

Parent Letter about PACE Plus Program

Hi Carol & Pam,

We are so happy with the progress Evan has made in the PACE program. It is the best money we have ever spent!!!! Yesterday, Evan did like the excitement he generated around his ability to recall Math facts. As parents and his former teachers, Math facts challenged Evan. It was an arduous process using hands on materials to help him conceptualized addition or subtraction. I handed Math over to Mark because I could not get Evan to do mental Math. It was something Evan did finally start to grab hold of with Mark as his teacher. But Evan did struggle with it. We both thought we would just let him use a calculator this year. Mental Math was holding Evan back. It was an obstacle towards developing more sophisticated Math skills. We see this success as opening the door to many possibilities. We are pleased with Evan's "academic" progress. It is the other indicators we see that really pleased us.

As parents, we are seeing progress in other ways. The astounding difference is what Evan does when he comes home. All summer long and into September, daily, I would hear "I'm bored ". Once Evan got into the PACE program, his mind needed to continue the stimulation. I did not have to find things for him to do. I did step back to let Evan choose naturally the kinds of activities he needed to do with his mind. I did deliberately stay in the background while Evan designed how he would spend his free time in the afternoons. I started to spy on Evan to see what he was doing and where it was going. For example, I watched with wonder as Evan took out all his blueprints of Star Wars space ships, study intently each one of them for an hour, select 3 blueprints and pulled out his small Legos to build them.

When I took Evan with me to the dentist office three weeks ago, the receptionist came in while I was getting my teeth clean to tell me how Evan had built the Sears Tower from memory using the large Legos in the waiting room. She had never seen anyone's child concentrate and be so determined. Evan's Lego creation was remarkably close in appearance and clever in its design. The receptionist was so impressed. I told her we did visit the Sears Tower a couple of years ago. Recently, the news events of 9/11/01 have featured stories and pictures of the Sears Tower. I was not the only one who could see the cogs turning Evan's brain.

Evan really did not need mindless activities after the PACE program. When he watched television, it was educational programs like the Science channel or documentaries on the Discovery channel. No longer did I have to him ask to stop watching the Cartoon channel. It was eerie not to hear the words "I'm bored." I was fascinated by the many ideas Evan had to entertain himself, his ability to focus and the thoughtfulness of his recreation. He was never lost for ideas to do things. His play was stimulating. It was like his brain had

The true indicator for me was the real world applications. When we have Evan pick up his room or the family room, it was incumbent on us to break down the task into small steps and direct him. Evan could never do it on his own. That has changed. For the first time, I am watching Evan carry out this job on his own. I did raise the bar too for the end product for what I required as a neat and orderly room. (Dusting, vacuuming, straightening out the pillows, etc.). Before PACE, Evan would lose his attention after completing the first step -- e.g., clearing off all the items on the floor and putting each one back in its place.

Two weeks ago, Evan knocked me over with his ability to do comparison shopping at the grocery store. I asked Evan to "help" me find the best buy on sandwich bags. Evan looked at the shelf stacked with different brands, different size bags (pints, quarts), different kinds (freezer bags) and the mix of other products (garbage bags, plastic wrap). I told Evan to pull from the shelf the sandwich bags once he located them so we could figure out the best buy. I instructed Evan to put all the boxes into the cart where it would be easier for us to read and compare. Evan did not need to do it that way. Walking from side to side, Evan looked at each brand area, found the sandwich bags and remarkably he was able to narrow our choice down to 3 different brands. One was on sale, one had 5 free extra bags and the other was the lowest priced brand. I had watched Evan analyze the prices in his selection. That was not required by me. Even then Evan was able to correctly "guess" at the best buy.

I think the grocery store is a wonderful classroom. I often find a lesson or two for Evan as we shop. I know what he is capable of when in this classroom setting. I hugged him so hard in the store that day. My face lit up with joy at how much information Evan had processed and how fast. I was exclaiming what a great buy he had found and praising him for a job well done. People were looking at me. They never saw a lady get so excited over sandwich bags.

Evan likes all his teachers but his favorite is Mrs. Ewing. Before TLC, Evan could form a positive relationship with only one teacher. He could not transfer that over to other teachers. The frosting on the cake at TLC is how relaxed Evan is and can feel the reward of a teacher's compliment. Going into a school building and working with a teacher was for Evan what it is like when we have to go through an uncomfortable medical procedure. When the health professional tells you that you're doing "good", it just helps you to endure the procedure. When a TLC teacher tells Evan that he has done well, he can feel the compliment.

It is easy to see the "quantitative" progress. But the "quality" to the

happiness in his recreation, his ability to be a productive, contributing family member and his mastering/acquiring life skills (comparison shopping). I know the TLC teachers like to hear about how learning translates to improve a student's life outside the classroom setting.

If Evan seems to be a good worker, it is because he is feeling a return on his investment in many ways. Yesterday, he asked me why you and Jan got so excited over his doing the Math test. I explained that the PACE program is something new at TLC. I told Evan that the teachers are learning how the program works and how well students can do with it. I told Evan he had done quite well. It was something everyone at TLC likes to see. Evan pointed out to me that he did not realize he was helping Mrs. Ewing "learn", too. Evan was really pleased that he could give something back to her. Evan feels she is truly invested his doing well. They are a team. Evan is pleased with his outcome from the PACE program and his TLC learning experience.

Today, we will see what is next for Evan and his learning program at TLC.

Sincerely,

Mark and Lisa