

Student Portrait - Dimitri, Grade 1

Who is Dimitri? Dimitri is in the 1st grade, and is the oldest of two brothers. Both boys were diagnosed with autism prior to turning 2 years of age. Dimitri received intensive in-home behavior based services, 25 hours each week, up until the age of four when he began preschool. In-home services continued for 10 hours a week and were phased out last year. Dimitri has been fully integrated in a general education classroom with one-on-one paraeducator support beginning in kindergarten. He receives speech-language and occupational therapy services, as well as the support of an inclusion specialist who provides case management and weekly consultation with the general education teacher and paraeducator.



What are his interests? Dimitri has many interests and develops a deep knowledge set of the things he is most fascinated with. Currently, that includes superhero's (with Spiderman being his favorite) and trains. He became interested in trains after his family took a trip on the train through the Sierra Nevada mountains last summer, and now he can recite facts and figures on every type of locomotive and the major railways in North America. He has a goal to ride across country by train at some point in the near future.

What are his strengths as a learner? Dimitri has a strong vocabulary and is developing solid reading skills at the 1st grade level. He demonstrates good number sense and is also performing at grade level in math computation. Dimitri is a strong visual learner, and requires visual support throughout his instructional day. He uses visual schedules, first-then sequences, task sequence instruction cards, time trackers and an emotion thermometer to support positive behavior and promote his independence as a learner. Dimitri has good working memory, and can often remember facts and details that his other classmates have forgotten. This is particularly true for science activities, another area of interest he is exploring. For example, several months after completing a unit on the life cycle, Dimitri can still describe in great detail all of the critical steps in the process. Dimitri relies on his strength in organization to keep him regulated. His backpack is meticulously organized and he knows where every thing goes so that he can easily find it.

What are his challenges as a learner? Dimitri struggles with math reasoning, and is currently unable to solve word problems that involve addition of three whole numbers. He struggles with fine motor skills which currently impacts his written expression. He has difficulty using tools such as scissors, and his ability to form letters and keep his print within the lines on the paper are compromised. His print is often illegible and he applies too much pressure when writing which results in torn and ripped paper. Writing can be the most frustrating part of Dimitri's school day and often results in tears and angry words. Dimitri will speed through tasks he does not prefer or like to do (e.g. anything with worksheets or paper and pencil) in order to get to something he likes to do (e.g. watch science you-tube videos). When he becomes frustrated with a task, it is difficult to get his behavior regulated and back on task. He relies on visual supports to help him monitor where he is in a task and to know how much he has left before he is finished.