

# We Can



# Tran·si·tion

/tran'ziSH(ə)n/

Noun

1. The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.

Example: “students **in transition** from one program to another”



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Dear Friends—

The Monarch School of New England is a leader in its work with children and young adults with significant disabilities.

Our willingness to take risks goes back to our roots in 1969 when we saw a need to help parents of children left out of society. From this desire for change, a small, informal playgroup began.

### “We Can”

Word spread about the possibilities the playgroup offered to these children, and so in 1971, the group approached the Rochester Association for Retarded Children for space and financial support.

The association agreed. Costs to operate the center were supported by a grant from the state, with Gov. Walter Peterson stating:

“This grant is the first step in providing for a group of New Hampshire’s citizens who have long been neglected. Neglect of this group has been costly because it has created a body of dependent persons.

“More importantly, it has been costly in the waste of human beings *who can and want to be productive.*”

The stories on these pages reflect our passion in helping our uniquely talented students become productive human beings—in school, in their community and at work. Teachers, parents and school districts share the same vision of readying

our students to contribute to our world in meaningful ways.

We have come a long way since our early days, but in our philosophy, we have not changed: We remain committed to taking risks.

We believe in our students and those who support them.

We believe in their abilities.

Together, **We Can.**

Diane Bessey, M.Ed., PT  
*Executive Director*





He wants to be in charge.



### Hunter and Nicole

“Hunter is special. He is witty and charming. He’s fun to be around,” says Nicole.

Nicole is Hunter’s teacher.

She continues: “He is 10 years old. He is very capable and loves to help and be a worker. It’s finding those things he likes to do to keep him motivated to learn.”

“Hunter wants to be an office worker at the school. He has a name tag and a lanyard, and he wears different shirts with the ‘Monarch School of New England’ logo. He thinks he is a worker, but I like to remind him that for right now, he’s a great helper. But one day, he could work at a place like this if he does well in school.”

Nicole works with students in grades 4 through 7, ages 9 through 12. Her room is colorful and inspirational, yet when there is too much going on, it offers a respite of calm. Each of her students brings his or her unique abilities to the classroom. Nicole sees it as her job to foster those skills that bring out the best in each child and that will serve as the basis for learning.

“Hunter is really smart; he’s good at math. He can do triple digit addition in his head faster than some of the staff.”

Yet, although he is good at academics, it’s not what he enjoys.

Hunter wants to direct the classroom and be in charge. He wants to run the school.

His future?

His mom wants him to be happy. She is one of his biggest fans.

She wants him to feel he has a purpose and that everything he does in school will build his confidence so that he can have a great future— especially since he has such a great heart and really enjoys helping others.

Nicole, “definitely sees him working,” she says. Hunter is very independent, and although he will need to learn how to work under someone, he is very capable of doing so.

However, before he takes over the world, he will need to get his reading, math and schoolwork done.





## Denice and Hayley

“As a parent, **transition** means planning for the rest of your child’s life. It’s a lot of work.”

Hayley is a student at the Monarch School of New England; Denice is her mom. Hayley has physical challenges; she is also visually impaired and nonverbal.

“Hayley will be 16 in July. She will be at the school until she is 21. After that, we will try to determine what she might want to do to keep her days full and busy and challenging. We want her to be happy,” Denice says.

For parents planning the transition of their child from a student at school to a 21 year-old adult who has graduated, few options exist. The young adult can stay at home full-time or can attend a day program at an area agency going out into the community for vocational and recreational activities.

A third option is that parents can participate in a program in which they are given a budget to hire people to work with their young adult,

doing a variety of programming. “A year ago, I really couldn’t talk about my hopes for Hayley. I didn’t know what we had for options.”

Having a child with disabilities presents many emotional challenges to parents.

“You plan, you work, you do your best and you accept that your dreams for your child may not be her reality. I surround myself with people that ‘get it’ because you really need to have those people in your life.”

“Seeing how other families have been successful has been a big help to me. We are a community. People don’t mind talking about their experience.”

Her hopes for Hayley’s transition?

“If she can be challenged by participating around the house and being out in the community around people who like to be with her, that would be a good life for her. To be doing things that keep her physically active and healthy. We want her to be happy.”

“For me, it begins with accepting where we are right now, and knowing that it’s all OK.”

We want her to be happy.



One must work and  
dare if one really  
wants to live.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

**Dr. Carole A. Smith**

The secret of joy in work is contained in  
one word—excellence. To know how to  
do something well is to enjoy it.

PEARL S. BUCK

Dr. Carole A. Smith is the director of Special Services at MSAD 35, Marshwood's school district, which includes the towns of Eliot and South Berwick in southern Maine.

She partners with the Monarch School of New England when a student with a disability in MSAD 35 needs more than what her district can provide.

"I came on board with the Monarch School of New England years ago," says Carole. "When I first started working with them, they were going through some growing pains. The tipping point was when Diane took over as director. She and I share the same vision."

Carole is no stranger to special education. Before she became a director, she was a practitioner in the schools for 23 years, working mostly with students with emotional behaviors. She has always been a firm believer in looking at abilities first, then disabilities.

There is joy in work. There is no happiness except in the realization  
that we have accomplished something.

HENRY FORD

The partnership between the schools works because of a shared philosophy: a focus on the whole child. A child's abilities are seen before a child's challenges. This means that everyone has potential.

This is especially important as a student gets ready to *transition* to work.

"Our kiddos can have supporting roles in the work place. The vision has to evolve with each child and start when he or she is really young," Carole says. "What are the child's emerging skills? How can we capitalize on these skills and abilities when considering transition from school-based services to adult life?"

"Jobs that used to support the middle class don't exist because they need a different level of training. We have students who could do some of these new, emerging jobs. It's our responsibility to re-evaluate the new opportunities for our students in the work place, task analyze the work

and figure out how our students can contribute to the work force in meaningful ways."

Take for example, work required to be done in a grocery store. Groceries have to be bagged. It is a real job that is essential to provide in grocery stores, and it matters to the customer that bagging is done in the correct way. Eggs are never on the bottom.

"So, we explicitly teach the skills needed to our students. We capitalize on a student's ability, carefully teaching the bagging skills as well as the pragmatic skills required to be successfully employed in this capacity. As educators we ask companies to tell us what skills they require in workers, and we'll tell that company that we can create that worker, matching our students and their skill sets to that which our students are able to contribute to a given workforce."

"Our kiddos need an education—a holistic education that takes care of every aspect of who that child is as a person. Diane and I share this philosophy: We feel it in our bones and in our souls. Now, we need to get this message out into the workforce."





.....nothing short of amazing.



## Alec and WOKQ

Alec is a 20-year-old young man with neuromuscular issues

throughout his body. He is non-verbal and moves in the world using a wheelchair.

His dad calls him a “Warrior” and says that if anyone has the right to ask, “Why me?” it should be Alec. But he does not. Rather, Alec is “full of joy and loves to do anything and everything,” his dad says.

Alec has been at the Monarch School of New England for 5 years. He has grown in his ability to communicate, which can be difficult as he uses one finger at a time to type on his communication device. Each key he presses represents a phrase he uses throughout his day whether it is at home, school or work.

Three years ago, News Director Don Briand at WOKQ radio in Dover, was approached by the Monarch School of New England to work with Alec, the “weather geek,” who loves all things weather.

“I had no experience with someone like Alec,” Don says. “I have watched him grow

over the years. I am amazed at his tenacity and his great humor. He struggles at times, sometimes relying more on one arm than the other to find the correct letters, words or numbers. But he has gotten faster and I am amazed. I don’t want to just throw these words out, but he is an amazing young man.”

In addition to researching and reporting the weather, Alec also updates the scores for his favorite New England sports teams—which is all of them. Alec has come a long way in his ability to work. He is able to communicate the weather much faster than when he started. This has increased his confidence and his motivation to do more work.

What’s next?

Alec graduates in June 2016. His goal is to continue to work at a job where he can use his skills. He’s also looking forward to spending more time with his mom and dad. And because he will miss his friends at school, he plans to keep in touch by phone. The skills he received at the Monarch School of New England have helped him shape a future. His own strength and persistence also make him ready for the next phase in his life.

Which is nothing short of amazing.





## Taylor and Warren's Hardware

Taylor is 20 years old. He is the first student to graduate with a diploma as

opposed to a 'certificate of attendance' from the Monarch School of New England.

This is a big deal.

When he was 17, Taylor began working at Warren's Hardware in Barrington, N.H. Once a week, accompanied by a staff person, Taylor learned the skills to become a responsible employee: He learned to sweep the floors, stock the shelves and break down boxes from shipments.

When he graduated in the summer of 2015, he was offered part-time work at the store. His real family drives him from Maine and picks him up at the end of his shift. He works on his own, taking directions from his boss and carrying out the tasks assigned to him.

"He is capable," says storeowner Andy Miller. "His working takes the pressure off of me."

When he's got something to do then I can focus and go do what I need to do. His skills needed to be found and worked with, but he's learning them. And he will be able to take the things he's learned here and do them elsewhere— and do a bigger and better job."

Taylor calls Andy and Kay, owners of Warren's Hardware, "boss man" and "boss lady."

"They treat me like family," he says. "I love my job. I do everything behind the scenes to keep the store clean. I also help carry out packages for customers."

Success is employment for our students after graduation.

Working at a job he loves is possible for Taylor because of the vocational training he received at the Monarch School of New England.



He works on his own.



I hope these pages have given you insight into the beauty and the depth of the work we do here at our school.

You've met four of our amazing students: Hunter, who is 10 years old, Hayley at 16, Alec at 20 and Taylor, a graduate of our school, at 21.

**Transitions**—moving from one learning experience to another—provide each of these students a foundation for volunteer opportunities or jobs where they will be valued and productive. It goes back to my opening message with Gov. Walter Peterson's words:

"... human beings who can and want to be productive."

So what's next for our school?

Within the next few years, the building pictured on the next page will become a reality.

It is the new Monarch School of New England High School & Vocational Technical Training Center where our students will be educated and trained to meet a wide variety of work options in agriculture, hospitality, technology and retail.

It is our future. It is the future for our students.

**WE CAN.**

*Diane Bessey*  
Diane Bessey



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# Suc·cess

/sək'ses/

Noun

1. The accomplishment of an aim or purpose
2. Student transitions at the Monarch School of New England



**WE CAN** consider it a success when our students graduate from the Monarch School of New England and take their real work experiences out into the world.

**WE CAN** be proud of our students as work helps them be successful: Active, hard-working contributors to our shared society.

We serve 50 students / year.

  
Monarch School  
*of New England*

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