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UNST421

Paper 2

During my lifetime, I have walked out to walk on many times. During this class, for my class service, was one of those times. As I mention in my first paper, my son experienced several difficulties with the local school district in my hometown. This resulted in me pulling him from the school district and enrolling him in a public school from home. As a single parent & full-time (plus) student, this was not an ideal solution for me but the best solution for him. As he comes first for me, I have jumped into this new experience with both feet.

Levi and I have been involved with this program for almost a month now. While some things are still getting worked out, it has been going great (well there have been a few bumps, but I expected a few). The first week consisted of testing and learning to navigate the system. As it was after the middle of the school year when Levi started, he just tested for math and language arts/literacy. Since it was not one of the typically milestones he still had to start the 1st grade curriculum at the beginning the test individually through the courses to get to present level. Each course has typically at least 18 units that consist of anywhere from 5 to 10 lessons. I am not quite sure why he needed to do the long tests if they weren’t going to help place him where he is at academically. I think it is more fair to say that the curriculum is at your own pace then individualized.

One typical aspect of autism is a high IQ or specialized area the person excels at. My son has a few areas but the what he excels at the most is math, logic, patterns, and puzzles. He tested into the 5th grade math (way to make me worried about keeping up with him when he is high school age). He has tested out of the 1st grade math already. We started the 2nd grade math yesterday. As he enjoys math so much I use doing one as an incentive to do the subjects he might not enjoy so much (I believe bribery can be an effective tool that should be used when appropriate).

The literacy and language arts he tested above his grade level for the most part as well. We are currently working through the unit testing to get to the present level. One aspect I do not like about this part of the program is that language arts is divided into four subgroups (phonics/spelling, vocab, handwriting, and literature comprehension) that have to be passed to go onto the next grade level. He has a phonological disorder so phonics is a bit of struggle with him. Handwriting is also hard due to his autism and fine motor. These struggles make him grade level, or slightly below his grade level so it will slow down his learning in language arts. I would prefer that he could just proceed each subgroup as he completes them not be held up due to something such is handwriting, besides it is hard to read a majority of the populations handwriting anyway.

One of my goals in schooling from home was to make sure that he has fun learning again. Due to his previous school experiences, he begun to hate any form of learning. As a lot of his current school has been testing through the curriculum, which is not fun at any age, I have made sure to stop and do the lessons that I think he would really enjoy. I can honestly say that this goal has been met. He enjoys leaning again! As I am typing this paper, even though we finished his lessons for the day, he is drawing and writing in his journal about some things he learned today. It was totally his idea to get out his journal during his free time. I am so excited by this! He also is talking about what he is learning and connecting it to the world around him more frequently. This is one of the final steps he needing in his journey to healing from his ordeal in the local school district.

Another goal I had in this schooling at home was to keep up with his social experiences. While he hasn’t been able to do as much as I had hoped (do to my limitations in time not him), he has still had play dates and other experiences. I organized our church kids into a play date once a month. This month we went to fun jumpers. He had a blast. Levi and a friend took another younger boy under their wing to make sure that little boy had a fun time. I have a few activities planned for spring break.

Overall, this has been a great change for both my son and myself. I am still learning how to balance my time but am making progress in this regard. I am also making sure to have just fun me and him time. Tonight, is games and movie night. The schooling aspect will take time to get where it works for him, but we getting there a little more every day. He is becoming happier and having fun again which is important to me. Watching him grasp something new and how he is approaching everything is a joy to experience. I am very fortunate to be able to share this opportunity with him. This is going so well that I have already decided to continue this next year as I start graduate school. I am hoping to be able to do this at least until I enter the workforce again. Then depending upon where that takes us, will depend our what we do after that.