What's the Best School for My Child?
Kelly Randall was surprised when her son Nathan’s first grade teacher suggested he might be experiencing seizures. Kelly was still learning about autism, and she had assumed the times Nathan wouldn’t respond to her were due to his autism.

Nathan’s epilepsy diagnosis began a new and stressful phase of her family’s journey. “Some of the medications Nathan was prescribed really changed his normally sweet personality. I remember calling the doctor with my concerns and hearing him say ‘Well, that’s all I’ve got.’ I was stunned. I felt utterly alone. That’s when I reached out to other organizations like the Epilepsy Foundation and Raising Special Kids.”

Kelly recently joined the Raising Special Kids staff and assists families in finding resources, mentoring, and support to help them navigate through their challenges. She commented, “I just don’t want anyone to feel as alone as I did. I really found my calling in helping families whose journey includes learning about epilepsy and trying to find appropriate interventions.”
Parents often ask about finding the best school for their child, and the question is not easily answered. What is considered appropriate by one parent may be entirely different for another. Whatever criteria parents consider in seeking the ‘best’ school, they often need useful information to evaluate how well a school can support the academic achievement of students with disabilities.

The Arizona Department of Education examined three years of statewide testing data to find the schools where students with disabilities improved academically year after year. Through on-site visits with districts and charter schools, data collection and evaluation methods were used to examine what schools were doing to consistently improve outcomes for students. The goal was to identify key strategies to share with other schools and parents to improve outcomes for more students. It turns out that every high-performing school had six traits in common.

1. **High Expectations**
   Too often, students’ educational opportunities are limited by low expectations. When there are strong connections between general education and special education teachers, and a student-first mentality, schools develop high expectations for all students.

2. **Highly Effective Teaching Strategies**
   Instruction was intentional and purposeful, with lesson plans and activities written in advance and based on data that could continually advance students to mastery of concepts and skills taught. Students were not just “receiving” an education; they were actively pursuing and participating in it.

3. **Data Driven Decision-Making**
   As Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, explains, “It [data] tells us where we are, where we need to go, and who is most at risk… [Teachers] want to know exactly what they need to do to teach and how to teach it.”

4. **Students Are Provided with Reteach and Enrichment Activities**
   Based on achievement, teachers assign students to either reteach or enrichment sessions. The goal is to give students the opportunity to master essential skills and knowledge before they move on to the next level.

5. **Students with Disabilities Receive Core Instruction in the General Education Classroom**
   The largest, longitudinal study of education outcomes of 11,000 students with disabilities, the National Longitudinal Transition Study, showed that more time spent in a general education classroom was positively correlated with higher scores on standardized tests of reading and math, fewer absences from school, and fewer referrals for disruptive behavior. These results were independent of students’ disability, severity of disability, gender, or socio-economic status.

6. **Effective Leadership**
   The schools’ leaders (superintendents, principals, special education directors, and lead teachers) set expectations for implementing effective strategies. Most principals were visiting classrooms regularly and participating in the meetings for all students, including those with disabilities. Many leaders set the standard for inclusion with the...
message, “these are all our students.”

To find the ‘best’ school where your child continually achieves academic success, ask the principal or administration of the school about how they can demonstrate effectiveness on these six traits. While many variables influence a child’s success in any given environment, you can begin with your own data-driven decision making for selecting the ‘best’ school to meet your high expectations.

Angela Denning, Deputy Associate Superintendent, Arizona Department of Education, is the state’s director of Exceptional Student Services. She described recent trends in measuring success for students with disabilities as shifting from compliance (getting evaluations completed within 60 days) to results (competitive employment and/or continuing education after high school).

Ms. Denning stated, “The results-driven accountability initiative provides an opportunity to increase support for improving student outcomes. We’ll be able to use information from this study to help strengthen the efforts of schools to implement these six effective practices.”

In addition to these six traits, there is another characteristic almost every good school exhibited: parental involvement. Parental involvement that makes the most impact on student achievement is not volunteer work at school, but the time spent supporting a child’s academic and educational goals through reading at home, and developing critical thinking skills. During your school-search conversations, you’ll have an opportunity to show your commitment to high expectations and student achievement through parental involvement.

MORE ABOUT THE SIX TRAITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

1. High Expectations
   *Raising Student Achievement for Students with Disabilities: Characteristics of Successful Districts*
   
   *Higher Expectations to Better Outcomes for Children with Disabilities*

2. Highly Effective Teaching Strategies
   *Highly Effective Teaching – HET*
   [https://resources4teachers.wordpress.com/het-susan-kovalik/](https://resources4teachers.wordpress.com/het-susan-kovalik/)

3. Data Driven Decision Making
   *Using Data to Influence Classroom Decisions*
   
   *The Context of Data-Driven Decision Making*

4. Reteach and Enrichment Activities
   *5 Strategies to Ensure Student Learning*

5. Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the General Education Classroom
   *Rationale for and Research on Inclusive Education*
   [http://on.nyc.gov/1yPSTz1](http://on.nyc.gov/1yPSTz1)
   
   *School Inclusion Resources from CIPR*
   [http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/inclusion/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/inclusion/)

6. Effective Leadership
   *Raising Student Achievement for Students with Disabilities: Characteristics of Successful Districts*
SPECIAL DAY FOR SPECIAL KIDS

2,500 PARENTS AND CHILDREN HAD FUN AT SPECIAL DAY FOR SPECIAL KIDS!

MARCH 21, 2015

Photos by Jeff Lang - All in the Family Photography
Would you like to share your perspective on raising a child with a disability? Your wisdom and experience could help other families receive the care they need, and assist state programs in designing and developing appropriate services.

Here is what is required:

- A resident of Arizona
- Parent or guardian of a child with special health care needs between the ages of birth to 21
- Young adult between the ages of 18-26 with special health care needs and not under guardianship
- Ready to share your experience to help other families in your community
- Complete an application and a series of required leadership development trainings

Parents and youth who complete the training series receive compensation, and also receive compensation for participation in project activities.

What are special health care needs?

Any condition that requires more doctor visits or health care services than most children or youth. Examples are: learning disability, asthma, diabetes, autism, behavioral health, sensory disability, life-threatening allergies, anxiety disorder, cancer, physical disability, seizure disorder, or almost any other chronic condition.

Questions?

Call Raising Special Kids at 602.242.4366 or e-mail info@raisingspecialkids.org for an application.

Leadership opportunities and compensation are provided through a contract with the Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Children with Special Health Care Needs.

Creating Community Connections

Heysi Notario was really excited to participate in last fall’s Virginia G. Piper Sports and Fitness Center (SpoFit) IronKids event sponsored by United Healthcare. He found out about the event from Raising Special Kids Family Support Specialist, Dolores Rios Herrera who reached out to his family with a personal invitation. Heysi showed up to the event fully-prepared to have fun and to do his best.

Also attending the event was Judie Walker, Ombudsman/Member Advocate for United Healthcare Community Plan. Judie recalls seeing Heysi arrive, “I noticed how bulky his wheelchair was and asked him if that was the chair he used all the time and he said, ‘yes’.” As her conversation with Heysi continued, Judie found out that he is very interested in many types of physical activities and a spark of an idea took hold with her.

Judie reached out to some of her connections and within a short time, was able to arrange to have a lighter chair donated to Heysi. Now, it’s much easier for him to participate in the activities he enjoys and he’s even begun volunteering at the SpoFit.

Judie and Heysi continue to keep in contact and Judie expressed her thanks, “Without Dolores’s efforts, we would never have met him. Thank you for making the connection to Heysi and his family.”
Partnering with Your Child’s Provider
Family Voices - National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships

As your child’s most consistent caregiver, you know your child/youth with special health care needs in ways that no one else does. The following tips will help you prepare for an office visit, talk with your child’s provider, and learn more after the visit.

- Trust your instincts
- Seek all the information that you can
- Search for providers that meet your needs
- Ask for special consideration if needed
- Look for ways that other family members can participate
- Communicate openly with your child’s providers
- Help your child build a relationship with his/her providers
- Ask every question that is on your mind
- Don’t be intimidated
- Ask for additional reading material
- Ask to tape a conversation
- A diagnosis may take time
- Ask for a written care plan
- Ask for help in financing your child’s care
- Learn from other parents
- Maintain a file of important information
- Seek second opinions if needed
- Change providers if needed
- Don’t give up

Taken from Partnering with Your Child’s Provider, Family Voices 1-16-2015 http://www.fv-nccpp.org/files/4414/2149/5755/ParentsPartnering_01-16-2015r.pdf

raisingspecialkids.org
A menudo los padres preguntan acerca de las mejores escuelas para sus hijos, y la pregunta no es tan fácil de responder. Lo que es considerado apropiado por un padre podría ser completamente diferente para otro. Sea cual fuere el criterio que los padres consideren para localizar la "mejor" escuela, frecuentemente necesitan información para determinar qué tan bien puede una escuela apoyar los logros académicos de estudiantes con discapacidades.

El departamento de educación de Arizona examinó los resultados de datos de pruebas de tres años a través del estado, para localizar las escuelas en las que los estudiantes con discapacidades mejoraron académicamente año tras año. Por medio de visitas a los distritos y a las escuelas charter o escuelas públicas experimentales, se recopilaron datos y métodos de evaluación utilizados para examinar qué estaban haciendo consistently las escuelas para mejorar los resultados obtenidos de los estudiantes. La meta era identificar las estrategias claves para compartirlas con otras escuelas y con otros padres para mejorar los resultados obtenidos por más estudiantes. Una vez completado el análisis, resultó que cada una de las escuelas altamente destacadas tenía seis características en común.

1. **Altas expectativas**

   Habían fuertes sistemas de apoyo entre los maestros de educación general y de educación especial, y una mentalidad de "primero el estudiante", era evidente en las escuelas con altas expectativas para sus estudiantes.

2. **Estrategias de enseñanza altamente efectivas**

   Con enseñanza intencional y con propósito, con lecciones planificadas y actividades escritas por adelantado, basado en datos que podría continuamente hacer que los estudiantes avanzaran en su manejo de conceptos y destrezas enseñadas. Los estudiantes no estaban solo "siendo educados", estaban activamente adquiriendo y participando en su educación.

3. **Toma de decisiones basado en datos**

   Como lo explicó Arne Duncan, la secretaria de educación de los Estados Unidos (US Secretary of Education), “los datos nos indican dónde está ubicado el estudiante, hacia dónde debemos dirigirnos, y quién tiene más riesgo... [Los maestros] quieren saber exactamente lo que necesitan hacer para enseñar y cómo enseñar.”

4. **A los estudiantes se les proveen actividades de re-enseñanza y de enriquecimiento.**

   Basado en el análisis de datos, los maestros asignan estudiantes a sesiones de re-enseñanza o de enriquecimiento. La meta es de darles a los estudiantes la oportunidad de manejar destrezas y conocimientos esenciales antes de pasar al próximo nivel.

5. **Los estudiantes con discapacidades reciben instrucción básica en el salón de clases de educación general.**

6. **Liderazgo efectivo**

   Los líderes de las escuelas (superintendentes, directores, directores de educación especial y maestros líderes) gradúan el tono y las expectativas para la implementación de estrategias efectivas. Muchos de los directores visitaban los salones de clases frecuentemente y participaban en las juntas de datos de todos los estudiantes, incluyendo los estudiantes con discapacidades. Muchos de los líderes han estado en el distrito o en la escuela por años y, de acuerdo con el informe del departamento de educación de Arizona (ADE) han fijado el estándar de inclusión con el mensaje "estos son todos nuestros estudiantes."

Para encontrar la mejor escuela donde su hijo pueda continuamente adquirir éxito académico, pregunte al director o a la administración de la escuela acerca de cómo pueden demostrar su efectividad en estas seis características. Aunque muchas variables pueden influir el éxito del niño en un ambiente determina-
do, usted podría comenzar con su toma de decisión basado en datos para seleccionar la 'mejor' escuela que llene sus altas expectativas.

Angela Denning, es la superintendente asociada oficial del departamento de educación de Arizona (Deputy Associate Superintendent, Arizona Department of Education), directora estatal de servicios para estudiantes excepcionales. Ella describió los cambios sobre las recientes tendencias de medida del éxito de los estudiantes con discapacidades, del cumplimiento (tener las evaluaciones completadas en un periodo de 60 días) a resultados (empleo competitivo y/o continuación educativa después de la escuela secundaria).

La Sra. Denning dijo que "la iniciativa de responsabilidad de resultados provee una oportunidad para aumentar el apoyo para mejorar los resultados obtenidos de los estudiantes. Vamos a poder utilizar la información de este estudio para fortalecer los esfuerzos de las escuelas a implementar estas seis prácticas efectivas."

Además de estas seis características, hay otra característica que casi todas las buenas escuelas tienen: la participación de los padres. La participación de los padres que produce más impacto en los logros de los estudiantes no es el trabajo de voluntario en la escuela, sino más bien el tiempo dedicado en apoyar las metas académicas y educacionales por medio de la lectura en el hogar, y del desarrollo de destrezas de razonamiento crítico. Durante sus conversaciones de búsqueda de escuela, tendrá la oportunidad de demostrar su compromiso con las altas expectativas y logros del estudiante por medio de su participación como padre.

**RECURSOS**

**Altas expectativas**


**Estrategias de enseñanza altamente efectivas**

https://resources4teachers.wordpress.com/het-susan-kovalik/

**Toma de decisiones basado en datos**


http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/48142_chap1.pdf

**Actividades de re-enseñanza y de enriquecimiento**

http://www.edutopia.org/stw-differentiated-instruction-budget-assessment-how-to

**Inclusión de estudiantes con discapacidades en el salón de clases de educación general**

Justificación de e Investigación sobre Educación Inclusiva http://on.nyc.gov/1yPSTz1

**Inclusión Escolar**

http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/inclusion/

**Encuesta sobre la participación de los padres**

Thank You for Referring Families
July - December 2014
To refer a family to Raising Special Kids, please visit our website and download a referral form.
Parent Leaders

Thank you!

UCP of Central AZ
Kandy Luty

Avondale
Teenaeh Curtin

Bellemont
Erin Polk

Bullhead City
Jessica Krueger

Chandler
Dawn Bailey
Marti Baio
Martha Burre
Kristina Hunt
Lisa Myers

El Mirage
Natalie Trujillo

Flagstaff
Kelly Reed

Gilbert
Carol Boyd
Todd Gilmore
Holland Hines
Tammy Leeper
Louise Murphy
Aimee Patton
Heather Prouty
Kim Updegraff

Glendale
Cathy Humphrey
Colleen McGregor
Marci Monaghan
Lorie Williams

Goodyear
Anne Dennis

Mesa
Dominique Colunga
Susan Melton
Danielle Pollett
Erika Villanueva
Molly Wright

Peoria
Sharon Blanton

Phoenix
Michelle Faudekar
Elizabetb Ketzler-Naughton
Maura Knoell
Heather Joy Magdelano
Rebecca Masterson
Maria del Carmen Nuñez
Manuela Rubio
Paulina Tiffany
Dana Wayne

Prescott Valley
Danielle Cummings

San Tan Valley
LaTasha Whitaker

Scottsdale
Sharón & Larry Landay
Chris Linn
Katie Petersen
Stacy Strombeck-Goodrich

Tempe
Megan Davis Dey

Tolleson
Kristie Amato

Tucson
Nancy Kupers

UPC Phoenix
Kally McGowan
Sarah Woelfel
Pinal Gila Community Child Services
Toni Limbrick
Pinal Hispanic Council
Gina Yost, BHHP, RC, FS
Primavera Online High School
Paul Black
Pure Chiropractic
Mohammed Awad
Quest Alliance
Annette Reyes
Refugee Focus
Jeanne Konkuytu
Joy Ruseruka
Rise Early Intervention
Cameron Kizziah
Joanna Resh
Rise Services
Rafaela Estrada Beltran
Roosevelt School District
Meagan Orban
Saguaro Foundation
Jose Vera
Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community
Judy Santeo
Cassandra Yazzie
Scottsdale Healthcare
Arlene Teasyatwho
Sharing Down Syndrome Arizona
Teresa Adair
Gina Johnson
Sonora Sky Pediatrics
Melissa Ochoa
Southwest Behavioral Health
Ruth Withe
Southwest Human Development
Priscilla Avila
Roxanna Chavez
Dr. Daniel Kessler
Arroyo Lidiana
Sharon Mayher
Southwest Network
Enedina Garcia
Southwest Pediatrics
Jessica Armentiz
St. Joseph’s Hospital
Nicole Curtis
Mary Elmore, LCSW
Statewide Independent Living Council
Larry Wagner
Stride Psychological Services
Mary Oakley, PSyD, CCASSP
Sunrise Therapies
Rosemarie Strout
Team Health Primary Care
Taylor Winters
Tempe Union High School District
Ron Denne
The Emily Center
Brianna Scott
Touchstone Behavioral Health
Christina Knuggle
Tribal Education
Rebekah Regnell
Tuba City Regional Health Care
Erin Martinez, PT, DPT
Tucson Unified School District
Debbie Isemann
Monica Brinkerhoff

YETC

Claudia Lopez
Larissa Richardson
Yuma Elementary School District
Barbara Castaneda
Kassandra Miller
Karen Yheulon

Individuals
Sara Bennett
Kim Cohill
Vanessa DiCarlo
Dr. Lauren Donnley
Joyce Fine
Samantha Flores
Sarah Jensen
Hope Kirsh
Steve Lee
Dr. Lee
Heather Joy Magdelano
Jeanette McCabe
Elizabeth McMorrnan, NP
Shannon Meyer
Dr. Beltra Patty
Anita Ratcher
Frank Rios
Holly Schramm
Dr. Michael Tanzy
Klint Webb

Thank you!
We rocked-around-the-clock in our Poodle Skirts & Penny Loafers

This year’s Party With A Purpose may be over, but you can still be a part of some amazing work by supporting families of children with disabilities. Go to http://www.raisingspecialkids.org/party/ to make a donation today!