

Teacher Reflections

Lisa Hawkins, Deerfield Run Elem.

Lisa Hawkins won the Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Award for Prince George's County in 2013.



I had a little girl, sweet as can be, but with separation anxiety. She would come in with tears. At first it broke my heart. But on the second side, I teach in an open space. There are 27 on my side, and right beside, 27 more. You have 54 kids who can't learn because you have one child who is crying.

Her family came to Side by Side, and they are a fabulous family. We were talking about behavior, and I said, 'Maybe a simple sticker chart – we could record stickers for her whenever she comes in being a big girl.' Two or three days later, it stopped. It changed the whole feeling for my classroom; it

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Parents Raise Their Game

These parents spoke at our annual breakfast on March 1 about the Great Start program. Great Start is a series of workshops where parents learn home activities that help their children succeed in school.

Folake Adeyemi, Montpelier Elementary School



Side by Side has been very helpful to my family. The culture in my country (Nigeria) is that parents send you to school and teachers take over your education. When you get home, nobody cares if you do your homework. Over here, Side by Side has taught me that I am the best teacher for my children and I have to set a good example for them in life. Education is the best legacy you can give your children.

Also, mixing with other parents at Side by Side, I learn from other people's approach to parenting. When we discuss math and reading strategies, we also discuss among ourselves what works in our family and what a family might be struggling with, and we learn from other people's mistakes and also from other people's successes. They have really taught me a lot.

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changed the whole feeling for the classroom beside us. We could get right into teaching. And that's the kind of impact this program has.

Dr. Selena Fizer, Deerfield Run Elem.



At our last Great Start session, we had graphs showing parents where the students stood in reading and in math. I told my parents that the highest students were the ones who came to Side by Side. Those are the parents who are right on me: "Well, my child mastered this; what can they do next?" They're always asking me for more advice, which is a wonderful conversation to have with a parent.

At first, when we were asked to do this program, I thought, "This is the beginning of the school year! It's Back to School Night. We have testing to do. How are we going to do these workshops? But, honestly, when you see what an impact it makes, it's all worth it. I'm just very blessed that this opportunity was presented to me, and I'm able to give back to it.

Sunil Mohammed, Deerfield Run Elementary School

My wife and I are first-time parents. We didn't know what to expect. We were going in unarmed. When we dropped off our daughter to start kindergarten, she had separation anxiety, crying whenever we'd leave her at school. With the help of Side by Side's Great Start, we learned how to manage this behavior through positive reinforcement. In less than a week, she was so happy to go to school.



We learned how to instill great habits in Sophie. Now she loves to read, she loves school, she loves her friends, she loves her teachers. She begs for math problems: "Challenge me, Dad; challenge me, Mom." She comes home every day with such a great attitude and good work habits. And it's all through this program.

Maria Hernandez, Laurel Elementary School

(translated from Spanish)



The Side by Side program is very important for me because it's a program that gives us great ideas. One of the techniques I have learned through Side by Side is to take away the TV from Monday through Friday. With the time we used to use to watch TV, I sit with them and play, color or read. I'm learning, and they are learning.

I have seen the result, that they have improved a lot. I feel great to know that they are learning and they are advancing. I invite other families to come because Side by Side has been a great program for my family.

You can further our mission by volunteering or donating! See our website, sidebysidelaurel.org.