

A Parent's Perspective: Allison Swets

To Allison Swets and her family, the difference between conductive education and some other programs is the difference between hope and despair, between ability and disability; the difference between finding joy in your child's development and living in uncertainty and fear. Shortly after Roger Swets was born at 25 weeks (weighing 1 pound 4 ounces), he was diagnosed with a condition that resulted in cerebral palsy (CP). As early as they could, the Swetses took advantage of therapy programs to optimize their son's potential, beginning with traditional school- and hospital-based therapies. Then, one day, Allison met a neighbor whose daughter also has CP. The neighbor told her about the conductive education at Aquinas College. When he was 18 months old, Roger was enrolled. Today, at 3, he breathes completely on his own – a feat his mother attributes to conductive education.

“With all of the exercising and intensive things he was doing in conductive ed, his muscles were able to develop, so his lungs became stronger,” she said. “Conductive ed did that and so much more for Roger. Yes, it strengthens his muscles, but it also keeps him healthier, makes him more alert and aware, and stimulates him more than any other program has.”

Before conductive education, Allison wasn't always sure what to expect from medical experts. Sometimes these experts focused on letting the Swetses know what Roger wouldn't do or what his world wouldn't be. At the Conductive Learning Center, the approach was different.

“The conductors were asking me ‘When are you going to start feeding Roger?’ instead of telling me not to worry because he'd never eat by mouth. They were asking me, ‘How many times did you put him on the potty today?’ instead of telling me Roger would never be potty trained, but not to worry because insurance pays for diapers.”

Allison said that conductive education provided a focus that built on Roger's abilities and the high expectations of him and the means to achieve those expectations.

Conductive education has “given me a perspective I never thought I could have,” Allison Swets said. “I have a positive outlook on my son and on his ability and his future. It has positively affected our family in the sense that, while we recognize that Roger has special needs, he is a normal part of our family doing normal kid things like watching Sesame Street and hanging out with his sister and playing - things that can be hard to come by with a special needs child.”

“The atmosphere of conductive education is an atmosphere of expectation, which is worth its weight in gold. It changes your perspective, it gives you hope. More importantly, it builds the abilities of your child and ensures him a richer life”

Allison summarized by saying, “We’re so grateful we live in Grand Rapids, Michigan and have the Conductive Learning Center as a resource. This program has significantly impacted our lives.”