



Special Needs

Meet the People We Help...

Problem

Jackson was a nine-year-old autistic boy who was mainstreamed in regular classes at his neighborhood elementary school. With the incidence of the disorder on the rise, more and more children with autism are being educated alongside their non-disabled peers, who often have a limited understanding of why autistic children behave the way they do and how they perceive the world. In Jackson's case, this often led to taunting, ridicule and even bullying.

Solution

A resource coordinator from Special Needs services came to Jackson's school to host a sensitivity training workshop. During the hour-long educational program, she showed the students how people with autism tend to behave and how they see and experience the world differently than others. She also talked about learning disabilities and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. The students asked a lot of honest questions and participated eagerly in the hands-on workshop.

Outcome

Jackson's classmates walk developed a greater knowledge of his disorder—and even his teachers are better equipped to help him learn and interact with his peers. The teasing stopped, and Jackson began to perform better in school and act out less often. "We don't understand how people with a disability feel unless we walk in their shoes," says the JF&CS resource coordinator.