

Facilitating Inclusion

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"This is too easy!" "I'm bored." "I don't belong here!" "I need to be in a regular class in my own school."

These are the facilitated words of our son Patrick in the spring of his kindergarten year in a segregated special education class outside our district. The following fall, after paying attention to what his words and his behavior were saying, we managed to convince the home school to accept him in full-time regular first grade. He was right- he didn't belong in "special ed." Just ask his first-grade teacher. She told me at the end of the year that inclusion is what Patrick needed. How good that was to hear!

Lest you think Patrick is an easy child, he isn't. He has autism. He has poor social and self-help skills. Fine motor skills are very weak. Impulsiveness runs high. Speech is coming ... much faster since [placement in a] regular education [classroom]. Aggression can sometimes occur. Patrick had a full-time aide, a "quiet room" (a converted storage area) to get away from the sensory overload from time to time, occupational therapy every other week, and a very patient teacher.

Patrick did it, he succeeded in first grade! I was told it went better than expected. He was happy. He did the school work by being facilitated. He was part of the mainstream and he improved so much!

Yes, we had rough spots. At times his behavior made us brainstorm for ways to change it. But all in all, it was a success. He talks so much more now. Facilitation is needed less. Behaviors improved a lot. Attention span improved and he is less impulsive. Second grade here we come.