Crystal and Katie

**Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning disabilities and learning differences. The best part about this podcast is being able to share stories with my audience, from families who are overcoming difficult times in their learning journey.

As parents, we only want the best for our children. Sometimes getting them what they need means we have to work a little. It means we have to shout a little louder and hope that by being the squeaky wheel, we can move things. Not only is it our job as parents to support and advocate for our children, but it's also our job to teach our kids to speak up, to ask for what they feel they need and learn to understand their strengths and needs.

Today on the show, I'm going to share with you one of these stories. This story is about a mother who knew what her daughter needed. A mother who didn't take no for an answer and continued to expect more. She knew how capable her daughter was, but it's also the story of a young woman who learned to advocate for herself.

She's learning to speak up and ask the adults to ensure she gets what she needs to be successful. Crystal and Katie, welcome to the show. Super excited for this today.

[00:01:04] **Crystal:** Thank you very much.

[00:01:07] **Delphine:** So crystal, there's so much about this story. No, but I really would love it. If you could start by telling us a little about the journey of Katie from your perspective.

Cause Katie, I'm going to ask you in a minute, your perspective, but I'd love to hear mom's perspective first.

[00:01:24] **Crystal:** Okay. So it started when Katie was younger, she didn't go to JK. She had a bit of a separation anxiety from me, so I put her in, um, a play school and then she'd went to SK and the teacher saw some concerned.

But did nothing about it. And then 2, 1, 2 grade one, and had a fantastic teacher, but the teacher too was struggling a bit Katie and the teacher was there supportive great communication with me and Katie and tried her best, but still no help. I went to the principal, the vice principal, and they had no clue what to do and how to help me.

They told me to go to the bookstore. And by the workbooks and they didn't know what to say to me or how to handle me. I kept voicing my concerns. They kept pushing it away. Grade two comes and I tried to talk to the teacher and, um, some support, but basically they thought that I was just being silly and being overly.

And then grades three. I tried to talk to the teacher again and I asked the principal and the vice principal, should we go for an assessment? At that point, I had the assessment and the school board did nothing with it. And then in grades three, she was doing a spelling test. And in grade two, she did a verbally and, but the grade three teacher refused.

[00:02:42] **Delphine:** And that's hard when there's, there's an accommodation that you're expecting. It's hard when you expect, do you have a con on accommodation one year and then you don't have it the next

[00:02:50] **Crystal:** year? Yeah, she was just very negative. She banged up on me with the vice principal. There was no support. I, all I heard was cute.

Katie is look how cute she is. How far she's come look at all her nice work that she's doing. Just look how cute you are. I mean, that's true. It is true, but, but you know, a lot, there's more to Katie than her cuteness.

[00:03:15] **Delphine:** So you get to grade three and you're pushing. So now what happens?

[00:03:21] **Crystal:** The teacher is very standoffish, very defensive refuses to do any supports for Kate in the classroom and tells me that she's giving me more time than any of the parents.

And she washes her hands.

[00:03:35] **Delphine:** How does that make you feel as a parent?

[00:03:37] **Crystal:** Frustrated? Very sad, no communication. I feel like they're ganging up on me, but not acknowledging and my concerns and there's nothing.

[00:03:49] **Delphine:** So the, the report that you had, cause you did an assessment for Katie that you had done, what, what came out of that report?

[00:03:57] **Crystal:** That she was a slow learner. She needed repetitive, like, ah, Inter and directions and help. She needed it to be having reading classes and more support within the classroom. They tried, but they didn't know how they did reading recovery for her, but that was not enough. They didn't know what to do with her because the teacher came to me and said, um, maybe she has dyslexia.

I don't know. Right.

[00:04:25] **Delphine:** So now what,

[00:04:27] **Crystal:** so then I had to call the school. . And she says to me that she didn't know what to do either. She came to the school, talk to the principal and the vice principal, and automatically you will see services up here in front, my daughter. And then we had an SST meeting and they kept saying to me that, because I have this assessment and there's no label that I will get no other services because there's no way.

And that it's my responsibility as a mom to be baking with her and [00:05:00] cooking with her and giving her rewards from the dollar store and the school is doing the best they can. And there's no other services out there for her. So

[00:05:12] **Delphine:** it's a new school year. What has changed? Has anything changed?

[00:05:19] **Crystal:** A lot has changed actually.

So in grade four, Katie was online and she had a fantastic teacher who helped and supported me, who guidance, Katie, who was celebrating her challenges, who know how to, to teach her and know how to reach her and spend time with her. And he, and along with the new school brunt SU school superintendent. God advocated for me and got what Katie needed.

 Katie is at a new school and that's in a special class getting the support, hopefully that she needs.

[00:05:55] **Delphine:** So Katie, that's quite a story. [00:06:00] What do you feel about your story? What, how does all this make you feel?

Yeah. Who wasn't helping you? Who do you think wasn't helping?

Did you have any teachers who tried though? There might've been one or two. Maybe it was

like, okay.

And how did it make you feel when you felt like your teachers weren't helping.

And is there something that you think that you've been able to accomplish on your own,

[00:06:48] **Crystal:** um,

[00:06:51] **Delphine:** reading or writing,

reading you're reading chapter books. That's awesome. [00:07:00] What's your favorite chapter book right now?

Those are good ones. And what do you think has been the hardest thing of this journey that your mom has helped you get through?

[00:07:17] **Crystal:** Like doing work online?

[00:07:19] **Delphine:** That was hard. It was hard for a lot of kids. You didn't like the work online?

[00:07:22] **Crystal:** Yeah, because they kept the news stuff.

[00:07:25] **Delphine:** Not not awesome as a, what is something that you've surprised yourself about over the last little while?

So something that you thought would be impossible maybe, and you were able to do or something that you weren't expecting.

Can read. That's a big deal. That's a really big deal. You should be very proud of that. You sound very proud of yourself for that. So that's awesome [00:08:00] crystal, with all that you do to continue to help Katie.

A step you think that you took, that helped you to be able to really advocate for Katie? What do you think? Was there one thing you think you did that really made the difference?

[00:08:18] **Crystal:** Yeah. If it wasn't for the new school superintendent in our area, I wouldn't be where I am. She was there to help me support me, guide me, direct me.

She fought for Katie was inside the school board. We came so close to an IPRC meeting and the school psychologist. Didn't have her stuff together and she wasn't prepared and they canceled it. She was the one that got it all sorted out and got me a new meeting. Chan was the one that supported me through the most.

So it wasn't for her. We'd be still struggling. And I wish there was more people like her and Katie's teachers, two of [00:09:00] them that were there to help and support us and to advocate and saying that I am as a mom is doing the right thing. I'm doing the right thing because I kind of felt that I was being, I don't know, like being, um, the school didn't like me, the school were resentful of me angry.

They didn't want me to. When vice principal told me that, you know, you shouldn't be here all the time. You should just go get a job. So it was just frustrating. And I just want the best for my daughter and she, and you shouldn't have to fight this hard. You shouldn't have this many stumbling blocks.

[00:09:37] **Delphine:** So Katie, I know school hasn't always been really easy for you.

And there's probably a couple of kids listening today who are finding that school's kind of hard and not their favorite place to be. But is there one thing or one little piece of advice you think you could give to someone who's listening who thinks school is really hard or something you'd say to them,

[00:10:00] **Crystal:** keep trying and work hard.

[00:10:03] **Delphine:** Is that what you do, you try hard all the

[00:10:04] **Crystal:** time. Yeah,

[00:10:08] **Delphine:** that's awesome. That's a really good thing to keep trying. Right. And not give up. That's a really important one.

 Crystal, this one's for you. Cause I just asked Katie this question. So this, this question's for you crystal. So a little bit. To the same kind of thing. I just asked Katie. I mean, there's lots of families who have struggled and it's hard and it can feel lonely and dark and all those things.

What's a piece of advice you would give to a family. Who's listening

[00:10:38] **Crystal:** almost to see what Katie said. Never give up. Never take no for an answer. Keep fighting someone there. We'll listen. We'll listen. And open doors. Keep fighting for your child and advocating because eventually you will get what you want.

[00:10:55] **Delphine:** You got to find your ally, right? You got to find the person in your corner.

[00:10:58] **Crystal:** Yeah. Yeah. [00:11:00]

[00:11:00] **Delphine:** Um, Katie, this question is about teachers. So you talked about some teachers who weren't so supportive and some teachers who were supportive. Right. And you get a little of both, you know, you can't have that all the time.

If there are teachers listening out there who have kids who are struggling, how can the teachers help kids who are struggling in their classroom? What is it that they can do to help kids in the classroom? Teachers?

[00:11:27] **Crystal:** Listen,

[00:11:29] **Delphine:** listen to what

I heard that you stood up in a meeting in front of a whole bunch of adults and told them what you thought you needed. What did you tell them you needed to be successful?

[00:11:48] **Crystal:** The teacher that would understand

like a classroom that has other, like kids that need special needs

[00:11:58] **Delphine:** and how [00:12:00] is being in a class with other kids who have means, how does that help you? How does that make it better

[00:12:06] **Crystal:** for you?

Cause it's like a teacher understands like,

like me,

[00:12:23] **Delphine:** do you feel less alone when you're with kids who are more like you.

Crystal. I think you've

talked about this a little bit, but I'll ask it again. What do you think educators can do to support families?

[00:12:45] **Crystal:** First of all, I think there needs to be open, respectful. The dialogue for communication needs to be ongoing and a willingness to work with the family and to work with the children and the willingness to know that [00:13:00] not all children during the same way, everyone's different value, the children who learn differently and just to be open to new things and trying new things and no judgment.

[00:13:15] **Delphine:** Yeah. I like the no judgment comment. I think that's really important.

[00:13:19] **Crystal:** Because not every child learns the same way and to be open for flexibility. Mm. What

[00:13:29] **Delphine:** about that idea? I mean, you talked a lot about your feeling of the school, maybe feeling like you were in the way or not there

[00:13:41] **Crystal:** whatsoever. So.

[00:13:46] **Delphine:** How would you like that to change?

If you could change that, what would it look like?

[00:13:53] **Crystal:** Um, I think I would let them to listen to me. I've adjusted a crazy mom. I know my [00:14:00] daughter and I have some background of education and I know what she can or cannot do. I want them to listen and look at her. And talk to her, talk to the teachers and we willing to listen.

Um, so

[00:14:16] **Delphine:** that idea of, of listening and understanding, right. And, uh, yeah.

Yeah. Taking a parent perspective. Cause I, I believe pretty strongly that parents know their kids better than anyone else. Right. I mean, educators are professionals in their own. Right. But they, they're not the parent of that child. They don't see them every day and see the struggles all

[00:14:36] **Crystal:** the time. So what I don't understand is I'm a mom, first of all, I went to them for directly.

I don't know the process and the procedures of getting a developmental assessment. I don't know what services are available. I went to them, the principal and the vice principal for guidance and support, but there was nothing, no support, nothing [00:15:00] whatsoever. Their answer was to go get workbooks. And that kid is too young for an assessment.

Right. So if I would have waited, where would she have been? That's hard. It is. It's very frustrating. And if I was, I had no prior knowledge or the education system or a mom who didn't know how to advocate, where would their child be right now?

[00:15:25] **Delphine:** So you've done some advocating. There's some changes coming.

So yeah, I think it's great. I think we need to celebrate those moments when things start to turn. What are your hopes now that Katie is in this program, what do you hope happens for Katie?

[00:15:46] **Crystal:** I really hope Katie. And continuous your skills in reading and writing and math, and that there's supports in there that help her succeed in grade five, that she makes lots of friends, that she has a bit of relationship with the [00:16:00] teacher and that the teacher, the teacher understands her and that you can blossom.

And maybe you go back to her homeschool. Hmm.

[00:16:09] **Delphine:** Katie, what are your goals right now?

[00:16:11] **Crystal:** Well, learn and get better at writing and reading and cheating my letters.

[00:16:19] **Delphine:** Those are really good goals. I have a sense that you will get there, kiddo. I think you're going to do great things. crystal and Katie, thank you so much for coming crystal. Thank you for sharing openly your story and, and really, shedding light on the idea of communication and openness and acceptance of parents.

I think that's a challenge sometimes. So I appreciate that piece that you've brought today.

[00:16:46] **Crystal:** Thank you very much. We had a great time. Thank you very much. It was great,

[00:16:50] **Delphine:** Katie. Thank you for, Your perspective, because I think sometimes as adults, we forget that kids have their own ideas about what they think they need.

And [00:17:00] sometimes we forget that. So thank you for sharing.