

Labelling our children

Contributed by Lauren Snyder
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Hi! I don't have any children who are school-age. So, I can't offer you direct experience, but I did want to offer some support. My daughter is still an infant and we are working with Early Intervention on some issues.

After reading your two posts on this issue I just wanted to chime in and tell you I think you sound very reasonable in your concerns to me. You are only wanting to do something that is perfectly "allowable" within the structure of the system. Your son has been through quite a bit, and could very well "catch up" or test different if these medical concerns weren't consuming so much. I also think it is wise on your part to avoid as many labels as possible.

I appreciated your desire to have your son among peers whose behavior would be inspirational. They could be excellent examples for him. Of course, the other obvious concern is that he wouldn't be well received by his classmates and would get frustrated with his inability to perform as his peers.

I just can't help but think back to when I was a child. We moved to Brazil when I was 7yrs and I was thrown into Portuguese speaking classes - just like that. No preparation or lessons. I remember getting frustrated at not being able to communicate in Portuguese as I wanted, but my largest frustration was my inability to communicate to others that I understood so much more than they thought I did, I just couldn't always put the proper words together. Within a year or so I was fluent.

I know that learning a second language is a different situation, but that feeling of having understood so much more than I appeared to have understood stays with me when I think of labeling children and their abilities. Personally, I'm a strong believer that all child have abilities we don't understand or expect them to have. Also, a child's environment is extremely influential. Peers have a lot to offer to each other, and children love to teach children. Children don't usually see in "labels" until they hear it through their teachers and parents (But they do notice everything and have the need to point it out and ask/talk about it).

I wanted you to know that I think you are being completely reasonable and responsible with your son. Let your coordinator be frustrated. She'll get over it very quickly especially if you tell her firmly, but with sensitivity and receptiveness, that you want "such and such" to be done - period. It fits within their current structure. She should gladly comply. You can offer up your explanation of why you feel it is best, but really I think an explanation is optional.

You are your sons advocate. Once you are in the system, have it work FOR your son - not for every one else's. Others can advocate for their children as they see fit. The coordinator can run her program as it is structured and I imagine part of her job role is to work with children and their parents so they are most served.

Keep up the good work! Hopefully, you feel supported and encouraged to do it the way you are feeling you should do it.

Sincerely,
Lauren (Mom to Brooke ex26.5wkr; 1yr old - 9 months adjusted)