

ARABELLA

“What I loved about the group family was that it was non-threatening, educational, but most importantly fun for not only the children but also the adults attending.”

I cannot believe EarlyEd is 1 year younger than me!

We first came to EarlyEd in 2008 after our third child, Arabella was diagnosed as having a Global Developmental Delay. At the time I was a Preschool Additional Needs Teacher. Although I was not ever alarmed at Arabella having a diagnosis, what did alarm me was how overwhelming understanding what to do once you have the diagnosis. And that is when EarlyEd came in to our lives. Not only did Arabella gain from the new found relationship with EarlyEd, but every family member who came did and to this day we all have such fond memories of EarlyEd at North Sydney. Ironically though, Arabella has the least memories of the place despite us being introduced to EarlyEd due to her needs.

At EarlyEd we attended weekly groups. Through these sessions we would be provided support from the physiotherapist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, social worker and of course the Special Educators. What I loved about the group family was that it was non-threatening, educational, but most importantly fun for not



only the children but also the adults attending. Many laughs were had. But trust me sometimes tears as well. Tears of joy, tears of exhaustion and tears of wonder.

Due to my work commitments, I sometimes was unable to take Arabella so my husband would go, and recall a grandparent attending at times too.

One of my earliest memories at EarlyEd was Jenny the physiotherapist wanting to encourage improvement in Arabella's walking. So we placed a forehead tennis sweat band around her upper thighs in a figure of eight. At the time I thought how weird it was (and it was) but wow what a difference such a simple idea made in building up her core muscles.

Another aspect of EarlyEd that has changed our lives forever was the introduction to Key Word Signing to our family. Although Arabella no longer relies on it, to this day my husband and I still use key word signing when wanting to discretely communicate in public. And interestingly Arabella when really tired sometimes resorts back to using it.

Arabella's sister and brother also enjoyed EarlyEd. Mia was lucky enough to attend the weekly group with Arabella prior to her attending school. And Thomas (and Mia) had also accessed their school holiday siblings group. Thomas and Mia were old enough when attending to remember the great times at EarlyEd.

We also all have very fond memories of all the staff at EarlyEd. EarlyEd assisted in us as a family embracing life's challenges with enthusiasm, honesty, determination and of course humour.

Today, Arabella is in year 6 of an IM class in a Support Unit in her local school (Asquith Public School) where she attended with her siblings before they went to high school.

Over the years Arabella has enthusiastically involved herself in a wide range of extra curricular activities, including Ballet Lessons, Choir and Netball. She has represented her school, zone and region at PSSA cross-country, athletics and swimming as a para-athlete. And represented her school in a variety of dance groups.

Arabella embraces life and she is very much looking forward to attending high school next year.

Happy Birthday EarlyEd and I trust that you will be around for another 40 years and more to continue to assist families like us.



Celebrating
40
Years
1979-2019

EE
EarlyEd
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Children with disability