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Picklegate

By: Bebe Bode

It seems like my son, Seth, was in elementary school such a short time ago. He is now almost 21 years old and a college man.

While in elementary school, Seth was fully included in a general education setting with a Para-educator. I remember when the school called and said, "Seth had a meltdown in his social studies class and had to be removed." This kind of behavior was not typical of Seth. Of course I was very concerned as to what triggered the behavior.

Well, it was "**National Pickle Day**," of all things! Seth has a limited selection of foods he eats and smells that he can tolerate due to sensory issues. Pickles were one of those smells he couldn't tolerate. Almost all the students in class were eating pickles, some of his classmates began offering him a pickle... they didn't know it would cause a reaction and were trying to include him in the activity, unfortunately, all hell broke loose.

His Para called and told me about what occurred and that she had to remove him from the class to calm him down. To my surprise the whole incident quickly turned into, "Picklegate!" His



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teacher asked a myriad of questions regarding what happened and it seemed like the entire school knew my son had a meltdown.

I always knew my son would stand out in some way because of his Autism. I felt horrible that I didn't even think to share this kind of important information with his teachers and Para to prevent such occurrences. I began to think about all the other things that his teachers and Para didn't know about him and how I could relay this information to them in a way that would benefit everyone.

I brought up the "Picklegate" incident at the next monthly staff meeting at Families Helping Families of Jefferson. Staff discussed the purpose of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is an important legal document that spells out your child's learning needs, the services the school will provide and how progress will be measured. We agreed that the IEP includes educational support only and doesn't give teachers important personal information about students that can be equally helpful in supporting students to be successful.

We put our heads together and thought of things that are not in the IEP, important in a student/teacher relationship, and supports the effectiveness of its outcomes. We also received input from parents in the community. This is when "Getting to Know Me" was born!

"Getting to Know Me" was in questionnaire format offering positive personal insight into your child's disability, their likes and dislikes, motivators and triggers. The tool was designed as if your child is sharing the information about themselves with their teacher. We felt it important to design the tool this way to personalize the relationship between student and teacher.

I used the questionnaire to format a newsletter with information I felt important for Seth's teachers to know about him. I added pictures of him, in the community, at home and doing different activities, so his teachers could see him in an environment other than just school. I shared the newsletter with his teachers and Para and I called it, "The Fun Times - a newsletter all about me!" They loved it!



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“Getting to Know Me” became very popular in the community. When the Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center saw the document on our website, they asked if they could collaborate with us to enhance the look. They took the information from the questionnaire and newsletter and designed the “All About Me!” document.

[Families Helping Families of Jefferson](#) is excited to share our **new**, refreshed, colorful, and fun, “**All About Me!**” tool for families and the **all new**, “**My Profile**”.

The new “**All About Me!**” is for students between **Pre-K - 5th grade**. The all new “**My Profile**” has the same purpose as “All About Me!” with a more mature style, and is for **pre-teens and young adults**. Parents can use “My Profile” to assist their child in the transition from elementary to middle and/or middle to high. “My Profile” empowers students, parents and teachers to prepare earlier for the transition from school to the adult world.

We hope you find “All About Me!” and “My Profile” easy to use tools to assist you in preparing your child and his/her teacher in getting to know each other. From one parent to another, it made a huge difference in my son’s life!

Both documents are available in Microsoft Publisher and Adobe “Acrobat” XI Pro. In order to edit the document in Adobe “Acrobat” XI Pro, you must have the program. If you wish to use Microsoft Publisher, please contact us and we will e-mail you a copy.

There is an easy to use Getting started with Adobe “Acrobat” XI Pro guide to assist you in entering text and inserting pictures. If you need assistance navigating either document, please don’t hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to help.

To download the documents please visit:

<http://fhfjefferson.org/resources/online-resources/education/school-age>



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