



Importance of Families Taking Risks

Transcript

Lauchie MacKinnon (teacher): Honestly, when push comes to shove, it's you guys, it was your family (that helped). Jonathan was lucky to have friends, he was lucky to have some really good teachers and people that cared about him and two wonderful TAs, three of them actually, that would do anything for him and were willing to play a secondary role.... But I just don't hear very many people who do what you do. I mean, you can take advantage of Big Brothers, Big Sisters, or a respite program, but they really are artificial--and it really comes back to me when I'm reading that literature about the Head Start programs and some of the good things. Those programs aren't successful unless you create literacy for the whole family and the same thing, if the whole family isn't thinking about how my son is going to advance socially, then how is that going to happen?

I can't stress enough the risk-taking, because that's what I don't see. And it's not, "Here you are standing at the end of the dock and I'll push you in!" It's not that kind of risk-taking; it's a special kind of intuitive knowledge of your child and watching them and saying okay. I think you (parents) had the advantage that Jonathan wasn't your only child.

Josie MacEachern (parent): Yes, that was an advantage. I had one teenager on the go by the time Ian and Jonathan became teenagers, so I was after experiencing that. And I realized that, yeh, I had to take risks and I have to let him go, and I have to let him try things. And that although I wanted to protect him and I didn't want people to be mean to him or that kind of thing--I wanted to go with him every place he went-- but I realized that I can't chaperone every trip. I had to work, you know. I have a job. I have to go to my job every day and I'd like to chaperone, I'd like to go on every bus trip-- every time they went to Louisbourg—and I wanted to protect him. But I realized that I had to step back and allow other people to do that, and thankfully we had some excellent teachers, some really good TAs that were, as you say, the historians of work that was done from year to year ("custodians" and passers-on of Jonathan's learning and progress).

But yeah, John and I knew that we had to get with the program and read and educate ourselves as much as we could. We went to the IWK. We searched out resources for

parents and talked to other people, and we were open to listening to what the educators would tell us as well. So, I think probably that helped us a lot, and I think it helped Jonathan in the long run.

(With thanks to L'Arche Cape Breton for videotaping.)



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