

Easterseals Academy Prepared Joseph, who has Autism, to Shine

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Joseph started at Easterseals Academy in 2019. Prior to, he was enrolled at a traditional high school with a low incidence program. My son is a happy guy most of the time, but like everyone, he has days that are 'not so smiley.' At the other school, however, those days were becoming more frequent.

I had heard of Easterseals Academy and their wonderful reputation, so we spoke with the principal. Before our initial meeting, I was beyond worried that this would be more of the same, and that we would be told that our baby boy would be 'too much' for the school.

I could not have been more wrong.

They listened to our concerns, and we talked about what transitioning to the school would look like. I remember leaving that meeting and feeling—for the first time in a long time—*hopeful* about my son's

educational journey.

Before Joseph began, we connected with his teacher, one of the people who has had the most significant impact on my son. He put us at ease immediately. There was no hesitation or apprehension, just understanding. That was the beginning of a very collaborative and strong parent-teacher partnership.

My baby experiences challenges—like we all do from time to time—but his teachers, paraprofessionals, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and BCBA's have done all they can to make my son feel encouraged, supported, and uplifted.

Joseph absolutely loves school.

This was not always a given. I have seen improvements with each new skill that he learns and task that he masters. I feel my son's pride in his accomplishments.

As his time at the school draws to a close and we look forward to his future elsewhere, my family will take all that Easterseals Academy has given us and cherish every moment. I know Joseph is prepared for life outside of their walls and will shine wherever he goes next.

I will never be able to fully express the depth of my gratitude, but I am so happy that the school is here to provide that same experience for other students.