

Sea Star - School for Neuro Education

Source: From Sea Star – School for Neuro Education, Sea Star Brain Injury Foundation.

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=770>

[Music]

Female Student-Sara: I am flying to an island that has lots of different names, I crashed into an orchid that was very, very rude...I said I'm very sorry, with a grin upon my face. Just then a palm tree hit me, and I lost my blue suitcase.

Female Speaker: I... I know very little actually, I have never had the opportunity to meet a child with brain injury.

Male Speaker: I, you know, you feel bad, but you should still do your part to try to help out.

Female Sea Star Administrator: Sea Star is a place where any student with a neurological impairment can come and be appreciated for their gifts.

Male Sea Star Teacher: Well it's a very unique school, it's a very unique project. We focus on working with the children who are not able to be served in a public school setting or even in private school settings.

Female Student-Sara: So I walked a little while and I sat upon the sand. A lobster came and snapped at me and bit my little hand.

Female Sea Star Teacher: We can have a visual teacher come on site to train myself and that child how... how to learn the visual help and visual aides.

Male Speaker: Kids with brain injuries...they...I'm not really sure...

Male Speaker: I don't know of an institution in LA which works with kids with brain injuries...

Male Speaker: Hm, tell you anything I know about kids with brain injuries...very little.

Male Speaker: Tough life, very difficult, hard to raise...

Female Student-Sara: I said why did you do that? With a tear rolling down. I get I'm not supposed to be here, in this God-forsaken town...

[Ocean Sounds]

Female Student-Sara: See Star School was created for children and grownups with traumatic brain injuries so they can become as independent as possible in their everyday lives. The school is located in Irvine, California. And it is the only school of its kind on the West Coast.

Male Student-Steven: I caught it! Here's one of my teachers.

Steven's Parents: He was three and a half years old and we were driving home from a friend's birthday party and we got in a car accident and so he had a traumatic brain injury and almost died a couple of times. He's got less than half of a brain left. And they said he would never do anything and never be

able to function.

Male Student-Brian: I had... a brain tumor when I was six and I had to have surgery to remove it. And then they didn't move it all the way out and so when I was eight, they had to... go back in again and take it the rest of it out.

Sara's Parents: We found about her brain tumor when she was six and a half. And she had had lots of bad behavior and... the schools that we had her in, they didn't know how to teach her nor did they know how to get her to... behave so that she could learn.

Male Student-Charlie: Actually it happened three days after Christmas and I was with my dad but yeah he went off the road and a block of ice, went off the road and hit a tree. And basically what happened was that the car, it basically wrapped around the tree. I had a right parallel stroke, which it affects the right side of your brain, so I got paralyzed from the left side of my body.

Male Student-Andrew: I was in a football accident...

Female Interviewer: Football accident.

Male Student-Andrew: ...and hit my head. I don't know how I didn't make it.

Female Interviewer: Didn't make it...

Male Student-Andrew: No, no...

Female Speaker: Oh you're going to go to Lenay's office?

Female Student-Elisa: Yeah!

Sara's Parents: Well Sea Star, they're more trained in brain injury and you have to go about disciplining and teaching a child completely differently then you do in a regular classroom.

Male Student-Brian: It's like they could deal with all this stuff, like behaviors, seizures and all this other stuff, that other schools don't have, like a public school, they don't have that.

Male Sea Star Teacher: We specialize in working with behaviorally challenging children, children that are very difficult to control and would be disruptive to a school, even a special ed program at a public school.

Sara's Parents: Well when Sara started this school she... wasn't able to sit in a room with other people talking. The teachers had to always focus on her, otherwise she would get really angry.

Male Student-Brian: And I used to have behavior problems here when I started.

Female Sea Star Teacher (about Brian): He was a very difficult student when he first started here. Behaviorally he was one of the most difficult students we've seen at this school.

Sara's Parents: She would... you know, run out of the classroom, she would start swearing and screaming.

Male Student-Brian: Like climbing on the roof, hitting people, giving them bruises.

Sara's Parents: But Sara has really come a long way with their techniques. She... can sit in a group of people, she can have conversation going around here and not be bugged by it.

Male Student-Brian: And... and now I don't have behavior problems here.

Female Sea Star Teacher (about Brian): Brian has just made huge accomplishments with his behaviors and his academics.

Female Student-Sara: Sea Star School works, the academic program side-by-side with the social one. We learn everything, how to read and write, count money and take a bus on trips around the community.

B-roll: Unintelligible verbiage/background noise.

Female Sea Star Teacher: And why they need to do math, why they need to understand the value of a coin, the value of a dollar so when they go to the store, they don't need to rely on someone to help them buy a bag of chips.

Steven's Parents: It's not daycare, a lot of places figure it's daycare and he was coming home with not really any work and now he's... got word cards and he's bringing home word cards and he wants to practice his reading, it's completely different then we expected, like just huge improvement.

Female Sea Star Teacher: Our morning is spent doing all academics in math, reading, writing, spelling, science and social studies are our five core subjects.

Female Sea Star Teacher: The only difference is we make it a little more tangible to their life so not only are they learning you know book skills and they're not just doing bookwork, it's... it's tangible, they can understand why they need to do math, why the need to understand the value of a coin, the value of a dollar.

Female Sea Star Teacher: Our afternoons are spent doing vocational and community-based activities.

Female Sea Star Teacher: You guys want to go on a picnic tomorrow? You want to go to a picnic to the park tomorrow?

Male Student: Yes, I do.

Female Sea Star Teacher: Okay, get your logs out so I can write it in.

[Music]

Female Sea Star Teacher: Students really enjoy going out into the community too, it's kind of a motivation to get their academics done.

Female Student-Sara: The physical program is an important part in the student's growth and mobility. The staff works with each student in an individual, own way.

Female Sea Star Teacher: A lot of her children have weaknesses in their muscles and so I try to have exercise programs for each of the kids so that they can build their muscles and their strength so that that will encourage them, to help them... walk better and to run better.

Male Student-Brian: Then during the rest of the week, we do like basketball, soccer...

[Music]

Female Sea Star Teacher: Look at me students, right here guys, right here guys. Smile.

[Singing and Music and Cheering]

[Song: "To Know You is to Love You"]

Female Sea Star Teacher: We teach them how to get along with their peers in the classroom and also to learn to be respectful and to teach these kids independence, I mean that's our main goal here is to teach them independence.

This institution is like a family here, we are a small program, we get to do one-on-one with the students. They get lots and lots of help and in another institution, there are so many kids and it's hard to really work on their specific goals and needs.

Female Sea Star Administrator: We have a maximum of six students in a classroom and for every two students we have one adult staff. So we have a very intensive level of supports. We also work in a very collaborative manner with all of our physical therapists, our occupational, speech, music therapy.

[Song]

Female Sea Star Teacher: Do you need to warm up your voice first? Let's warm up your voice first.

We use music to help with motor development and reaching, if they're reaching... if I hold the guitar way up here and have them reach up high to play, or if we're trying to... facilitate more use of their left hand say over their right hand, then we can present the instrument on that side.

It's not like a task that they're having to do sitting at a classroom desk, we're... we're sitting in a circle with guitars and drums and lyric sheets and singing their favorite songs and so they get to pick their favorite songs too. So if they want to sing... "Who Let the Dogs Out"... then we'll make a lyric sheet for who let the dogs out.

Male Student-Charlie: I want to try and get my doctorate and... in computers and engineering.

Male Interviewer: So you like computers?

Male Student-Charlie: Yeah.

Male Interviewer: What do you know about computers?

Male Student-Charlie: Computers... I know a lot about them and... my favorite thing is that you can do anything on them.

Male Interviewer: Since when you've been driving a motorcycle?

Male Student-Brian: Since I was 9, yeah.

Male Interviewer: How was the first time you drove a motorcycle?

Male Student-Brian: I fell every 5 seconds. I could only go in one gear and just kept on falling over.

Female Student-Sara: It's hard...

Male Interviewer: I know it's hard,

Female Student-Sara: That's why I'm never going to become an actor.

Male Interviewer: Maybe you could.

Female Student-Sara: Maybe, I wanted to but...

Male Interviewer: But you don't try?

Female Student-Sara: I should...

Male Sea Star Teacher: In a sense, to really look for a more important need which is more than just the academic skill itself, I think there's something that's much deeper that we teach here and that is... a sense of self-esteem, a sense of self-worth, a sense of at ease with whom I am with other people.

And the child who comes here and feel good about themselves and feel good about others, I think that's the greatest skill we can teach them.

Female Sea Star Teacher: Dignity, they are made to feel like they are very, very important citizens in this world.

Female Student-Sara: Sea Star is a little piece of heaven that dropped down here on earth for students like me to come and learn how to cope and survive in this crazy world that we live in with the angels that come to teach us everyday except Saturdays and Sundays.

Female Sea Star Teacher: I believe that in life... you know people, myself included, should do things that matter, should do things that make a difference in our own lives as well as the lives of the people that we work and interact with. It's important to support the program because it works, it's not just a school.

It's more than a school to these kids, we're family and we're friends, we're their support network, it's more than just a school.

It's an outlet to life. It's... it's a program that brings out of those kids what other programs probably would never do. It's a program that looks into the kids on an individual level that sees them for who they are, not their disability or their injury.

I look at my kids, I don't read their files, I look at my kids and I learn from my kids what they teach me everyday. I support it because... I know it works.

[Music]

Female Student-Sara: Brain injury is our number one cause of death and disability among the young people in the United States.