



Field Trips Enhance Learning: Oh, So Many Places To Go!

Whether it is a trip around the corner or across the state, you need to be organized when you travel with children. The challenges multiply when the children are medically and developmentally complex.

Amanda Coe, Head of School at Cedarcrest Center For Children With Disabilities in New Hampshire, is passionate about weekly trips for her students.

Recent excursions have included visits to Yankee Lanes, Keene YMCA, Distant Hill, Amazing Grace Sanctuary, and the City of Keene.

“Field trips teach students how to be active members of the community and provide opportunities to practice important skills,” she said. “Research shows that interacting with peers is advantageous across curriculum areas and grade bands. Interactions build social skills and metacognitive awareness, too.”

So, what does it take to make it happen? Green Room teacher Mary Hatch shared her process.

First, a destination is chosen. Sometimes the trip connects to the curriculum, for example a trip to the beach works with a unit on the ocean. If the focus is on life skills the students might work on them by visiting a grocery store.

“Other times we decide as a group on something that sparks interest, engages the community or enables students to connect with nature,” explained Mary.

Next, external research is done to determine logistics. Is the site wheelchair accessible? Is

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A trip to the local Children's Museum sparks joy.



Did someone say lunch? Is it in your pocket?



Something is fishy in the tank at Mystic Aquarium.

H.A.L.O.'s Gifts Can Be Life Changing For Our 'Little Ones'

Dear Friends,

The Help A Little One Foundation is all about quality of life for young people challenged by neurological impairment and complex medical conditions.

When meningitis debilitated our daughter Sarah 31 years ago, our family despaired because she would not experience the fulfilling life we had imagined for her. After a mourning period we finally accepted her new reality and began to focus on how we could help Sarah make the most of her new world.

Fortunately, our family has resources to provide conveniences and devices to enrich her existence and make her physically comfortable. Not every one is so lucky.

One of our most popular programs helps families purchase costly adaptive equipment that is life enhancing but not medically necessary, therefore not insurance reimbursable. (Please visit HALO.ORG to learn about all our programs.)

At first glance the adaptive bath chair we funded for Anthony (top photo) may not appear to be life changing, but its support system reduces slippage in the tub, eases straining for his caregiver and allows him to safely enjoy water play, a perennial childhood pleasure.

H.A.L.O. has funded countless adaptive tricycles like Natasha's (bottom photo.) The therapeutic benefits of bike riding are both physical and social-emotional. Riding increases range of motion and motor coordination and also fosters a sense of independence and inclusion with the child's peer group. Families are effusive in their appreciation because the cost of a tricycle ranges from \$500 to nearly \$2000 depending on the extent of adaptation needed.

Thankfully the community of children with severe impairment is relatively small. We are committed to the well being of our "Little Ones" and the people who make their days comfortable and fulfilling.

As always, we are grateful for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,



Anthony



Natasha

A Successful Field Trip Requires Internal And External Planning

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there adequate parking for loading and unloading the vans? Does the destination have a private place for changes? Where can staff access electricity for vents and suction machines?

Finally, teachers consult multiple

departments within Cedarcrest Center to purchase tickets, reserve vehicles, and arrange for an accompanying nurse and 1-to-1 staffing. They also alert Therapy, kitchen, and housekeeping departments to coordinate schedules.

"A lot goes into organizing these experiences but the return on the

investment is huge!" said Amanda, Head of School. "The Monadnock Region has been incredibly accommodating to ensure our kids have everything they need to have the best possible experience."

For more information please visit www.cedarcrest4kids.org.



Vibol's parents and all of his brothers and sisters look forward to the NEPC fall festival every year.

A Community Is More Than A Place Where You Live

Community is more than an address. It's a connection, a sense of belonging, a support system.

Children with complex medical and learning needs are a small percentage of the greater community, but they derive the same benefits when they are connected to the wider world.

New England Pediatric Care in Massachusetts nurtures these children and young adults. Its mission is to support the residents, their families and the staff who contribute to the health and

wellbeing of the NEPC community.

The annual Fall Festival is one of many NEPC opportunities to bring everyone together. It is a carefree event with support from the caregivers and also an occasion to strengthen community ties.

"Our staff provides more than physical care for our residents, we also become invested in them as people. Because we are present every day, we are their champions, too," says Megan Harris, Director of Therapeutic Recreation. "As part of their care team it is meaningful to be able to share in their joy."

The NEPC team, with support from community partners, created a

universal (accessible) playland for all ages to experience. This included music, a petting zoo, pumpkin painting, adaptive bowling, lawn games, delicious food, and desserts. A professional photographer volunteered to capture the special moments.

"The Fall festival is by far one of our most treasured events at New England Pediatric Care. It creates memories that will last a lifetime," said Amy Gagnon; Director for Student and Young Adult Services .

Learn more about New England Pediatric Care at www.nepc.org.

Special Ed Is Learning The Way That Is Best For YOU

A special education school is like a standard school, but also different.

Seven Hills Academy in Groton MA teaches the content outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks but adapts lessons to address the unique abilities of students with profound developmental delays and complex medical needs.

"Our students have cognitive, intellectual and physical challenges. They are non-verbal and non-ambulatory," said Monica Kleeman, Director of Education and Activities.

In classroom #3 this year, teacher Debbie Barry and a certified teaching assistant are working with seven boys distributed across grades 4 through 8 by chronological age.

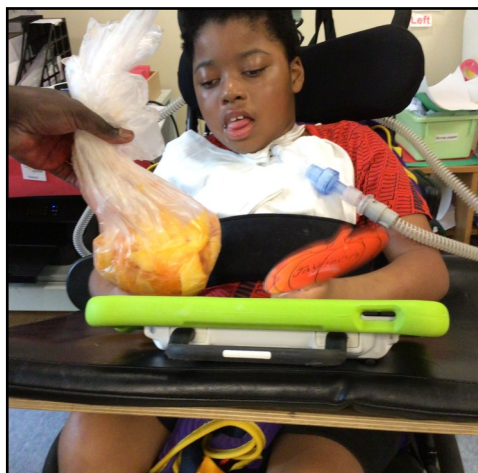
"I try to run the classroom like a general ed classroom but scaled to the students' individual abilities and grade levels," Debbie said. "We teach everyone literacy, language arts and math using theme based multi-sensory activities. All participate in ELA and Math MCAS-Alts (alternative state testing). Students in grades 5 and 8 also have science."

Each day a different student delivers the greeting at the morning meeting.

Students "speak" by selecting a picture or symbol which is announced via their voice output device (VOD). The technology enables a student from a Spanish speaking household to 'speak' in Spanish.

Not every student is equally aware of his environment. One student can use his hand and finger; another utilizes eye gaze technology for communication and learning, Debbie said.

While a math lesson might consist of



In a recent project at Seven Hills Academy students palpated a pumpkin inside and out, weighed the pulp, and counted seeds. The activity addressed individualized education goals.

counting the shakes of bells with one student, a boy with more advanced abilities may be asked to tackle calculations differently. Stories, vocabulary and activities are similarly geared to the different cognition levels.

Recently Debbie's class focused on a seasonal pumpkin activity for a schoolwide competition. The class read a story about pumpkins and then used a VOD to make choices to decorate a paper pumpkin which is now displayed on the classroom door. A real pumpkin was carved and decorated with a Spiderman theme.

The project provided hands-on sensory stimulation, socialization and outdoor time to explore nature in a new season.

"Our students have limitations, but we focus on their abilities instead. We provide a supportive and accepting environment to help them achieve their potential," said Monica, the education director.

For information visit: www.sevenhills.org/programs/long-term-care-home-at-seven-hills-pediatric-center.

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A Foundation for Children with Neurological Impairment

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