

# Iron County School District and community partners aim to give great education to all students

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See the video at" <http://www.good4utah.com/news/top-stories/iron-county-school-district-and-community-partners-aim-to-give-great-education-to-all-students/992718251>

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CEDAR CITY, Utah (News4Utah) - Utah has one of the highest rates of autism in the country. Of all the 8 year olds in our state, about one in 58 are diagnosed. Some parents say they struggle to find the most effective way to educate their children. It's a responsibility placed on schools, but doing what's best for each child while not over-burdening the classroom is a tough balance.

Reading, spelling, arithmetic: 7 year old Jacob Camp can do it all. However, communicating that knowledge is difficult.

"Jacob is my autistic son," says Misty Camp, Jacob's mother, "Communication is just so vital to everything, so that is probably the hardest thing."

That's because Jacob is mostly non-verbal.

"He's learning to talk, he has been learning to talk for quite some time," says Misty.

It's an issue that could have affected Jacob's education, but his Iron County School was up for the challenge.

Misty explains, "I am really quite impressed with his teacher...They probably expect more out of him than I do, which I appreciate because they push him."

It's all part of a new strategy the Iron County School District created back in August of 2017.

Kevin Garrett is the Director of Special Programs for Iron County School District. Garrett explains, "We have had some concern about our ability to work with autistic students, so we felt like we needed to bolster what we were doing for our parents and our students."

The district wanted to go above and beyond the federal law. On the books right now is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. It's purpose, in part is, "...to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education ...(and the) services to meet their unique needs"

Iron County School District took it a step further, partnering with [Kids on The Move](#).

Joe Dixon, the Autism Center Director for Kids on The Move says, “We’re all after the same goal of educating these kids, helping them access peers, helping them access their education.”

Kids on The Move provides support for families of children with special needs. Kids on The Move worked with the [Iron County School District](#) to train their teachers and aids on things like behavior analytic skills. These skills helped shape what many students in special education have: Individualized Education Programs, or IEP’s.

Naté Dearden works with the Utah State Office of Education. She explains that, “[An IEP is] the plan that governs a student’s special education services.”

A team of people work directly with the student and parents to create an academic program that uniquely suits their needs, and addresses behavioral goals. More than 84 thousand students in Utah public schools have IEP’s.

Dearden says, “If the student is not making progress...the team is required to come back and meet and make changes, because it’s not just supposed to be a piece of paperwork, it’s supposed to be a living document...and the concepts in it are used every day to serve this student.”

Trish Kotarski has been teaching special education in Iron County for two years. She says this new training not only shapes her IEP’s, but it affects her interaction with students.

“It’s made a huge difference in behaviors and being able to complete their work...without being a big disruption to the rest of the room,” Kotarski explains.

Misty says she sees the difference in Jacob as well, and hopes to see that growth continue.

“When he gets to high school what do I see? It really depends on what his teachers are like. His teachers right now are wonderful, he does more than I expect,” Misty adds with a laugh, “I think it’s great.”

Kids on The Move offers a number of resources for families of children with special needs, including things like Respite Care and Parent University. For more information on these programs and more a, [go here](#).

Iron County School District is also undergoing even more changes, and have recently started implementing Trauma Informed Education tactics. They say these changes are helping to drastically reduce behavior issues in their classrooms.

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