

Parent Story

Working together

Teacher

I met this student almost two years ago when he entered my prep class. We were both new to the school, excited and a little nervous on our first day. His mother seemed anxious and came to see me about her concerns and expectations.

It was clear from this meeting that we needed to establish a network of people from which we could draw upon a range of experiences. We established a support group consisting of myself, the parent, integration co-ordinator, education support staff and occupational therapist. We also drew upon other agencies and resources as needed.

As the year progressed, so did the student, far exceeding our expectations. He began not only reading but understanding and interpreting texts. He also discovered a talent for working with numbers. Despite this excellent academic progress, he was having some social difficulties.

By this time though, we had learned not to put limitations on him. We felt that the fact he had autism should not prevent us from trying to teach him to socialise with his peer group. He was quickly achieving the learning outcomes we had set for him, so why not social skills?

Again, we set to work as a team, drawing on the skills and experiences of each member. Together, we created a social story and made an agreement to read it to him every day, both in class and at home. Persistence paid off and it wasn't long before he began to make connections with his peers. He continues to make excellent academic progress, but it has been equally rewarding witnessing him develop his social skills. While working as a team has sometimes been difficult, it has also been very rewarding.

Seeing this student achieve and exceed his learning goals has been one of my most gratifying experiences as a teacher. I have come to realise the importance of not placing limitations on students. Also, and perhaps more significantly, I have learnt the importance of listening to and learning from others, acknowledging the different perspective each member brings to the support group.

Ultimately, we all have the student's best interests at heart and their successes can be largely attributed to team effort.

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