

A peek at their kids' progress

School for disabled has cameras in class

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A LONG ISLAND school for the developmentally disabled has gone high-tech to help children communicate — and put their anxious parents at ease.

The Hagedorn Little Village School, in Seaford, has installed cameras in its classrooms so families can monitor the children's progress — without disrupting class.

The school, where a handful of Queens kids attend classes, is also using devices that help children who can't verbally communicate to express themselves.

The school is gearing up next month for one of its largest fund-raisers. Proceeds from its 20th annual golf tournament will help the school buy and upgrade therapeutic equipment, officials said.

"We're asking parents to trust us with their fragile children who often aren't able to speak when they walk through our doors," said the nonprofit school's executive director Jon Feingold. The cameras "provide comfort and a chance for parents to see how we work with their children."

Little Village assists about 1,000 children a year from Long Island and New York City, though only a quarter of them ages 5 through 11, attend the school. It also evaluates kids for various disorders and runs early intervention and pre-school programs.

"It's so great," autistic student Malik Jones, 6, of Rosedale, said

about his school. "I like to play on the computer."

Fellow student Kelly Hur, 6, of Little Neck, wasn't able to communicate quite as well. She suffers from autism and cerebral palsy.

But her mother, Haili Hur, 38, said she was pleased with Kelly's progress. She's visited Little Village several times to watch her daughter work with a therapist on a video monitor.

"I want to see what they're doing at the school, so I can follow the same examples at home," she said.

She was particularly happy about the gains Kelly has made using a device that lets students touch pictures on a screen, allowing them to communicate anything from what they'd like to eat to whether something is upsetting them.

"Not being able to communicate is very frustrating," Hur said, noting the device has helped her bridge the speech barrier with her daughter.

Diane Paul, a director at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, a Maryland-based nonprofit group, said the devices can be a vital link.

"Sometimes they're the only means of communication for children who have trouble being understood," Paul said.

Feingold said he hopes that money raised from the tournament will go toward purchasing more of the lap-top-sized devices, which can cost \$700 to \$8,000.



Jon Feingold



Special ed teacher Daniele Murphy with enthusiastic pupil Malik Jones of Rosedale. Photo by David Pokress