

I want to thank you for letting me speak here today.

I am Jane Stadnik, the mom of a great 11 year old kid Jacob, Jacob is imaginative, witty and an eager learner, beyond that he also has ASD other wise known as Autism Spectrum Disorder. Jacob was diagnosed at three and we have been in the special education system since he was 4 years old. He is as of this year three academic years behind his his peers. His IQ is the same as his peers. Over the past couple years we've had budget adjustments in our districts and I have found myself looking outside the public education system, charters, cybers and even home school I personally think most special needs parents spend a good deal of time home school anyway. But then I remember how hard the parents who came before me have fought for the right to have our children educated in an inclusive public school setting. SO as my husband puts it I fight the good fight. And I plunge ahead.

So let me start by listing some of the services Jacob has received and is receiving at this time.

Services

Speech, Occupational therapy, Autism support, Learning Support, emotional support. Personal Care Assistant (billed through Medicaid) Social worker, also an autism consultant from Watson. There may be a few others that I have missed, but this is the bulk of it.

First and foremost I want to let you know and I am sure I am not alone in that parents don't expect the schools to do it all. Most of these services we as parents have also contracted outside of school, some even out of pocket.

Our school is lucky to have a dedicated speech teacher on staff, and it has helped tremendously with the continuity of Jacobs education. She works with his teachers attends his IEP meetings and makes sure that his speech goals also reflect his educational goals.

Occupational Therapy, hand writing eye hand coordination board to paper copying. Also working on sensory needs, he gets a little anxious in a noisy environment and has to work on coping skills to use within the classroom. Our school district contracts out for this, they change sometimes mid year, and often I get a report at the end of the nine weeks and rarely do we see them for IEP meetings.

All of the support classes (autism support, learning support and emotional support) are manned by a teacher and teaching

Assistant, not necessarily some one trained in special education. The teachers themselves maybe be special education trained but not necessarily. I've actually had a young teacher tell me that this is how to get your foot in the door, teaching a support class until a regular ed class opens up (I guess in hindsight I should be happy something opened up). Also the aides are pulled into other classrooms so they are not always available in class.

In the regular education classes Jacob shares an aide with two other boys (they have been together since 1st grade) all with different ways of learning. This aide does not stay the same from year to year and is not usually trained in special education. One year the aide asked me during open house whether or not that Jacob could learn, I was speechless, but in my heart sank an inside I was screaming we have to be on the same page, of course he can learn.

Our social worker covers all three elementary schools, so I'm not quite sure what really gets accomplished. But we do have one!

So You might have noticed we utilize a lot of services. On the schools website there are even more services listed....But what isn't said is that the budgets are stretched so thin, what's that saying? A mile wide and a inch deep. Those are the services our kids are getting.

So we as parents negotiate for these services, that's what an IEP meeting really is. A negotiation, as parents

we write down the top ten things that will benefit our child, then negotiate to get at least half...and hope that three actually get put into play. We are careful not to bring up budgets, we pretend that it doesn't play a part in what services our kids receive. But in the end we all know it does,

**These services need funded they an integral part of our child's' appropriate education, truly funded, .not here is a couple of bucks make the most of it. In the long run if we educate our children , they become productive members of society, even tax paying members of society.
Thanks again for this opportunity.**