



Samuel is 7 years old and has autism. Since preschool he was in the public schools in our district but in Kindergarten, we realized his challenges and behaviors associated with his autism were growing more severe and he was not doing well in the classroom and not progressing. Sam has severe OCD in addition to autism and our district was unable to place him in a classroom that could handle his challenges. After meeting with our district and staff we decided to place him in a non-public school, Speech and Language Development Center. It was recommended to us because of their reputation for being progressive in the way they allowed each child to learn and grow in the least restrictive environment.

We have found this move has benefited Sam tremendously. He is doing grade level work but since his language is impaired, they offer Sam a variety of other methods to help him succeed. He has a visual schedule that helps him organize his day and this helps him to know what is coming next and what to expect. White boards are used to help him communicate. Sam has many challenging behaviors... for one he is a runner and will just bolt away at any given moment. This causes some severe safety hazards for him but they have been able to help him organize his day and if he needs to “run” he can ask and run outside the classroom to the sandbox to help him meet some of those sensory needs.

I have found that every person at the school has a deep desire to be there. They love the school, believe in what they do and show tremendous commitment to the success of the students. Harriet Hasson is the Vice Principal and she has been a tremendous source of advice and encouragement to me. Sam’s aide, Katrina, just loves Sammy and has such a close rapport with him ... Sam is thriving since she has begun working with Sam. I could go on and on because there are so many that put their heart and soul into the school and the children. The school is well known and valued in the community of Buena Park.

I think the things that Sam likes the best about SLDC is the people. He loves his teacher Julie and aide Katrina. When he does something good at home he says “Katrina will be proud”. He loves to visit the school nurse on his way to lunch. It is routine. Then he must stop in and see Ms. Nancy and play with her toys on her desk. He has a special love for his reading teacher and loves to go to “reading with Ms. Carol”. He enjoys riding the bus and I believe he looks forward to seeing everyone when he gets there. The staff care about Sam, they care about his education, and they care about our family... Sam is thriving, learning, growing and we are thrilled with his progress since coming to SLDC.

-Joy Astle, Mother

