team, but he was swimming to beat his own time. The swimming also helped with his anxiety.

These are just two stories. There are more. There are kids who are writing wonderful poems, often about their challenges. Others I know are on speech or debate teams.

The precise logic involved in those activities fits their thinking well. Playing guitar or any other musical instrument can provide calming comfort. Other children I know excel at archery.

It is as important to find activities in which your child excels as it is to provide tutors and social skills groups.

Parent Coach and Licensed Psychologist, Carolyn Stone, Ed.D. (http://www.drearalystone.com) educates parents of children with learning disabilities, ADHD, Asperger Syndrome and anxiety about their children's needs using humor and evidence-based practices. Parents learn new strategies through role play and homework. She teaches children to manage their anxiety and attention and to understand their learning styles. You can learn about Dr. Stone's work from her blog at http://www.drearalystone.com/blog.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/6928244

PEATC Workshops and Events - December 2013

Monday, December 9, 2013 – “How to Talk So Schools Will Listen” workshop, 4:30pm -5:30pm, sponsored by the Bland County SEAC, Location at the Bland Co. School Board Office, 361 Bears Trl., Bastian, VA 24314. No Registration Required.

Thursday, December 12, 2013—Early Intervention—The Home Information Specialist, 10:30-11:30am, WJCC Public Schools, Central Office at James Blair Room 402, 117 Ironbound Road, Williamsburg, VA 23187.
Guide Your Special Needs Child To Unlock Their Inner Greatness!

Children with special learning needs have experienced more failure and disappointment than other children. Parenting children with special learning needs can be difficult, and calls forth from their parents an extra measure of care in "planting the seeds of greatness."

Seeds of "greatness" grow into strong, confident children-skilled learners who make bold choices and expect the best for their lives. They see setbacks as temporary and know they can find ways to surmount the obstacles that present themselves.

Children grown from greatness develop a "winner" mentality that supports them when he becomes challenging. Children grown from these seeds problem-solve; they test out theories; they create wonderful new platforms from which to explore and conquer life; they carve out a strong personal identity. They reject thoughts of failure. They create. They succeed. These children lead.

But what happens if children do not have a strong sense of their own internal greatness? These children harbor self-doubt. They have come to expect defeat. They prepare to lose. They defend themselves from the pain of failure. They make choices which are restricted to those options that are guaranteed to produce the least amount of pain. They wither in the face of challenges, moving through life like ghosts of themselves, restricting their life to the least painful alternatives, rarely reaching beyond the safety of what they are sure they can do without failure. They see challenges as yet another instance of humiliation, and they resist humiliation at all costs.

How can parents plant the seeds of greatness in their children?

A child learns to believe in his or her greatness through his or her interaction with parents. There are many ways parents can "sow greatness" into their child's life. The following two strategies applied consistently will nurture your child's desire to tackle life's challenges with confidence.

Review your child's successes with him (her) on a daily basis!

Never let your child doubt his capacity to ultimately prevail. Resist the temptation to criticize. If your child does not behave in a way that pleases you, remember that the cause of your child's bad behavior is his feelings of disempowerment and insecurity.

Help your child to feel more secure! Express faith and confidence in his ability to handle the challenges of life and to select appropriate behavior next time. Guide him to believe that he can make the best choices for each situation.

Keep your child's successes front and center in your mind and in your child's mind!

Parent your child from an attitude of strong belief in his abilities and in his ultimate achievements. If you feel any doubts, banish them. Let go of any beliefs in your child's limitations. Cultivate your child's mindset of greatness.

Daily affirmation for greatness:

My child has the power to make successful decisions and have a glorious life. His talents are so strong that I have every reason to expect success. I believe in him. My child is brilliant and amazing; his life is evolving toward greatness. I admire the way he meets challenges head on. I can trust his judgment.

Children who have experienced failure have, unfortunately, begun to grow seeds of self-doubt. Like a gardener pulling weeds that block the sun, parents can crusade against self-doubt and nurture the seeds of greatness!

About the Author: Dr. Kari Miller is a board-certified educational therapist and director of Miller Educational Excellence, a Los Angeles based educational therapy facility whose mission is to bring about unlimited possibilities for underachieving students by guiding them to discover their true brilliance and use it to change their lives.


Special Resources For Special Needs: Famous Individuals with Disabilities

Famous People with Disabilities: Athletes, Artists, Celebrities, Musicians, and Writers / Journalists
http://yodisabledproud.org/organize/docs/PRIDE/4_Middle_School/Unit_2_Middle/2_1m-Famous_People_List.pdf


Famous People with Learning Disabilities: http://www.goodlearners.net/FamousPeople.html

Famous people with illnesses or disabilities: http://www.girlshealth.gov/disability/fun/famous.html


Improving The Effects Of Learning Disabilities With A Kids Art Class

Children’s art classes are a valuable addition to a comprehensive treatment plan for learning disabilities (LDS). Difficulties with fine motor skills, called dyspraxia, can improve with classes in drawing or painting. For dysgraphia sufferers, a kids art class is the perfect opportunity to express themselves, which is a skill they find most difficult to acquire. Other children with LDs in other areas such as oral, math, and written will improve and gain from their artistic ventures.

Refine Physical Movement

Dyspraxia and children with difficulty controlling their fine movements find joy in improving their weaknesses. At a kids art class, LD sufferers can work in a medium that challenges them while being unconcerned about satisfying a curriculum or being wrong. Unlike writing, mediums such as painting, sculpting and drawing don’t require crisp, straight lines. Many modern artists are famous for their ability to think outside box and create something fresh and new.

Children’s art classes provide children with choices that meet their particular needs. Children with dyspraxia, for instance, might find clay or other similar mediums easier to start. While children with only minor difficulties might find drawing is better because it allows them to work with their recent achievements and promote their continued advancement.

Creativity And Self-Expression

Children with learning disabilities are often afraid to express their true selves because of the embarrassment attached to their condition. Frustration and depression often appear because of this inability and they begin to ignore the outside world.

In the small, relaxed atmosphere of a kids art class, children benefit from the care and positive atmosphere that allows them to push the rules of art to learn about who they are. There is no pressure to choose the right answer and they can learn the boundaries of their chosen medium and imagination.

Communication And Problem Solving

Communication is one of the largest skills learned and practiced at a children’s art class. Kids not only learn to express their ideas to the world, but they listen, follow directions, work with others, and problem solve. Children find the instruction in a kids art class more entertaining than traditional text book teaching and absorb and enjoy the teachings more readily. The problem solving skills allow for more personal interpretation. There is rarely a definite answer in the realm of art; it generally follows a set of guidelines with particulars defined by the individual.

Increased Self-Confidence And Improved Team Skills

With a kid’s art class, children are immersed in a comfortable environment that promotes working together and the acceptance of things that are different and unique. For this reason, many children with learning disabilities see children’s art classes as a place of acceptance. It becomes easy for the children to work with others and make friends.

These new found skills and friends often carry beyond the children’s art classes and stay with them throughout life. The realization of their creativity and the thrill of their successes only increases these new skills.

They gain a heightened self-confidence through their creations that reflects in their improved communication with others, their willingness to stand out, and their ability to take healthy risks.

The methods and techniques learned in a kids art class just scratch the surface of their education. Children with learning disabilities can improve the skills they find difficult without being afraid of being wrong or being bullied by other children. They can be proud of their strengths and learn to enhance them. Children’s art classes give those dealing with learning disabilities a positive experience while treating and improving their condition.

About the Author

Christine O’Kelly specializes in children’s art classes and is an author for Young Rembrandts, a kids art school that teaches the drawing skills children need while developing learning skills that give them an academic advantage in the classroom.


Latino Corner

El perfil del estudiante

Este mes celebramos las fortalezas de los estudiantes con necesidades especiales. ¿Quiénes más que los padres pueden comunicar las fortalezas de sus hijos? Los padres conocen muy bien los retos tanto como las fortalezas de sus hijos. Pero ¿cómo puede comunicar este conocimiento con el equipo de IEP? Una manera de hacerlo es escribiendo en un cuaderno lo que usted conoce de su hijo. Usted puede crear un Perfil del Estudiante. En el perfil puede incluir listas de los gustos, preferencias, retos, apoyos, adaptaciones, habilidades y fortalezas de su hijo. Poniendo esto por escrito le ayuda a organizar sus pensamientos también puede compartirlo con los profesores si lo desea. Por ejemplo, las fortalezas de Pedro incluyen: él puede dibujar muy bien, sigue instrucciones muy bien y tiene el hábito de hacer quehaceres. A Pedro le gustan los deportes y escuchar música. La información que los padres proveen de las habilidades de sus hijos en las reuniones de IEP es muy valiosa puesto que toma parte del fundamento de las metas que se escribirán en el IEP.

The Student Profile

This month we celebrate the strengths of children with special needs. Who else more than parents can communicate their child’s strengths with others? Parents know well the challenges as well as the strengths of their children. But how can you communicate this knowledge to the IEP team? A way to do this is to write down this knowledge on a notebook. You can create a Student Profile. On the profile you can include the likes, dislikes, challenges, supports, accommodations, abilities, and strengths of your child. Putting this in writing will help you organize your thoughts, and you can also share this profile with teachers if you want. For example, Peter’s strengths include: he can draw well, he follows directions well, and he does routine tasks. Peter likes sports and to listen to music. The information that parents provide about their child’s abilities during IEP meetings is very valuable because it is the foundation of the IEP goals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show your child how to make a paper snowflake.</td>
<td>National Mutt Day! Ask your child his favorite dog name.</td>
<td>National Hand Wash Day! Buy fun soap for home or school.</td>
<td>National Cookie Day</td>
<td>Put a special note in his lunch or backpack.</td>
<td>Eat a healthy breakfast with your child</td>
<td>Be an Angel-Have your child go thru their old toys and donate some of them to Shelters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a walk together as a family before dinner.</td>
<td>Ask your child to name three friends &amp; tell you something fun about each one.</td>
<td>Always read to your child</td>
<td>Sit outside together with sidewalk chalk!</td>
<td>Gingerbread House Day</td>
<td>Ask your child to tell you something he thinks is “lucky”.</td>
<td>Day of the Horse! Ask your child to name three stories which have a horse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask your child to name a “religion or faith” other than your own.</td>
<td>Have your child tell you what he would like to do to be famous.</td>
<td>Sing a Holiday song while making dinner.</td>
<td>Pick out a box of cat food &amp; dog food. Take it to your local shelter together.</td>
<td>Have your child put stamps on holiday cards.</td>
<td>Be certain you and your child have gone through his backpack.</td>
<td>World Peace Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather pinecones or holly together for decoration.</td>
<td>Exotic Fruit Month Give your child a new fruit!</td>
<td>Make bedtime very special. Have your child say “good night” to family not there.</td>
<td>Christamas. Whatever you celebrate, hug everyone in your house.</td>
<td>Candy Cane Day. Share the story!</td>
<td>Teach your child to write a thank you note.</td>
<td>Recite the Pledge of Allegiance with your child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend some time together in a bookstore.</td>
<td>Go through your child’s toys and remove any broken or sharp pieces.</td>
<td>Have a special breakfast.</td>
<td>Candy Cane Day. Share the story!</td>
<td>Friends are fun!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>