

In the COVID-19 pandemic, your support for our therapy programs meant even more for children with autism!



Your donations and grants this past year helped fund our kids' therapy programs here at our school & therapy centre for children with autism. The cost of delivering these programs this year was \$598,800.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER – A COMMON AND COMPLEX NEUROLOGICAL DISORDER

1 in 66 children are diagnosed with autism and experience a variation of challenges that can severely affect learning, communication, social interaction and sensory integration. Early intervention, intensive structured support, individualized programming and specialized therapies are key to building their skills in every area of development and maximizing their meaningful participation in their families, schools and communities.

THE GIANT STEPS APPROACH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Children with special needs are particularly vulnerable to reductions of in-person interactions and the challenges of virtual learning, and their families have been especially appreciative of our programming. Following moving provincial health guidelines, our team creatively provided a mix of virtual and onsite academics and therapies to our students. For their safety, inclusion in local schools, therapy group work, community outings and our evening Sports & Rec Club have been on hold.

PROGRAMS DELIVERED

With your support, 4 to 14 year-old children with autism benefited from 3 therapy programs: speech, behavior and occupational therapies.

- Our kids participated in weekly sessions with registered therapists who specialize in the field of autism.
- For the majority of the year, families had the option to choose whether their child received their therapies online from home or onsite at Giant Steps.
- Our therapists worked closely with our teachers, program assistants and families to develop and implement our students' education/therapy plans and ensure generalization of skills and strategies to home.

IMPACT

Kids with autism made advances in a wide array of developmental areas:

- Using speech, technology, schedules and picture symbols to communicate
- Movement, coordination, muscle strength, motor planning and balance
- Dexterity, printing, writing, keyboarding, using technology
- Dressing, feeding and toileting skills
- Swallowing, chewing, table manners, food choices, meal preparation
- Visual discrimination, memory, spatial orientation, eye-hand coordination
- Play/social, sports and physical education skills, and
- Coping with sensitivity to sound, light, touch, crowds and new environments.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Our staff and families are especially grateful this year that you helped kids with autism gain the skills they need today – and the skills and abilities that will impact their futures as adults tomorrow.

