

## Clackamas County Children's Commission: **Allie's Story**

My name is Allie, and my family has been lucky enough to have the experience of sending our oldest daughter to Head Start. Chloe recently turned 5 and when we realized that she was going to miss the Kindergarten cutoff date we were worried about whether or not she would fall behind academically, and if it was going to bother her that all of her friends were moving on to grade school while she stayed in daycare. I was also very concerned about how an additional year in daycare would affect us financially.

I had recently reduced my hours at a new job so that I could stay home more with my two kids, ages 5 and 2, in order for us to save money on childcare while my husband worked the night shift. We were constantly juggling our schedules in order to make it all work (which was very stressful), and one day by happenstance I drove by the River Road Head Start and saw that they were enrolling students. I called and was SO excited and relieved when I found out that Chloe qualified for one of their programs!



When Chloe started in her classroom I was blown away by how closely their program resembled a real Kindergarten class. They served meals, had calendar and circle time, and lots of structured academic activities. They taught the kids social-emotional life skills like problem solving and listening skills, recognizing positive traits in others, and self-regulation skills. They held parent-teacher conferences, Back to School nights, hearing, vision and dental screenings, and even had a SMART reader program. One of my favorites was their themed family nights, where they offer healthy dinner and teach all kinds of cool things to help you learn and

grow with your child. We were also assigned an amazing family advocate who went above and beyond to address any concerns we had about Chloe's development and who would frequently check-in to see if we needed any support.

In addition to all of these things, an actual life-changing experience for us was the fact that my daughter was able to have an early vision and hearing screening. Before Chloe's class started they tested her hearing and we were told that she had failed her hearing test in both ears. I was initially very worried and confused because I had no idea how long my child had gone with whatever issue she was having. Luckily after months of working with her doctor we were able to rule out moderate hearing loss, and we were led to a specialist who helped us figure out the medical care we didn't even know Chloe needed.

As someone who has worked in schools for the last 10 years, I feel totally confident in saying that Chloe's classroom experience went above and beyond what a typical Kindergarten would, and should, look like. I feel so lucky that Chloe was able to be a part of the Head Start program, and I truly believe that any child who is fortunate enough to be a part of the program will benefit by leaps and bounds in order to be prepared, socially and academically, once they enter grade school.