

## Eric

I would like to share with you my story and experience about what it was like for me to go to school.

I just had my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday; life is getting better for me. When I was little, the Doctors at several treatment centers diagnosis me as having high functioning autism with bipolar disorder. Because of this I was not able to talk until I was four, then my language was difficult for people to understand. I went to Menningers' Pre-school when I was three and to kindergarten at Menningers' in the morning and kindergarten at Highland Park South in the afternoon. I did not like to go to school or to be away from my parents, I often was scared that they wouldn't come back. I would act out so that I could go home. My teachers did not know how to help me.



Because the school did not know how to help me I was often in trouble. I hated school and the other kids were mean to me. I was sent home from school almost everyday. Sometimes I wished that I could die. Because of this I had to go into the hospital. I went to KU Medical Center, then the Crittenton Hospital and Menningers. I lived in Menninger for 2 years and it was awful.

What I hated the most in school was that the teachers didn't want to teach me. They only gave me worksheets, year after year. I wanted to be in classes with other kids and have books to learn out of. I felt that the only thing I was graded on was my behavior. I would get angry and know one cared, they would just send me home or put me in time out.

My favorite school was Lawrence High School. They listened to me and helped me. I had Andrew as a para-educator. Andrew was my attendant care person from TARC and he helped me a lot. Andrew took me to and from school. I was able to have real books and attend class with other kids without disabilities. It was great. When I came back to Topeka, they let me go to regular classes and I felt that I really learned something.

My recommendations to professional are to make certain that parents and student learn their rights and if possible get a special education advocate. Keep students away from special schools, and let them learn at their own pace. Make certain that they have the right supports such as a para, quite place to regroup.

I do not currently have a job, although I am in the process of working with my mom to start a business at the mall. I would like to help people that are working and can not get to the food court, get their lunch by having me get it for them.

I would also like to thank my teachers and doctors for putting up with my behavior through the years. I can now see how important school was to my future and wish I could have understood this while I was in school.

Eric, Age 25  
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