

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Michelle Murphy: Hi. I'm Michelle Murphy and this is Keegan, and we're here to tell you about my five-year-old son Ashton's Head Start story. We have a fairly unique experience with Head Start. We started out in York County, Virginia, and then we moved to Prince William County. When we started in York County, my son had been born two months premature and he had some fine motor skill delays. And through Head Start, we have made leaps and bounds, and we have actually just about caught up with all of our fine motor skills.

We... I -- I can't say enough good things about the Head Start program and what he's -- he's had, the experiences through Head Start, everything from taking his first trip to the zoo to our homework activities on our green sheets. Yesterday we went on a nature walk and we got to see signs of spring, or even, for the first time, him -- him and myself, we -- we got to open a coconut to taste a fresh coconut, which was a new experience for both of us. All ideas that, without our green homework sheets, we would never have thought of on our own.

Head Start... We knew -- I knew from the moment Ashton was -- is the size Keegan is now I wanted him in the Head Start program. It is so amazing how they can teach kids, and how much they learn and how much fun they have. My son Ashton comes home every day talking about all his friends and the experiences he had with his friends, and what he did with his friends, and is so excited to do homework. And every day he wakes up and he says, "Mom, is today a school day?"

And he runs to get to the bus because he is so excited to go and to learn whatever lesson it is that they're learning that day. As a parent, I've watched him grow. I've watched his -- his fine motor, gross motor, verbal, all his skills -- I've seen the skill sets just triple from where we were. And we get all kinds of ideas and -- and the more involved you are with the -- the green sheets, if you use them as a guideline and even go a step farther, as a parent you get to see many new things and you get to see the way that they grow and they get these experiences.

I can't say enough good thing about -- things about our family service workers. As a single parent, we've been through rough times as well as good times, and it doesn't make a difference. We could be having a great time, that family service worker will call just to check in and make sure: "How are you doing? Do you need anything? Is things okay?" And if we hit a hard time, they're right there, right by our side, offering anything that they can help with our family. It's -- it's like having an extended family member, your family service worker.

If you ever need anything you know you can call and they will be there at -- at -- at the drop of a hat. The more involved you are in Head Start, the -- the better the experience that you're going to have. I've been a member of the Policy Council, and at our old Head Start I was the vice-president of the parent council. Just last week I went to one of the parents' meetings where they spoke about bicycle safety. There are all kinds of meetings or outings or field trips.

There's so many experiences that you can have with your child and for your child that, I would say, the more involved you are the better the experience for you and the child.

Valuable resources... I think that through the different parenting classes and -- and everything from the conscious discipline that they have at -- at the Prince William County to -- they have -- to all the different classes they offer -- computer classes. They have where you can become CPR and first aid certified. There are so many different resources that as a parent, I mean, you can learn the skills to go out there and to get a better job.

My -- from being the vice-president on the -- on the parent council last year, I put that on my resume and I was able to get a job at a -- working for a hospital up there in -- doing marketing and things like that because of my experience on the parent council. I would tell other parent -- parents to be as engaged as -- as fully as you can be, to dive in, because the -- the more that you do with your child and with Head Start the better the experience is going to be for you and for

your child.

And it's just so rewarding to watch your kids grow and to -- for you to get to see things through their eyes, which is some of the most beautiful memories you can have.

-- End of Video --

-- Premalink for viewing (requires Flash and javascript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000171-Michelle+Murphy+Parent+Interview-2011-SD360p/bfcf2822e1440b481fu8d161162c75d57c84>