

Today, 50 families in America will find out their child has autism. This neurological disorder is the fastest growing developmental disability in the country and more common than childhood cancer, cystic fibrosis or multiple sclerosis combined. According to the U.S. department of Education, between 1992 and 2002 the number of children attending school with autism in Texas grew 475%.

My son Mason, was born in 1998. Since that time we have lived in two different school districts in Texas, both of which have been grossly ill-prepared to deal with our autistic child. Autism is an epidemic. The causes are still unknown, but one thing certain. If our schools do not adjust and adapt the best practices to educate these children, Special Education will drown under the influx of these new students.

Of course, TEA will tell you they are already taking steps to address this issue. Like the seminar that was put on in Dallas in the fall of 2002 in which a Lawyer representing the Texas Association of School Boards trained school administrators on how to deal with parents of children with Autism.

Quoting the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, "If school officials expect parents to disagree with them about a child's education, they should crank down the thermostat and give parents straight-backed, unpadded chairs. 'The last thing we want is people getting comfortable. It's a war room, except it, set it up as one.'"

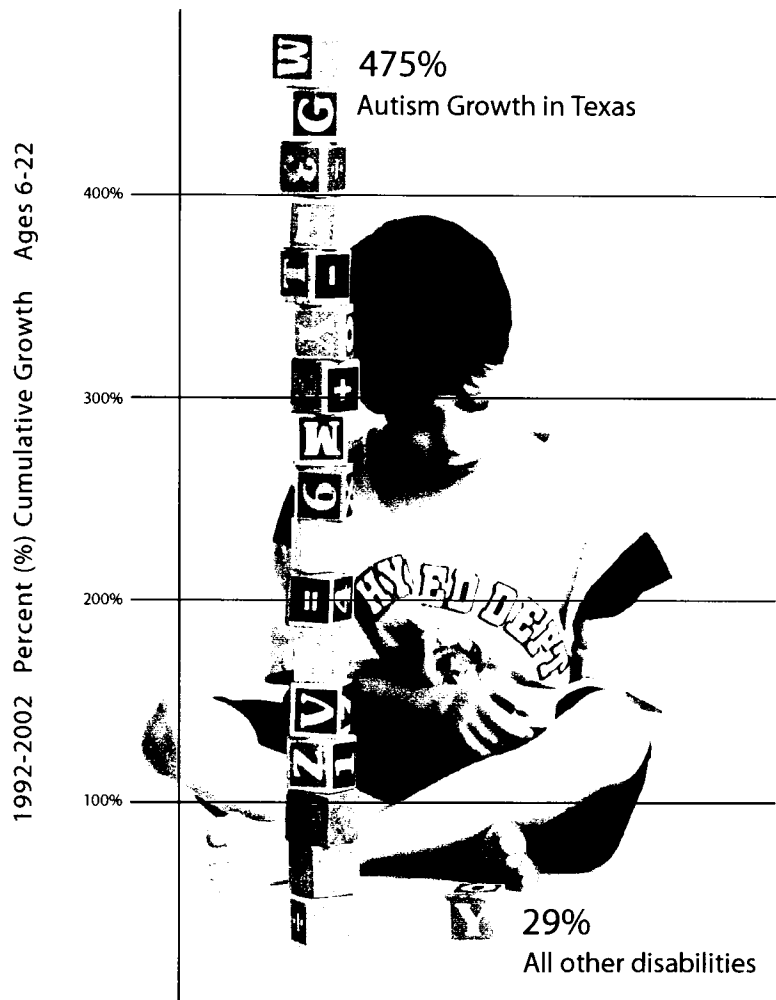
He's referring to the ARD process or the Admission, Review and Dismissal Committee. Which, according to TEA's Notice of Procedural Safeguards, Rights of Parent of Students with Disabilities, I, as a parent have a very important role and serve on the committee, along with teachers and administrators, that will develop my child's Individualized Education Program, (IEP). This I would applaud, if teachers and administrators were being trained on how to best educate children with autism instead of being trained on how to go to war with their parents.

We now live in Allen, Texas and I pay the highest property taxes in the state. I don't mind, as long as I know my tax dollars are being well spent. There is a tremendous need for teacher education and training and for research into the best practices that can truly help the growing population of children with autism. The parents of these children have so much energy and passion. These women spend every waking hour trying to improve the lives of their children with autism. Put them to work for all of us. Team them up with TEA – in a real team that can find us the best practices we so desperately need.

Thank you for your time,



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Today, 50 families will find out just how staggering this figure is.

Every day, 50 families in America will find out their child has autism. This neurological disorder is the fastest growing developmental disability in the country and more common than childhood cancer, cystic fibrosis or multiple sclerosis combined. While the debate continues as to the cause of this epidemic, more research for treatment is needed for children with autism, and additional training for parents and educators is critical. To find out how you can help, call 817.390-2829 or visit www.asgtc.org