



Our Journey through School with Megan

Cathy Beard, TxP2P Parent

When our daughter Megan, now twenty, entered Kindergarten 14 years ago I had no idea what her school career would be like. I can still remember so clearly that first kind teacher finally telling me that I could leave, that Megan would be fine and assured me they would call if anything came up. I guess it really wasn't normal for a parent to be in the classroom for several hours each day! We've had our ups and downs with the school district but over all Megan has received the education and care she deserves. We have met countless devoted teachers, aides, and therapists whom are some of the best people and the kind of people that I respect the most, the ones who choose to work with our children. However, I also recall a contentious conversation with a regular ed art teacher who told me she didn't "sign up to be a special ed teacher," and to which I replied, "Well, Megan didn't sign up to be a special ed kid."

In primary, intermediate, and middle school, during the first week of school, the counselor or I would go into the classrooms and talk to the children about Megan and her disability - to give them an idea of what life is like for her and to show them ways to help and interact with her. I would tell the kids to sit on their hands, not use words, and tell me they were hungry or that their head itched. It was amusing to watch them moan, squirm, and look puzzled and frustrated. They got the point!

In fifth grade a fellow student wrote a paper for the PTA's "Reflections" competition. His mother called to get our permission to write it about Megan. The title was "A Different Kind of Hero." He won the competition and his endearing essay is something I will treasure forever. This past year when the school district talked about consolidating the primary schools Life Skills classes onto one campus I proudly stood up and read his paper at the school board meeting. My point being, if Megan and her friend had never met due to the fact that she wasn't educated in her home school, then it would have been a loss on both sides.

Her years in high school consisted of art, choir and lunch with the regular ed kids, and several periods in the Life Skills class where it was, and still is the "hub" of many activities for all students.

Megan graduated this spring and "walked the stage" escorted by a wonderful student who has been her friend for many years. As she started making her slow methodical journey from one side to the other, all three hundred seniors started clapping and standing until they were all up and they continued standing and clapping until she was across the stage. Needless to say, it was quite moving and had our whole row in tears.

Texas Parent to Parent

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Megan is now in the 18 plus program. She spends a couple of hours at school each day, but mostly is out in the community volunteering and exploring places. She visits the local senior citizen center and the assisted living home where she and her aide sing and entertain the residents. The daycare, local library, grocery store, and thrift shops all are getting to know Megan. We think, plan, and talk a little bit each day about what her future will be like from here on. We are exploring the idea of starting an activity center for young adults like her here in our hometown, and at this point our plan is for Megan to live with us for as long as possible. Megan's school journey may be almost over but we look forward to the future and the new possibilities it will bring for all of us. Megan was diagnosed with Rett Syndrome at 8 years of age.

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