

# Comal Independent School District

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Summit includes something for every parent**

When Karolyn Davey first heard the diagnosis that her son had autism, it took her breath away.

"I was completely blindsided," Davey said. "I didn't know what autism was and I didn't understand what the doctor was saying to me. I just remember thinking all the plans I had for my child were blown to bits."

After going through a wide range of emotions, including anger and fear, Davey decided to become proactive.

"I was initially told my son wouldn't be able to talk," she said. "I refused to accept it. That's when I rolled up my sleeves and started educating myself in any way I could. Now, more than 10 years later, my son is now considered a highly functioning autism child and is in general education classes at Canyon High."

That's why forums like Saturday's Comal ISD Parent Summit at Church Hill Middle are perfect for parents like Davey, and anyone else who wants to take an active role in the development of their child.

The daylong event began with a stirring keynote speech from Comal ISD Apple Trainer Dan Schmit, the former coordinator of instructional technology for the Nebraska Department of Education, who spoke on "Engaging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners."

Parents attended breakout sessions throughout the day on a wide variety of topics, including "Unlocking Autism," "College Admission: You are in the driver's seat!," "Why can't my child pay attention?," "Communicating with teens," "Protecting and growing your child's brain," "The 411 on Drugs," and "Dyslexia – What parents can do."

“Parents of any age group child can find something informative here,” said Jamie Ezell, Comal ISD’s parent liaison coordinator. “We feel we’re addressing many different needs.”

Davey, who also has a daughter at Church Hill Middle that was diagnosed with autism, agrees the Parent Summit provides invaluable information.

“I think it’s awesome,” Davey said. “It’s impossible to keep up with all the information that’s out there now. You can Google a topic and get thousands of different answers. Forums like this helps make sure parents are getting the right information.”

Davey said she believes parents of any type of student can benefit from a summit like this.

“I hear parents all the time asking, ‘How can I help my student?’” she said. “I hear that from parents of both general education and special needs kids. They also want to know what’s going on with their children. This is a place that helps answer those questions and it brings the community together at the same time.”

Jenni Scott, Comal ISD autism specialist, said parents taking advantage of forums like the Parent Summit is critical.

“Getting the correct information can make or break a child’s future,” Scott said. “Parents can get practical strategies and tools to implement and make day to day life, as well as planning for their child’s future, easier. This shows parents are taking ownership and they want to be a big part of their child’s life.”

Parent Tucker Cuellar was planning on attending sessions on dyslexia, assisting your child achieving success in math and science, and on ADHD.

“I think this is a must for parents,” Cuellar said. “I certainly need all the tools I can get to help educate both myself and my child.”

Comal ISD physical therapist Rebecca Greebon said she highly recommends parents attend future summits.

“This is like a one-stop shop to help parents,” Greebon said. “There are so many ways to teach your kids, and learning methods have changed so much recently as technology has changed. I think staying on top of those changes in education is more important than ever now.”

Several Parent Mini-Summits will be scheduled in the spring. Topics will be selected based on parent feedback. If you have a suggestion for a summit topic, contact Ezell at 830-221-2169.

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IN PHOTO: Comal ISD autism specialist Jenni Scott speaks to parents during her summit session "Unlocking Autism" on Sep. 19, at Church Hill Middle.