



Inclusive education: 'That's great!'

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 BY KATHY BOTHAM

EMC News - "That's great!" the animated bear said in response to the correct answer given on a computer screen. Six-year-old Liam Baxter-Jeffrey is doing math on the smart board in his kindergarten class room at Oxford-on-Rideau Public School.

It was 9 a.m., Friday morning. It was a "B" day and Liam has just gotten off his bus and rushed in to his classroom. He goes to the huge screen at the front of his class. He points to his own name in the left column and drags it over to the right side. Each student who enters the class room does the same thing with their own name. Attendance is done and class begins.

His teacher Pam Adamson, asks Liam to show me how this huge screen at the front of his class room works. This "smart board" looks and generates exactly like a tiny computer screen would. Liam double clicks a few icons on this five-foot screen and he is now reading letters and counting numbers.

"That's very good," Adamson tells Liam. The bear on the screen agrees.

Liam goes to his desk and starts to read his work book. Laurie Howard, his educational assistant helps him work on words. "Cup" and "cake" together make cupcake.

"That's a muffin," Liam says. "That's right," Howard agrees.

And then with the magic of technology, the page Liam is working on in his work book is now five feet wide on the smart board at the front of the room. Liam and four other students go to the smart board and take turns answering questions.

This is a kindergarten class. This is Liam's class. He is learning. Liam is learning to count, learning to read, learning about music and computers. He is playing and learning to wait his turn. He is with wonderful teachers in a very positive and supportive environment. He is with his friends. This is inclusive education. Liam has autism.

Schools and teachers such as the ones at Oxford-on-Rideau provide the opportunity for children with an intellectual disability (such as autism) to be included in the mainstream classrooms.

"Liam is eager and keen to do things, he likes to join in," Adamson says.

He enjoys songs and stories. Sometimes Liam takes a lead role and presents for the class. "He really loves the computer," she states. This was quite obvious as he worked the smart board. He was certainly too quick for me to keep up with him at times.

Community Living North Grenville just celebrated May as Community Living Month and this year's focus was on

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Kathy Botham, Kemptville EMC
 Educational assistant Laurie Howard, centre, works with Baxter-Jeffrey, left, and another classmate.

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Kathy Botham, Kemptville EMC
 Oxford-on-Rideau Public School kindergarten student Liam Baxter-Jeffrey uses the smart board in his classroom as his teacher Pam Adamson looks on. The smart board gives Baxter-Jeffrey, who has autism, the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment surrounded by his teachers, classmates and friends. This strengthens Community Living North Grenville's theme of 'Inclusive Education,' which was recently highlighted in May as part of Community Living Month.

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Ashley Kulp, Kemptville EMC

inclusive education. Though the month has ended, great stories about Liam learning and prospering in a class room with his friends need to be told. And teachers such as Adamson and Howard need to hear "that's great," too. The smart board bear would agree.

EMC Events - Hundreds upon hundreds of treasures were waiting to be scooped up by bargain hunters, above, on May 29 as part of the second annual 'Best Offer Yard Sale,' hosted by O'Farrell Financial Services Inc. The sale, which included housewares, children's toys, crafts, books and appliances and was held in the O'Farrell Financial parking lot, will benefit the North Grenville Public Library's 'Room to Read' campaign. Proceeds from a special barbecue on site will also go towards the campaign for the new central library.

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