



# Educational Spotlight

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**Healthy Living:** Virtual learning and education during the Covid pandemic: Children who are at high risk.



## Graham's story:

**Tell us a little about your family**

*We are a family of 4 with a dog. Zach/Dad, Amber/Mom, Finneas/Big Brother and in the 6th grade, and Graham/ little bother and in the 2nd grade, Last our sweet dog Sugar.*

**What is it like to balance virtual vs. seated school?**

*Both boys are virtual. We balance it with making a schedule and following it each day to stay on track. We schedule breaks to help with the school work not being too much. It has been a challenge having both boys in different grades and completely different schedules. We have managed this with Finn (11yrs old) by having a magnet board schedule that I help him set each morning before starting his work for the day. Graham's schedule is a little harder to follow. He does therapies outside of the house 2days a week. He is not always willing to do the work either.*

### **Why did you pick virtual school?**

*We choose to do virtual school due to Graham being immunocompromised. Graham has CP, Development delay, and is non-verbal so making this choice was a lot of us weighing out the pros and cons. By Graham not doing seated school we lose out on a lot like his amazing teachers who have been working to help him hit his IEP goals, PT, OT, and his Speech. For a kid like Graham these are super important. On the other side, he cannot get sick with this virus. After talking with his Doctor, we felt we would stay home.*

### **What are your hopes and dreams for your sons?**

*My hopes and dreams are for them to return to seated school and get vaccinated & complete school, and be able to live their lives to the fullest.*



### **What tips do you have for other parents working with their school team?**

*What I have learned about working with the school and his IEP is that it is nice to have support on your side like Bobbi, our educational liaison. I will say it has not been easy to complete the work and goals we set for Graham this year due to the change of us being at home, we have learned to appreciate the goals we have set as we are the ones administering his schooling and helping him reach those goals. His special ed teacher and therapists have been invaluable resources of knowledge and support.*



### **What does a typical day look like for you all? How have you set up their workspace? What have you done to help them be successful?**

*We have an office area in our front room where Finn and Zach both work. We both help the kids with school, we use visual aids often like big signs, magnet schedules, things like that. Graham's school happens all over the house, we do physical, occupational and speech therapy at home wherever we set up for the day. He likes to work on things like Starfall on his iPad. They both enjoy taking breaks in their playroom and going outside in the backyard to jump on the trampoline for recess.*



### **What does your family enjoy doing together?**

*We like to watch movies, play board games, play in the backyard, go on bike rides, eat :)*

### **How are you balancing school and therapies?**

*Graham sees a physical and occupational therapist once a week for 1 hr. each. Since the pandemic, he does not get therapy through school but they are available for support or consultation. He typically gets a half-day of school each day, he works on letters, numbers (counting to 100, quantities/adding up to 10) sight words, art, music, and other electives. We're working hard to help him hit his IEP goals.*

### **What are some of his assets and your vision/his vision for his best life?\_**

*Graham is a warm loving kid who gets along with everyone. He likes to let you know what he wants and loves playing pranks and joking more than anything. Our vision for his best life is for him to be able to accomplish whatever dreams he has when he grows up and not be hindered by a world that doesn't see accessibility justice as something to strive for.*

- Amber & Zach

## **Caleb's Story....**

### **Tell us a little about your family**

*My husband, Matt, was born and raised in Springfield and I've lived here since 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We love raising our family in the Ozarks. We have four boys: Isaac (12), Silas (10), Caleb (8) and Titus (4).*



### **Why did you choose homebound services? What have been the benefits and challenges?**

*Homebound services made the most sense for Caleb because of his health and mobility needs. He received a heart transplant at four months old, which means he's on medication to suppress his immune system in order to prevent his body from rejecting his donor heart. A brain surgery at two left him with significant developmental delays. The combination of a compromised immune system and his inability to protect himself from germs by using good hygiene led us to pursue an option where he could stay in his home environment.*

### **What advice can you give other families?**

*While the circumstances leading us to pursue homebound services through SPS were not ideal, Caleb has been given every opportunity to thrive with his therapy and education. The teachers and therapists involved in his homebound services are phenomenal. Caleb loves working with them and as a side perk, I get a front row seat to how his teachers and therapists work with him and can carry their ideas over into how we work with him on our own.*

### **What are your hopes and dreams for Caleb?**

*I've always wanted Caleb to be the best Caleb he can be, whatever that may look like. I want him to have every opportunity out there to give him the best quality of life. Part of that equation is keeping him healthy so that he doesn't have frequent setbacks preventing him from the progress we know he can achieve. We're confident with continued hard work he will walk and will be able to communicate many of his needs using a speaking device.*

### **What has your experience been with his services and working with the school? What tips do you have for other parents to work with the school?**

*Our experience with Caleb's IEP and working with Springfield Public Schools has been excellent. They have always been quick to listen to my concerns and ideas for future goals. I think the best advice I can give when working with the schools is approaching each step of the process with kindness and patience. From my experience, people who choose a career in therapy and teaching are some of the most compassionate I've ever met. I have always felt like Caleb's therapists and teachers are partnering with me to help him achieve as much as possible. One of the benefits of homebound services is that it allows for a closer relationship with the individuals working with him and it really does feel like teamwork as we brainstorm together to help Caleb be successful. I have never felt like they have anything but his best interests in mind, so any time I've had a concern, it's been discussed in a way that assumes we all want the best for Caleb. That trust has a big impact on how I feel about every aspect of Caleb's services.*



### **What does a typical day look like for you?**

*Because of the pandemic, Caleb has been doing his homebound services virtually, so his nurse Ms. Ashly or I help him get signed in to work with his teacher and therapists that way. During normal homebound circumstances, they come to our house for thirty minutes a couple of times a week. Caleb loves the one-on-one attention. Outside of homebound services, Caleb loves to ride his adaptive bike around the neighborhood, watch Mickey, Elmo and Signing Time and wrestle with his dad and brothers. He receives most of his food through a G-tube, but he loves to eat chocolate. In the summer his favorite place to be is in the pool.*

## How do you balance your son's education and therapies?

*I have three other boys. They attend Gloria Deo Academy, which is a hybrid school that meets in person two-three days a week and works from home the rest of the week. We chose this option early on when Caleb was still very ill to allow us flexibility to travel for doctor's appointments and hospital stays. Caleb receives PT, OT and Speech. During normal circumstances, he receives each of them twice a week for thirty minutes. Some of them have been adjusted this year with the virtual option, but hopefully it will resume normally this Fall. It's been a great fit and has worked wonderfully for our family's needs.*



## What does your family enjoy doing together?

*We love reading and recently renovated a room in our house into a library. You'll usually find someone in our house curled up in that room with a book or school assignment. We love to be outside and recently purchased a camper and plan to visit several Missouri State Parks this summer. We also are very involved in our church and love to spend time there (again, when there's not a pandemic)*

## What are some of his assets and your vision for his best life?

*Caleb is persistent. He's not afraid of hard work and has achieved so much with his mobility and cognitive abilities given all that he's had to overcome. When he's tired of working, he rarely gets mad; he gets silly. Even though it's not ideal for his progress, it's hard to stay mad at him, because he's always ready to laugh. He's a joy to be around and his smile is contagious.*

## Resources:

[Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs \(CYSHCN\) Eligibility | Special Health Care Needs | Health & Senior Services \(mo.gov\)](#)

[Children's Medical Services \(kidsmedsupply.com\)](#)

[Mental Health Resources | Springfield, MO - Official Website \(springfieldmo.gov\)](#)

[Healthy Kids | Springfield, MO - Official Website \(springfieldmo.gov\)](#)

[Nemours KidsHealth - the Web's most visited site about children's health](#)

[Healthy Living – LifeCourse Nexus \(lifecoursetools.com\)](#)