

A Place For Justice

Justice, one of our students at our Miami Rescue Mission's after school program, is truly a work in progress. We are happy to say that we found a peaceful place for little Justice in Communities In Schools of Miami, Inc.

It was a challenge to discover a way to get Justice to remain a part of our program. When he first arrived, it was very difficult to manage his explosive behavior, he would fight us constantly. My staff and I would have to run behind him to keep him from his destructive behavior like trying to leave the building and constantly sneaking away from his assigned group. He needed constant supervision and one on one attention that we just can't provide due to staff limitations. Justice made it very difficult for our tutors who attempted to work with him. His behavior reached the point where he had to be removed from the classroom setting. Through a planning meeting with staff, partners, and parents, we came up with a strategy to help Justice improve his behavior so that he can be a part of the program and interact with the other students. It was apparent that Justice was not taking some needed medication for his special needs. However, the parents refused to cooperate so we had to find alternative solutions.

We met with Justice and asked him to become a program helper. Every day he was given a special role to play in the program. Justice would shadow either the Site Coordinator or the Head tutor for the day. We explained how we would like to work out a behavior modification program where he would be rewarded daily, if he complied. After he had agreed, we finally began to see a positive change in Justice's behavior.

As time progressed, we allowed him to color alone, but always in eye view of an adult. We gave him positive reinforcement, like hugs and praises when he did better. More time had passed and Justice opened up to us and shared how he loves computers. Thankfully, we just received a brand new computer lab, fully furnished, by the Miami Heat.

Justice is a very bright young man. It is amazing to see the transformation in his behavior. He has now become a very calm and sweet young man. You would never have expected, or even think, that he would have ever acted as he had done so in the past. We now can talk to him, and he responds in a polite and positive manner. Soon, it came time for our end of the year awards ceremony. Justice received the "Most Improved Student of the Year Award" hands down. It is truly an honor and joy to see lives changed by love and patience.