

## 36th Annual National Head Start Training Conference Parent Interview: Nicole Mabbot

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Jarma Wrihten: Hi, Nicole, how are you today? Nicole Mabbot: I'm doin' great!

Jarma: Welcome to the ECLKC Parent Place. We're happy to have you, and just excited to have you come in and hear your story as parent, as teacher in the home. We really are trying to get lots of parents' points of views, so we hope that you'll be able to tell us a little bit about yourself, your child in Head Start, and how you support your child's learning in the home. Then we'll talk a little bit more about other fun things.

Nicole: Okay! Well, I am a mother of four boys, three of which have had the Head Start experience, one of which is not quite there yet. I have had three children who have been able to get into the program because they've had a disability, which is a great thing to find out that, regardless of income, they were there to help when other centers wouldn't have been there, and I'm basically their advocate, and have been very dedicated to Head Start, just because I owe them for everything they've done.

Jarma: But Head Start actually owes you -- you're the parent! Without the parents, we wouldn't have a foundation, so we want to thank you for saying -- sharing that! What are some of the things that you all do together, some of the together time activities? And, if you could tell us a little bit about that, and share any experiences that you do.

Nicole: Well, our favorite thing is simple things. We are a great family of going out to do grocery shopping together, and to go do our regular shopping together, and a lot of parents and people in the stores are probably going, "What is the lady doing out with four kids at the grocery store?" And I honestly thought to myself, "There's no way I'm going to do this," but I've learned through Head Start that there are fun ways to involve families without spending money, and to use just everyday experiences to incorporate into their lives to show them the skills that they need.

It demonstrates to them, the importance of, you know, being a team player, and to help. They are my helpers -- I make them be my litte helpers, give them each jobs, and they count out the items for me and put them in the cart, and one of them will read the labels and tell me where the product is that I need, and all these skills we use every day, and they're taken for granted, and my kids have learned that there's more to it than just going to the store and grabbing what you need and getting out. It can be a fun learning experience, you know, with simple things.

Jarma: I love that and since you've said, all those fun simple things and great ideas, how do you feel you've helped prepare them for school, and do you have any that are transitioning into kindergarten now, and how have you been successful at helping them to prepare for school and life, actually?

Nicole: Well, I would say that definitely all the skills that we use -- counting, sorting, reading labels -- and the funny thing is is people think that you have to be able to read the letters to be able to read, and that's one thing that Head Start has taught me that, necessarily, you don't have to be able to read letters to be able to read; that children at young ages can learn to read by picture association, and that's something that's very important, and that can be a great skill and asset to help them build, and encourage them to learn to read in the future.

And I think that basically we've all used those skills and just grown from it, and my children are transitioning. I do have one that's going to kindergarten. I have one that's in kindergarten, and one that's in first grade! And I'm just telling you, it's leaps and bounds -- leaps and bounds! I have my first-grader who's scoring above average - now, these are disabled children that had language barriers, and they are both scoring above their peers, and this is something I feel is based off of the support that they received prior to kindergarten.

I feel, if I hadn't had it, there's no way -- no WAY they would have had the ability to go from where they were to where they are and be above the class. That's something that I am forever grateful for. Jarma: And it sounds like you're

doing a remarkable job because you're well aware of things that they need, so you've had experience with the speech language pathologists, OT and PT, and any others?

Nicole: We had -- we've had OT and PT. We've had special instruction because my children have had behavioral difficulties; and that's, you know, common when you have children with language barriers. They have a lot of developmental delays, and they get aggressive, and they get frustrated, and that's all part of it. And it takes several therapists, and, you know, teachers, and a community to help these children and to understand that the reason why they are the way they are is because they do have that delay, but they need encouragement...

... not negative stares or people, you know, saying, "Oh God, get that child out of the store" -- No! They need the town to support the child, you know, and to encourage the family not to give up, and to get frustrated. I feel a lot of kids are getting neglected nowadays because parents are just so overwhelmed and frustrated by disabilities, and it's really a learning, you know, it's really a learning thing for everyone; the child and the family, and it helps to make you stronger, when you go through something like that.

Jarma: So what would you tell other families about being that parent, as a first teacher? I mean, you've -- your role is working with a child with disabilities, which is set -- very sentimental and dear to my heart, so what would you tell other parents how -- how should they proceed?

Nicole: Well, I think the most important thing is to get as many people involved in your child's life as possible, and to, you know, step back from those who want to be negative, because it may be hard to separate yourself from some people that have become your best friends, but you have to have positive encouragement the whole step or you won't get there, and you can't ever give up. You have to keep trying, over and over, and it's going to take twice as long then it would without a child without a disability, to get to those, you know, those those barriers and to break through them, and to conquer your fears...

...and to make that child feel like they're encouraged and to make that child feel like they're there and they understand that you love them. It just takes a little more support, so make sure you have a good support system. And use the school; use the centers. The social workers are on site, they have great, great resources, and there's lots of things in the community that can help, you just have to learn how to ask for help, and to be there, and to be involved.

Jarma: That's right. And so, for a simple tip for the day that you would tell another parent about teaching any skill at home, and it could be as simple as teaching to count -- just, what would be your tip for the day?

Nicole: My tip for the day would be, "Don't become frustrated!" Simple as that -- don't become frustrated. They're learning -- just like we are -- and we have to adapt to them and their needs. If we're frustrated, they're frustrated. I have four boys, it takes a lot of patience to get through the day. But at the end of the day, we all go to bed, and we're all happy, and they feel loved, and that's important.

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-- Premalink for viewing (requires Flash and javascript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000183-Nicole+Mabbot+Parent+Interview-2009-SD360p/ec1d5835G3d2e74e49qafd1Y69ce6c3b828f>