

Parent Interview:

To the Gladys Prior Selection Committee for Teacher Excellence:

This is a transcript of an interview held at an Elementary School between a principal and parent.

Principal: Would you tell me a little bit about the experiences you and your children had at American Elementary School* with Mrs. Jane Q Sample*?

Parent: I have three autistic kids, Eric, Emanuel and Ethan who were all former students at National Elementary School*. They all went through the school system in the autistic program. I had an opportunity to meet and get to know Mrs. Jane Q Sample, an outstanding teacher. She went over and beyond to make, first of all, my wife and I welcome especially with 3 autistic children. It was hard enough raising the children, but then to deal with the frailties and lack of respect from other people who don't understand autism was even harder. Mrs. Sample really, really helped us understand that we weren't alone. I didn't feel like I was on an island by myself when it came to things that I needed to do for the children. This was especially true in the moments in the primary early years as they were learning to adjust and to work on their behavior. In fact Mrs. Sample was excellent, she was patient, she was calm even dealing with our child who was my most severe autistic child who was really, at the time, hard to deal with. He was noted as a runner because he would run out of the class—that was his thing, his way of acting out. She was very kind and patient with him, and if there was a mishap she would call and say, just letting you know. Whatever happened she would always be concerned—just an outstanding teacher. I think in my experience of going through the system she was probably the most respectable, most personable, most humble and kind teacher that I ever had the opportunity to know. I really appreciate her going over and beyond with our child, not shunning him because of his behavior or his autism but still loving him just like his mom and dad. I just really appreciate everything that Mrs. Sample has done in the past for my children.

Principal: Now your kids have now moved on from elementary school and are dealing with life in middle school. How are they doing now?

Parent: Actually they're in high school! Two children are being considered for graduation this year; as you know autistic children go to school until they are 21. They start working on what they call life skills. They are doing excellent. One child is doing much better than he did in the early years thanks to the groundwork that Mrs. Sample laid in the beginning. I really think with her patience and her caring, and showing him how to deal with his behavior really helped our son get the fundamental skills that he needed to get to where he is today. For instance, he used to do a lot of stimming.

Principal: What do you mean by stimming?

Parent: Stimming is when the child does not know how to handle his emotions. They use a self stimulation action, usually repetitive, like rocking, blinking, or running in circles to calm their emotions. In order to calm himself down, our son would take his hand and use pressure points trying to ground himself, trying to get alright. The problem was he would use these pressure points on other people. He would push his hand into someone's jaw or the back of someone's head. As the children get bigger stimming hurts. Mrs. Sample was the first one that was instrumental in teaching him positive stimming and how to stim himself and not stim others. She was instrumental in helping me show my son normality.

Principal: Now you say that 2 of your sons will graduate this year, and of course they have all been in the public school system sector for many years. Do you think they recall or remember Mrs. Sample?

Parent: Yes! Like the back of my hand. Every time they see her they remember her because of the kindness. Here's the thing, autistic children remember 2 things, they remember those who love them and those who do them wrong. They shun from them, they don't want to speak to them and they don't want anything to do with them when they have a bad memory, just like normal kids. My child always hugs her, loves on her, he's just a big baby. Being my youngest child he is the most lovable, and the biggest of my 3 sons.

Respectfully submitted,

Principal
American Elementary School

Parent
Parent of three autistic children

I just want to say, if anyone needs further information about me or my three sons, please give me a call.

**Names have been changed in an effort to provide privacy for those mentioned in this transcript*