Combining a Personal and Professional Passion for Inclusion

To say that Kerri Ullucci has spent her life dedicated to education would be an understatement. As an Associate Professor of Urban Education at Roger Williams University, Kerri has found a way to combine her personal passion for her children’s education with her passion for teaching others.

“I’ve worked with many, many schools during my career, and I can’t say I’ve seen any school offer inclusion as well as Meeting Street,” says Ullucci. “It’s an exceptionally strong model that I wanted my boys to be a part of. I have no doubt that Andre and Atticus are in a better place because of their experiences at Meeting Street.”

Kerri’s two boys, both without special needs, began at Meeting Street in their Early Learning Center as infants. Andre is now a talented 1st grader in The Grace School, while Atticus recently turned four and continues to thrive in our early childhood program. Though Kerri’s boys have “participated in just about every facet of Meeting Street,” Atticus also benefited from our Early Intervention program.

Diagnosed with a hearing impairment at 18 months, Kerri’s family turned to Early Intervention for Atticus’ speech and hearing therapies. After undergoing corrective surgery just prior to his 3rd birthday, Atticus no longer has difficulties with his hearing and is “doing great.”

“The model of Early Intervention is remarkable, especially when you have a little one and therapists come directly to your home,” says Ullucci. “It also really helps parents know what to do for their child in their own environment.”

As a professional educator, Kerri is quick to share her commitment to the inclusive education model. She is a teacher of teachers and incredibly sensitive around issues of student diversity and differing family backgrounds of all children. Having her sons at Meeting Street is part of “walking the talk” and seeing first-hand the benefits that Andre and Atticus bring home each day.

“Our boys are socialized with children of all types of abilities. Some speak with their hands, some with their eyes, and others even use iPads, so this is what’s normal for them,” adds Ullucci. “Being where children with special needs are segregated would be abnormal to them.”

Kerri and her husband, Derek Michael, who is also an educator, point to the maturity Andre has developed in part from learning alongside children of various ability and understanding that everyone is different. They see this same development in young Atticus, further underscoring their commitment to Meeting Street.

One misconception that Kerri hopes will change is the feeling of some that programs such as ours aren’t as rigorous academically to accommodate all the students we educate. For their family, nothing could be further from the truth.

“Atticus came home one day talking about constellations and phases of the moon; he’s only four,” says Ullucci. “I’d bet there are some adults who don’t know some of what he shared.”

Last spring, Kerri took her passion for Meeting Street and inclusive learning to another level when she began to offer an elective class to her students; “Case Study: Meeting Street.” Her goal was to provide students graduating as elementary school teachers an opportunity to be exposed to the inclusive learning environment.

“Inclusion can be hard to envision without seeing it. To learn what it really is and what it can do for all students is very valuable,” explains Ullucci. “I think people are afraid of what they don’t understand. My students choose to take this class, and when they see what happens at Meeting Street they get it.”

Kerri’s students regularly comment on how patient, nice and thoughtful our students are to one another. They also believe, and Kerri shares the sentiment that our students will grow up to be better people, more caring and more sensitive because of their experience here. For us, it’s the highest compliment possible.

When asked what she’d want people to know if they could remember just one thing about Meeting Street, Kerri’s answer was simple.

“Inclusion works for all kids. Period.”