

One year ago, this week, our eight year old son, Jordan A (as he insists on being called) transferred to Bryant School in Lake Oswego. This was his fourth school in three years, looking for the right 'fit', as a child with autism. Bryant marked the end of an anxious search for a collaborative team, and the beginning fulfillment of our dream for him to walk to school in his own neighborhood, fully included with the help of a full time classroom assistant.

Last Thursday, Jordan A sang a solo rendition of "My Favorite Things" from the Sound of Music for his entire school -- children, building staff and select parents. During this annual talent show, fifteen acts were performed in the last forty minutes of the school day. Before the show began, Jordan A was known by most, if not all students in the school. With his odd conversational topics and unusual mannerisms, we had felt, as his parents, that perhaps he was perceived more as a beloved pet than peer, to children outside his grade level.

Jordan A was the ninth act, ironically his all-time favorite number (in an obsessive-compulsive sort of way). The audience gave very polite & quite appropriate applause for the preceding acts. We were not prepared for the thunderous burst of applause that occurred when he sang his final note; neither did we expect the standing ovation that continued for almost five minutes as the audience insisted that Jordan A return to the stage to receive their appreciation and acceptance.

When he returned for his second bow, he put his hands together and joined in the applause. Many laughed at his antics; most would merely chalk up this experience as Jordan's moment in the sun. It occurred to me that perhaps when clapping, Jordan A understood something much more important about this moment.

Bryant staff has worked very hard to make a place for Jordan A, and to create an environment accepting of his differences. Jordan A. became the medium by which all that good intent and hard work of inclusion came together. Yes, this truly was a special time for Jordan A (and his parents), but even more, this was a proud, glorious moment for the community of Bryant School in meeting their commitment to embrace diversity.