

## 36th Annual National Head Start Training Conference Parent Interview: Lynn Edwards

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

Jarma Wrihten: Greetings, Lynn. We're happy to have you here today with us at the Parent Place at the ECLKC, which is the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. So thanks for coming out and being a star today. It's your opportunity to share your success story and your experiences about how you, as a parent, have supported your child's learning in the home. And I know when we spoke that you told me you were a former Head Start parent...

Lynne Edwards: Yes.

Jarma: ...but you're also a Head Start staff member. So we're going to...I'd love you to really share with me all the wonderful things about what you've done as a parent to support your child's learning at home and how he's succeeding in life today. And then just kind of highlight on some of the things you think that were important to you and how you spent your together-times with him and what you see about Head Start in the future.

Lynne: Okay. Two things. I am a former Head Start parent, my son is now fourteen, and I'm currently a grandmother to a five-year-old who's presently in Head Start and I also serve on the policy council. Both of my children had learning disabilities and behavior problems. Now the first one...Head Start was very very important to me then because that's when he was diagnosed with his disability, and they truly truly helped me.

They helped me with his behavior at Head Start, with daycare, it was truly holistic and that's what I really like about Head Start, it's not just school. It included me. It included him, his doctors, speech pathologists. Whatever he needed, it was all coordinated through our research coordinator, which was...she was just phenomenal. Jarma: Wow.

Lynne: And with the coping skills that he learned at Head Start, that's what helped him when he transitioned to public school and even though he was in a special school when he first started, those coping skills helped him to eventually be able to go to a regular public school. Now he's in all regular classes and he's doing well – honor roll student and getting ready to go to a special program in the fall for science, technology, engineering, and math and it all started with Head Start.

And in addition during that same time, because Head Start is holistic, it helped me to go to college because I needed to do something besides worry about my son. And so while he was in Head Start learning, I went to college and in 2002 I ended up getting my A.A. degree in business. So now I'm back at Head Start with a five-year-old with behavior problems and speech and language problems and again, the disability coordinator is phenomenal. She has pulled so many resources together that he's really doing well.

They're also going to help me to help him to transition into public school with supports. So, once again Head Start will be in my life for quite a long time because of the resources. What I would say to the other parents: Be involved. Be honest about your children. If you think that there may be something wrong, speak about it. Tell your resource coordinator. Discuss it with the teacher because they're valuable in helping you to sort things out.

Some things are what they are, but some things you need a little bit of help with. Don't be afraid to speak up because they're there and they're a wealth of information and knowledge and resources that you may not even know about. Always be involved with your children. Make everything learning; it can be fun.

When we...when I take him to the bus stop in the morning, our bus stop – we have a little stand and it has all these little dots on it. Well he's learning to count. So every day we count the dots. When we first started he didn't do so well, but now he's up to twenty-five, so the dots helped. We read. He loves the Wii. He beats me all the time. [Both laugh]

Lynne: But it's limited and he knows if he does well in school then he has an hour of Wii time. If he doesn't do so well

in school, then he know he doesn't get the Wii but we do something else fun. So it's not like a punishment, but that's like his ultimate thing. I'm not sure what else to say.

Jarma: Well, you said a whole lot. And you are involved in quite a bit so all those experiences that you've had with the OT, the PT, you know you talked about the resources – disabilities resource and you're sharing about some together-time experiences. Now when you get home and you've gone to all of those...you've seen all these professionals, what do you do in the home to really bring about the supports that he need so that it can be fun and learning times?

Lynne: He's very routine, so we have a set routine. We basically eat around the same time and we always eat together. That's where we discuss what happened during the day – his successes, his not so good things that might have happened. I discuss my day and that's when he chooses whether we're going to read that night or if we're going to watch a movie.

And then at the end of the day it's his bath and he has to have a kiss and his hug and it's off to sleep. So we try to keep it so that he can have structure not only in school, but at home so he basically knows what his day is going to be and what's expected of him every day until he can...until it's just more natural for him.

Jarma: Okay. So kind of summing this up, like you shared several ideas for some advice you would give to other parents. How do you see the future of Head Start in the way it should go and perhaps maybe supporting parents in their roles as teachers and even beyond that.

Lynne: I see Head Start being more instrumental in children's and family's lives. I think more children need to be involved in Head Start and I think parents need to know that you don't have to be just low income to be involved in Head Start. My...the...Koran who's in Head Start now is because of his disability; it's not because of my income.

And I think Head Start really needs to stress that because there's so many more kids that could be involved in Head Start sooner than public school and really get that strong, firm foundation and supports in place before they get to public school because really public school because it's so large can't give you that nurturing and caring and holistic approach that Head Start can, so I would encourage parents to look into it.

Don't just think about your income. Don't just look at it for low income. Think about your child and ask. You might be surprised.

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-- Permalink for viewing (requires Flash and JavaScript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000157-Lynn+Edwards+Parent+Interview-2009-SD360p/d7a894fde6673i428cJa2dfM7fd7958f0e38>