

Inclusion Confusion

Laura Watts, Program Director

Two years ago my husband and I were invited to a Christmas party at the home of new friends we had not visited before. As we turned down their street, we were greeted by a brightly lit home surrounded by parked cars and festive partygoers. We saw Sue and Bill standing in the front window sharing a drink with friends. As we entered the house, we enthusiastically introduced ourselves to unfamiliar faces and began making our way toward our friends, tasting the generous portions of hors d'oeuvres as we proceeded. When we finally reached them we were amazed at the looks of shock and confusion on their faces as they greeted us. It turned out that they had just hurried over here to their neighbor's house to quickly say "hi" before hosting their own party in their home next door. Regardless of how right it had all looked - we were attending the wrong party!

Sometimes it is hard to know if your child is in the right educational setting. Included program options may shine brightly, parents you know may be having a wonderful inclusion experience and it sure seems like everyone else is heading in that direction. But is your child at the right party?

Liza Cassels and friend.

I am sometimes called to observe a child in an included setting that should for all practical reasons be working extremely well, yet still the child is struggling. I ask the usual questions. Is the child learning academically? Are test scores indicating progress? Is material being adapted adequately? Are there health issues interfering with maximum learning? But what I am discovering more and more is that the problem is simply that the *child* is being lost in the inclusion attempt.

The family has achieved an inclusion experience that meets all the requirements they have fought for. But what does the *child* think of the placement? Is this a placement in which a child is not simply surviving – but thriving?

Even a child who cannot communicate verbally due to age or ability can demonstrate signs parents must watch for apart from academic achievement to determine what their child is thinking about his or her classroom



ANNOUNCEMENTS

FALL FUNDRAISER COMING UP!

Keep us in mind...

Last year's Christmas Concert and Silent Auction was a big success!

Join us for this year's fall event on

October 14, 2003

featuring Les & Lorraine Roettgess, members of the Jacksonville Symphony.

Watch for details in future mailings.

Due to the generosity of the donation in honor of Jackson Becker Lee by Eric Rankin Lee and Family, **therapy equipment is available for check-out.**

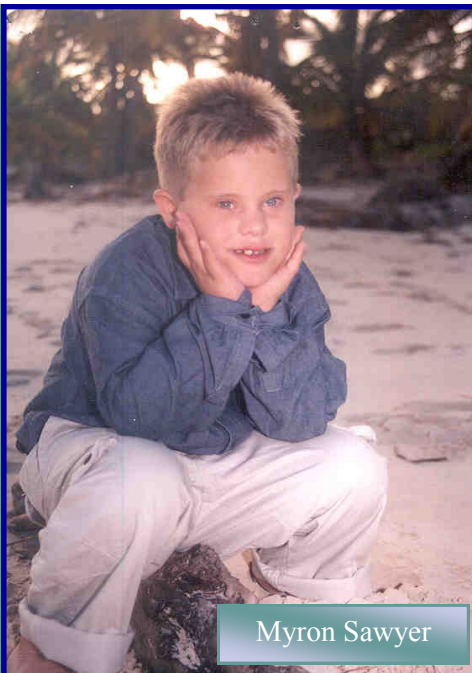
Please call Ann Schwelgin at ext. 266.

INCLUSION

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- Is the child's personality in school different from that seen at home? Is she normally happy at home but sullen or withdrawn in class? Or is she demonstrating uncharacteristic disruptive, active or uncooperative behavior in the classroom?
- Does he want to go to school each morning?
- How does the child react to her classmates? Does she walk down the hall laughing and conversing or is she walking alone and apart? Would the observer see a confident, proud child or one with head down, shuffling at the end of the line?
- Is he acting aloof at home? Does he come home happy and ready to participate in family activities when he arrives, or does he disappear into his room? Is he usually willing to share his joy about days out with grandma but not the news of his school day? Or are there suddenly marked differences in behavior at home?
- Do classmates from school call inviting her to parties, the movies or to just hang out? Or are all such invitations prompted solely by classmates parents?

It is unarguably the right of every child to be included in his school. But it is the responsibility of every parent to assure that the included environment chosen is truly the right one for that child. Know your child - not just his academic abilities but his personality, coping mechanisms and social needs. Know your child's teacher. Set up a consistent form of communication so you know her past experiences, present concerns and future plans for her class. And help her know your child. Design a single page or tri-fold brochure of "fun facts" about your child, complete with pictures and descriptions of favorite friends, activities and achievements.



Myron Sawyer

Help your teacher to see the same precious child you live with every-day.

The act of accepting a child with Down syndrome into a class of typically developing children may no longer be a teacher's choice – but having an attitude of acceptance is. Support this teacher in any way possible – be there to make phone calls, do routine tasks or provide treats for the staff when they have had a particularly busy week. Your child will see your support of his teacher and sense a comradeship that will allow him to confide in his teacher when necessary and to share his feelings if he is overwhelmed or confused. And a teacher who is not confident about working with a special needs child – and his parents – will be more likely to make the extra effort if she feels accepted too!

Inclusion is not just about academic exposure. It is not just about social role modeling. It includes every aspect of your child's learning. But in order to have a truly successful experience, your child needs to feel that she is in the right place for all of it.

The Down Syndrome Center at Hope Haven Children's Clinic and Family Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing positive, strength-based assessments and information to the families of children with Down syndrome.

An interdisciplinary team evaluation consists of an education consultation, behavioral / medical evaluations, physical, occupational and speech therapy evaluations.

Families receive a comprehensive report describing their child along with home and/or school suggestions for further growth.

In-school visits are available upon request.

For information or to schedule an Appointment, contact
Ann Schwelgin
(904) 356-5100 ext. 266
AnnS@hope-haven.org
www.Hope-Haven.org

**These evaluations are not intended to replace primary care or services already in place.

Application forms are available upon request. Current funding allows families to pay only a minimal co-payment for evaluations.**

*“Give a man a fish,
and he eats for a day.
Teach a man to fish,
and he eats for a
lifetime.”*

The same rule, give or take poetic license, applies to vocabulary acquisition. The trick is not to accept or adopt a single definition or category designation for a word, but to explore the many meanings a word may possess – and then apply that strategy to newly learned words.

When you think of the word “rock,” what comes to mind? A large, heavy, irregularly shaped object lying on the ground? That diamond in cousin Shirley’s engagement ring? What we do when we hold an infant in our arms? That loud, raucous music which the “experts” felt wouldn’t survive the ‘50s? Maybe you made an idiomatic connection, remembering that slice of day-old bread you ate last night that was ‘as hard as a ____.’ Perhaps your thoughts turned to a certain wrestler turned actor who portrayed the Scorpion King, or to Doris Days’ long-time movie companion, Mr. Hudson.

And if you were able to relate to all the above definitions of “rock,” then you don’t only know one vocabulary word, you know seven.

One of the most important aspects of communication development is learning how to recognize the intent of a spoken message. And children have a

WORDPLAY

...TEACHING OUR CHILDREN HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE, THINGS, DEEDS AND EVENTS AROUND THEM

Timothy Stavropulos, M.A., CCC-SLP, Director, Speech/Language Department
Hope Haven Children’s Clinic and Family Center

better chance at hitting the mark receptively, when they realize that words can have different meanings.

Children with disabilities often take a direct, literal approach to word definition, pretty much focusing on whether or not the target word is an object – something they can see, hear, feel, sense – or whether the word in question is a verb – something they can do. Re-visiting our word “rock” we see that it fills the bill in both these categories.

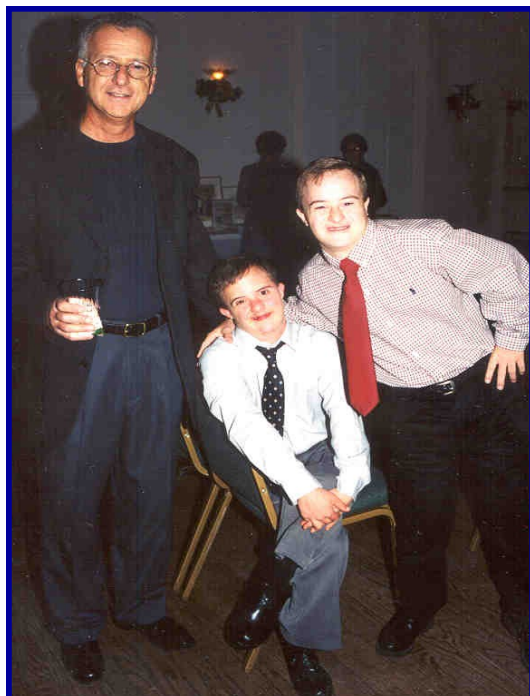
So, one way to immediately expand a child’s vocabulary is to describe objects in and around the child’s environment with words that can be used as verbs as well as nouns: chair, can, shoe, comb, bowl.

Once the child begins to get in the habit of recognizing how words may be used as nouns or verbs, other common usages can be introduced. These include:

- Combining the root word with prefixes or suffixes: happy-unhappy; help – helpless; spell – misspell
- Building a larger word out of two smaller words: breakfast; oatmeal; playground.
- Using the word in a saying or idiom: “face”: “face the music”; “save face”; “keep a straight face.”

- Humorous usages: puns (filibuster = a rodeo cowboy who only rides female horses); absurdities (Why is it silly to say: “Let’s put the apple in the toaster.”).
- Creating lists of categories – words that describe an entire family of concepts/words: How many things can you think of that are fruits? clothing items? Vehicles?

Showing our children how words can be used in different ways provides tremendous opportunity for increased comprehension and expression of language.



Tim Stavropulos with Nick Revels and Jonathan Watts (seated) at the Christmas Down Syndrome Center fundraiser.

Liza Cassels is nine years old and lives in the small town of Arcadia, Florida. Her favorite activity is riding her horse, Blaze. She takes riding lessons twice a week and participates in the barrel race and flag event at the local Arcadia Saddle Club once a month. Other favorite activities include reading, practicing cursive handwriting and, of course, watching videos and dancing to CDs. She loves to drive her golf cart and



play police. She also loves to play outdoors with her two dogs, Jack and Ashes. She was recently awarded Student of the Month at West Elementary School where she is fully included. Liza's best friend is Ashley. They have been friends since nursery school. Liza was very excited about being a flower girl in her sister's wedding on March 29. Liza wants to be a veterinarian, a "kid's doctor," a dentist and work at the livestock market when she grows up.

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