

Jordan's Journey

Jordan is a 3 year old who has attended Morganside, a community-based child care center since he was 18 months old. He has had the same teacher, Janice, for the three years, two years in the toddler room and this past year in the young preschool room. This past year, Janice had a new teaching partner, Lana. Lana is a young, enthusiastic teacher who recently graduated from an early childhood program at a college across the state. Morganside center is near where Jordan's mom, Kisha, works, but in a neighboring county to where they live.

When Jordan was about 2 years old, his parents began to notice that he was slow to respond when they spoke to him, that he wasn't really talking much, and when he did talk his words were jumbled. They weren't really certain that there was a problem, as Kisha, describes,

I thought, well maybe not..... then I would see other kids and say, well, maybe.....And everyone thought I was crazy....They'd (her family and friends) say no..... nothing is wrong..... I had talked to my husband and he said that if there was something wrong, they would have said something at the school..... that's what they do.....

During the 2nd and 3rd years that Jordan attended Morganside, Simone, a graduate student from a nearby college, was doing a field placement as part of her coursework. Simone had been an early childhood special education teacher and her role at the center was to be available to observe children that the teachers there had concerns about. Sometimes, she simply helped teachers think about strategies that might work to help children be more successful in the classroom. Other times, the teachers asked her to be there when they decided to talk with parents about getting further assessment for their children. She often provided the teachers or parents with information about how to contact their school district, or how to get in touch with other community agencies for resources.

Janice had asked Simone to observe Jordan, and to talk with Kisha about some concerns they had about his development. Kisha says that it was after Simone met with her that she "got the ball rolling". Even though she and her husband had some suspicions that Jordan may be "behind", she said that having someone else see these concerns really helped her decide that she needed to do something. Kisha said that she went back to Jordan's doctor, who had also told them previously "not to worry". Kisha said that she really had to push the doctor to give Jordan a referral to the ear, nose and throat specialist, who recommended ear tubes and having his adenoids out. After Jordan's procedure, Kisha and her husband noticed a difference in his hearing and speech. Kisha described the change as "an instant difference.... I finally heard a true voice from my child".

While there were improvements in Jordan's receptive and expressive speech, his 3rd year at Morganside was a challenging one. Now 3 years old and in the preschool classroom, he had difficulty following the daily routine, and with some impulsive behaviors like climbing on chairs and knocking toys off shelves. He also had difficulty interacting with other children, often hitting or scratching them in the face, leaving marks. Other parents become upset, and Marge, the center director, started to get more directly involved. She encouraged Kisha to contact the school district program where they lived, to see if they could get further assessment and maybe see about going to the program there. She even called the program directly to help get information for Kisha, but she did not share this with the Janice and Lana, Jordan's teachers, or with Simone, who was trying to help Janice and Lana problem solve about how to help Jordan.

It was often from Kisha that the teaching team and Simone learned of Kisha's interactions with the school district. They felt confused and anxious about what seemed to them to be an attempt to get Jordan "removed" from the center. Even though they knew that they needed to fill out an "incident" report when Jordan hurt other children, they felt guilty when they did so because they thought that this provided Marge with more reason to consider expelling Jordan. Although Simone felt they were making progress with Jordan, she did not have an "official" role at this center, and did

not feel comfortable confronting Marge with her feeling that it would not be in Jordan's best interest to change programs at this time. Simone also felt strongly that by keeping Janice and Lana out of the loop, Marge was missing an opportunity to encourage Janice and Lana's professional development. She said, "They have been good about trying out new strategies with Jordan, and they have lots of good ideas, even if the two of them don't always agree".

Simone reported that it was a

very confusing time.....It seems like Kisha is getting mixed messages from the school district, and we don't know what conversations have taken place because Marge has made it clear that she is now going to be the contact person.

Kisha confirmed that she felt confused about information from the school district. She had taken Jordan for an assessment, and he had an IEP in place. In January, Jordan went to the school district program. Kisha said,

Marge said that Morganside probably did not have the resources to provide Jordan with the help that he really needed, so we decided to send him to the school district program. When they told me that he could come to [the school district] preschool, I thought he was going into the special education class, but later we got a bill for \$370, so I realized he was in the regular program. And also the preschool teacher there told me that Jordan wasn't ready – they complained about him touching everything. But I didn't really understand, because his IEP says that he can go to the regular preschool, so how can they say his is not ready? Then he was supposed to get speech and PT and OT, but it was only available on Fridays, and that didn't work with my work schedule.

Kisha decided to bring Jordan back to Morganside in February, just a month after he had started at the school district program. Then, in late April, she decided to keep Jordan at home. Her work schedule had changed and she was able to rely on her grandparents for the days when she worked. She said that she was going to send Jordan back to the school district program starting in the fall, but she felt, "right now, we just need a break. I am a little fed up". She was still feeling uncertain about how it would work to send Jordan to the school district program, but she had talked to the special education director and they confirmed that Jordan would be in the special education preschool each morning and in the school district child care (in the same building) in the afternoons, for about the same cost as she had been paying at Morganside. Kisha has mixed feelings about Jordan leaving Morganside:

If he could have gone to Morganside till he was about 15....(laughs)..... And still get everything that he needed.....Everyone there was truly trying to help.....it felt like home. Even now if I have something I don't understand, I know I can call Marge, or Simone, or the teachers..... The school (district) is more depersonalized... I think it can make some parents turn away... I am sure they thought about me, 'Why isn't she cooperating?' I just hope it can all work out. I wish I could be closer to where he is going to go to the preschool. Its' hard to work farther away from where your kids will go to school.

The Morganside teachers also have mixed feelings about Jordan's journey away from Morganside. Janice, Lana and Simone all agreed that Jordan was making progress, and felt frustrated that they didn't have more time to continue working on the strategies that they had implemented with him. They each also mentioned feeling "worried about Jordan" because of all the changes he had experienced in a few short months. Janice, who had been with Jordan the longest, said,

Even though we were still working on things, I know that this is the most familiar setting for Jordan. He's been here a long time. And I know that his mom feels comfortable here too. I worry about how all these changes are affecting him. I wish he could just finish out the end of the year.

Discussion/Reflection:

(Individual or Small Groups)

Using the following framework, identify at least **two (2)** issues for the following stakeholders, based on this case.

	Child	Family	Morganside EC Teachers	Morganside Program/Structure	School District EC and ECSE Programs
Issue					
Issue					
Issue					
Issue					

Choose **one (1)** of the issues you identified for each stakeholder/group, and discuss ideas you have for improving the process(es) experienced by each.