



INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

August 30, 2009

Friends of TCA:

Our first week has come and gone, and we have surpassed even our own expectations. Two things about this week really stand out for me and that is the students' desire to stay at school, and the community interest we have received.

Each day we begin with a morning meeting and a story we can all share. Students are acclimating to this new schedule and are all really enjoying this shared story time. The older kids share and explain the ideas of the story to the younger ones who eagerly ask questions – this love of a story is one of our goals at TCA. Reading is the key to learning, and to learn to love to read for a child with Autism is a formidable goal.

Though we separate for our academic learning, throughout the day we come together for recess, snack, explorations and social pragmatics – the highlight of the afternoon has been our science experiments; we have made rainbows in a bowl and bottles burp! The kids love it! Each afternoon the parents come, most spend at least 15 minutes trying to get their child to leave. There is no greater compliment to our school than this. Parents tell us too that their children are happy to come to school in the morning and that it is a joy not to have the dreaded “fight” about bringing their student to school. A positive experience is paramount to our continued success – we hope to bring this kind of experience into each child's life. If this week was a gauge of our success, I know in my heart that we are succeeding each day.

More wonderful than just bringing a brighter outlook on school experience, is the hope we are giving local families. Each day this week, without fail, a parent or grandparent has stopped by to see our school and has left with renewed hope for their child. On Tuesday, parents brought their daughter, who was so enraptured by story time that she asked not to leave - mom and dad did leave her, and she has been with us every day since! Moreover, two grandparents showed up on Wednesday saying they have followed our progress in the news and what “a blessing” we are. By Friday, they had dropped off the registration form and the \$25.00 fee. Since all new enrollments join us on October 1st, I told Grandpa I would hold his check rather than cash it. When he asked me why, I said “In case you change your mind.” He laughed and said, “You better cash that check! I want to see it clear by next week!”

This is the kind of confidence we are getting from the families who come and observe our program. Each day is a learning process as we get to know our students better and they continue to learn our procedures and expectations. Everyone has made great strides this week and I would say we are all looking forward to continuing to work together.

Thanks for your interest and for helping us to *Chase the Dream!*

Mimi Lundell