

Hello Monarch Families and Community Partners!

The Fall 2023 school session is well underway. As an educator and school administrator the excitement of the first day of a new school year is an annual event I look forward to as the final days of August draw near. This year I experienced Monarch staff eagerly preparing their classrooms for students' arrival. Staff engaged in discussion of how to best support each student in having a great first day as the start of a successful school year took shape. On August 30th, students arrived by car, van, or bus greeting familiar faces and ready to start their next learning journey. The Monarch school buildings began to come alive with the rhythm of the school day creating a positive energy of learning and growth!

In just 4 weeks since students returned, so many important things have happened. Like all students across New Hampshire schools, students met their new and returning classmates and began bonding as a unit working with their instructional and therapy staff supporters. Daily and weekly schedules have taken shape giving the students a routine to meet all their learning goals. Classroom expectations were formulated with student input, allowing a connection to understanding how our governmental laws are made with/for citizens. A few of the rules I've noted posted on classroom walls include messages that are applicable to all learning environments, such as "Be Kind" and "Make Friends".

I also experienced unique aspects of the start of the Fall session that I believe can only be offered by the unparalleled approach to personalized learning that Monarch provides. Each student is actively engaged in learning throughout the school day, with individualized support to highlight strengths and progress toward established goals. Simple moments in an average school day are turned into teachable moments by Monarch staff. I observed this in action recently when a student's morning greeting to a staff shifted to a prompt to engage with a communication device. The interaction grew from a standard one word encounter in passing, to a sustained exchange of welcomes with back and forth communication between the student and staff.

Another highlight I observed this week is my observation of two group speech therapy sessions integrated with support from a music therapist. Students enjoyed playful tunes while practicing articulation, expressive, and receptive language skills, as well as having social interactions with their peers. Monkeys, pumpkins, and the classic song "She'll be Coming Round the Mountain" were just a small portion of the interactive language-rich session. The guitar strumming, sign language, hand clapping and staff/student vocals created a stimulating learning environment for all students. This is another example of the unique, collaborative approach that Monarch offers.

Finally, I continue to note the amazing support for our school and students by surrounding businesses and organizations. From multiple school supply drives and partnerships for community-based instruction, to participation in community events and enrichment opportunities offered for our students - there has been an outpouring of support so far this school year. As I am introduced to community members, many share their personal connections to Monarch and all speak of their recognition of Monarch's important mission to provide an education that fosters unlimited possibilities for our students.

Monarch students benefit from a robust, supportive learning environment. As a result of thoughtful planning and collaboration between all team members, students are actively engaged in meaningful lessons, activities and therapies throughout the day. Together with the support of our students' families, and our community partners, this is what Monarch provides to each student. As the school year moves forward, I am certain I will continue to witness more amazing learning moments that integrate education and therapy to maximize student progress.

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