

I Can



a·bil·i·ty

/ə'bilitē/

Noun

- 1.The capacity to do something
- 2.Talent that enables someone to achieve a great deal
- 3. Monarch School of New England**



We are a day school that works with children with disabilities, ages 5 – 21.

These disabilities include autism; physical disabilities, deaf-blindness, traumatic brain injury, hearing and vision impaired, developmental; and emotionally handicapped.

Children who for much of their lives, have been told they are different. And because of this, aren't able to do – and learn – as their 'typical' peers.

Here at the Monarch School of New England, we see things differently.

This from a dad: "There are no preconceived notions of what a student can or can't do here. You begin by believing a child can do anything. What a wonderfully dangerous assumption!"

These pages reflect the "I CAN" attitude of our students. All because we focus on 'ability' as opposed to 'disability.'

It is this attitude that makes all the difference.

Take some time to read our stories and to learn more about our school—and the amazing students we serve.

We love to talk about who we are and what we do so if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. Or schedule a time to come and visit.

And if you do, be prepared to listen for awhile... we think you will be just as amazed as we are at what our students CAN do.

Diane Bessey, M.Ed., PT
Executive Director



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Charlie

Charlie is eight years old. He is in the third grade.

Diane is his teacher. "When we first observed him at his public school, most everything was being done for him. It was all hand-over-hand assistance."

Which means the adult holds the back of a child's hand, guiding him to explore various objects.

Research indicates that the more you teach a child with disabilities to function independently at an early age, the less help he will need as he grows older. Hand-over-hand assistance lets children be more passive in their efforts as they don't see themselves as doers but rather as someone who waits for assistance.

Again, Diane. "Charlie is much more capable than what he has been given credit for. In my classroom, it's a matter of allowing him to be independent in the way he needs to explore."

I CAN.

Although Charlie has only been with the Monarch School of New England for six months, already there are differences. He is calm, makes choices and is much more mobile.

Now, he walks down the hallway – exploring, looking at and touching things that interest him. He figures things out. He acts as opposed to waiting for someone to do something for him.

Charlie is an amazingly beautiful boy. You can melt in his big, brown eyes.

"When children with disabilities appear small and cute, that's how people treat them," states Diane. Their cuteness becomes a liability. They don't learn to do things for themselves. "That's not right for Charlie, as he is a capable child with great potential."

And it is here that we will help him achieve it.

Monarch has become much more than a school to us ... it's an opportunity, an attitude and a way of life. Since coming to Monarch, Charlie has gotten his 'spark' back.

Each morning, he eagerly waits for the bus; his school life is full and it carries over into his home life. He has made progress we never thought possible. He's able to participate in a full day of activities including academics, life skills and adaptive sports. We see his self confidence growing as a result of Monarch staff who have given him the chance to shine.

Suddenly, Charlie's future seems full of possibilities."

KRISTEN, CHARLIE'S MOM

age 8

“I am excited that Ayana is attending the Monarch School.

Ayana has always been a happy girl but since coming to Monarch, she has blossomed into a brighter, happier child. The school has taken the time to see her potential – they let it shine through.

Ayana has adapted quite fast with some tasks ... others will take more practice. But the way they teach, the structure and consistency that Monarch provides – I’m excited to see the accomplishments yet to come.

There are still challenging days but at least now, we have hope for her future. We had lost it once.

SIZAIDA,
PROUD MOTHER OF AYANA

“Ayana is a bright, young lady.” She is 12 years old.

Stephanie is Ayana’s teacher.

“She has come a long way since she first started at the school. She’s successful because of our dynamic environment and the strong level of consistency she receives in the classroom.”

When you first meet Ayana, you might think ‘oh, she’s just a cute little girl.’ But she is so much more than that.

When Ayana first began at Monarch, she required a great deal of assistance, including hand under hand and verbal cues. Without this help, she was unable to do even the simplest of tasks, like following her schedule. It was a frustrating experience for her.

With consistency and follow-through from staff, Ayana is learning how to do things differently.

She is more willing to use her hands and her vision to look at what she is doing.

This allows her to take on more classroom jobs such as passing out attendance sheets in addition to participating in morning meeting tasks, such as holding the flag for the Pledge of Allegiance, watering the plants and feeding the fish.

She has proven to us – and to herself – that she can learn various tasks when the steps are broken down, a skill that will help her in the future.

Again, from Stephanie: “Within our classroom and throughout the school, we have high expectations for all our students. Ayana’s success shows that with a little, caring push, she has the potential to accomplish so much more.”

“We are proud of her.”



age 12

Ayana



Ben

Ben is 19 years old. He loves to work.

A senior at Monarch School of New England's Gonic site, Ben's coursework focuses on functional life skills – money concepts, work ethic, taking direction from staff – all critical skills he needs when he graduates and moves into the workforce.

Success is easy to define for Ben.

He wants to work at as many jobs as he is able. And he has the confidence within himself to know he can do this.

Ben works at 5 to 7 different job sites around Rochester. He cleans police cars, helps maintain exhibits at a museum, recycles oil at a public garage, cleans and sweeps at a florist shop, folds pizza boxes and does seasonal barn work at a farm.

He is a busy guy.

Kate is Ben's teacher. "His ability to take direction from any number of people helps Ben with his jobs. The functional life skills he learns in the classroom carry over to his work in the community. So whatever he learns at school, he's able to use at work."

Kathy directs the school's vocational program. She works with Ben helping him figure out different careers to explore jobs he might like. For each job, he fills out an application, goes on an interview and then does a tour of the potential job site, exactly as he would do once he graduates.

Ben has his own ideas for what he wants to do when he graduates in 2015.

When asked, he will tell you he wants "to get a job, either pouring concrete floors or working at a police station." His plans also involve living on his own in an apartment in town.

His time at Monarch is helping him get prepared for life after school. He will be ready.

Ben arrives at the museum willing and ready to work. He's always happy to be here.

We work on exhibit-related jobs together, from safety and maintenance to cleaning and new exhibit construction. He hammers, sands, stains and tightens bolts. I can give him a job and let him go. When he's done, he will find me, ready to move on to the next project.

Ben is a hard worker – he is a great help to the museum.

MARK CUDDY,
EXHIBITS MANAGER
THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF
NEW HAMPSHIRE

age 19

I give all the credit to the Monarch School.

What he got at the school he couldn't have gotten anywhere else. They exposed him to things we couldn't have done ... like kayaking, sledding or hippotherapy.

We never thought he would have been loved so much as a person, as much as he was at the school.

Dan was at the school for a good 10 years.

With Dan at Monarch, I never had the heartache and stress that other parents dealt with. The staff was awesome. They got him out in the community to do wonderful things.

DANA, DAN'S MOM

"He's happy here. It's where he wants to live. He adjusted a lot quicker than we did."

Dan is 23 years old. For a number of years, he was a student at the Monarch School of New England. Now he lives at Waban's Group Residence in Maine.

Dana is his mom.

She never thought he would live anywhere but home. Things change.

Dan graduated from Monarch in June 2009 and that fall, was accepted into a day program at the Morrison Center in Scarborough, Maine. Life was good.

But then he went through a phase where he was having a hard time eating and sleeping. Dana says, "Because Dan was having such difficulties, no one was sleeping." So in the spring of 2011, the family decided to try respite. Dan spent his first, ever, weekend away from home that May.

He loved it. And wanted to stay. That wasn't supposed to happen.

So over the summer of 2011, Dana and her family helped Dan transition to his new place. He moved in on September 1.

Dana is amazed at Dan's independence. She credits the Monarch School of New England for helping him get there. "What he got at the school, he couldn't have received anywhere else. Staff was awesome. They exposed him to things we weren't able to do with him – kayaking, sledding and hippotherapy."

"I also didn't think it possible that he could be so loved as a person, as he was at Monarch. It was like a whole chunk of heartache and stress I never had to deal with."

All this has helped Dan enjoy his new life.

Clearly, Dana is proud of her son. And of what he has been able to accomplish. Never in her wildest dreams, did she think this might be possible.

Yet all she has to do is look at the smile on his face and she can see success.

Dan

age 23



SUC·CESS

/sək'ses/

Noun

1. The accomplishment of an aim or purpose
 2. **Student transitions at the Monarch School of New England**
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SUCCESS is the number of students who transition back to their home school district.

On average, we serve thirty two (32) to thirty six (36) students each year at the Monarch School of New England. Since 2004, we have transitioned fifty eight (58) students.

