



# Celebrating the Children

## ■ Private school in Byram inspires special students

**BYRAM** – A private school for children with learning disabilities in Byram is quietly providing an innovative education for children from all over Sussex County.

Celebrate the Children teaches a growing number of students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade in the Byram Consolidated School building on Lackawanna Drive.

Students receive individualized attention from teachers in a colorful environment. What makes Celebrate the Children different from other special education schools is the use of a curriculum called Developmental, Individual, Relationship-based Intervention, designed by Drs.

The DIR program, or "Greenspan approach," helps to evaluate a child's strengths and then uses that information to determine how to strengthen their weaknesses.

In addition, it focuses on helping children attain skills that they will need for the real world and focuses on getting them to think for themselves.

Some of the children that attend the school have attention deficit disorder, Down syndrome, autism, or mild emotional and physical challenges. The classrooms have no specific designations.

The program is open to any child whose learning environment causes him or her to become disorganized, which impacts the ability to learn.

"There are very few districts that provide what we do," said Office Manager Malorie Osgood.

The school was developed by Monica Osgood, who initially started implementing the DIR approach in the public school district in Mount Arlington.

To help illustrate how the DIR approach differs from other special education environments, Monica gave an example of how they would help teach the concept of "more and less." Many schools might try to teach the method by holding up blocks, and reward the children when they are able to determine which side has more or less.

Using the DIR approach, she said, teachers at Celebrate the Children would use direct information about the child to help the learning process. If it was a boy who liked Matchbox cars, teachers might get a box with two cars and a box with 10, and ask the child which box they would rather have.

"With other approaches, schools teach more specific skills, whereas the DIR approach concentrates on getting them to think for themselves," said Monica. Students enrolled. It has rapidly grown from the four students that it started with on its opening day, Jan. 21.

"Our intake process is when parents come to look at the school to see if it meets the needs of their children," said Malorie. "We currently have two to three intakes a week, and we foresee starting next year with between 30 and 40 students."

As the number of students increases, the school will increase its number of both teachers and aides. However, space limitations will make the school max out at 40 students.

The program is open to children whose public school system cannot offer the services offered at Celebrate the Children. In that instance, the district school board can refer the child to Celebrate the Children and will pay the tuition fee.

"The program really works. It gives the children self confidence and helps in so many ways," said Malorie. "To see the smile on some of these kids' faces that they never had is really extraordinary."

The program is available to kids throughout the area, and current students come from as far away as Bridgewater and Roxbury.

For more information, parents may call the school directly at 973-448-0041 or visit [www.celbratethechildren.org](http://www.celbratethechildren.org).

