



# 2023 Healthy Living Conference

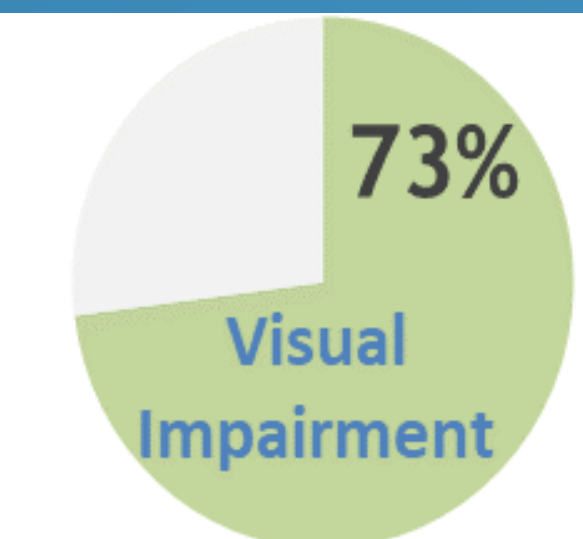
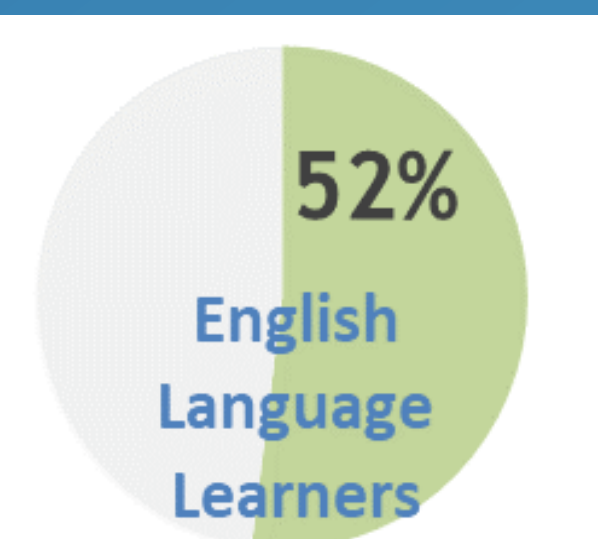
## Wayfinder Family Services Special Education School

Reinventing an adaptive hands-on curriculum in the new normal  
School Principal, Nancy Berger, MA



### INTRODUCTION

Wayfinder Family Services' Special Education School offers children and youth, ages 5 to 22, who are visually impaired or have moderate-to-severe disabilities a safe, positive environment for learning and growth. Teachers develop students' communication, mobility and functional skills to increase their independence in our state-certified non-public school with a low staff-to-student ratio of 1:2. We offer PT, OT, SLP, TVI and O&M.



### Wayfinder students get moving!



### OUR GOALS

- **ROUTINES:** Re-established new instructional routines to promote self-confidence and comfort for students in their classrooms following extended periods of at-home instruction.
- **HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION:** For students with visual impairments and multiple disabilities, increased hours of 1:1 therapeutic interventions to recoup and continue to gain skills in communication, orientation & mobility, braille, tactile efficiency and self advocacy.

Emphasized use of personalized hands-on, high-interest learning materials including visual/tactile schedules, cause and effect activities, musical materials and object cues.

Redesigned new life skills instruction such as completing household chores, hygiene routines, and developing personal recreation/movement and leisure interests.

- **CONFIDENCE:** Structured learning activities to assist with self-confidence and independence-building. Facilitated groups where students need to make choices, take turns and make their wants and needs known.
- **SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE:** Reestablished a regular schedule of school fun using enrichment activities such as arts and crafts, music and movement, social stories, specialized PE and healthy food preparation activities.

### Wayfinder Students & Faculty



### OUR PROJECT: SPECIALIZED COVID-SAFE INSTRUCTION

We had managed the pandemic safely but needed to reinvent our instructional strategies to include new hands-on, high-interest learning and social experiences within new health protocols for medically fragile students with multiple disabilities. The City of Hope Healthy Living Grant was the boost we needed to overcome the challenges we faced.

### WHAT WE DID

- New lesson plans with accessible routines, enrichment and group engagement.
- Daily specialized PE and movement activities.
- Created personalized, hands-on materials.
- Emphasized therapeutic services and skill recoupment – specifically for vision and mobility services.

### COMMUNITY BUILDING School-wide celebrations & events

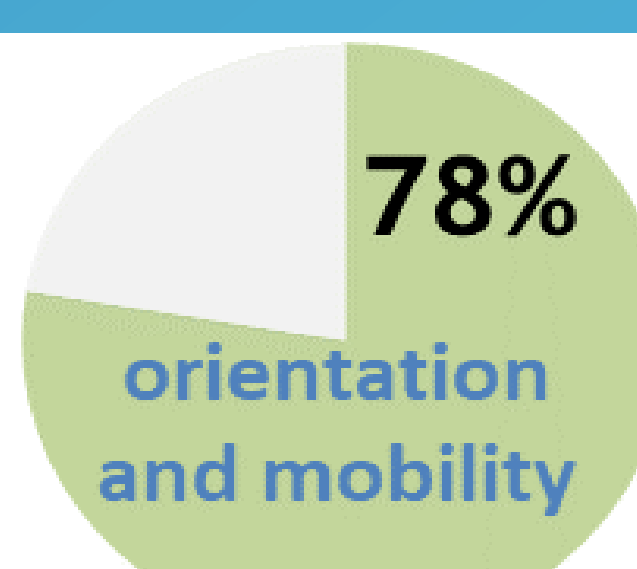
Designed motivating, social events to encourage confidence and communication in a variety of experiences.

Halloween · Cinco De Mayo · Thanksgiving  
Winter Holiday Fun · Spring Holiday Egg Hunt

### OUR CHALLENGES

- Adapting instruction.
- Revamping classrooms with new hands-on learning materials.
- Adapting student groupings to meet social distancing requirements.
- Less access to community-based instruction.
- Weekly Covid-19 testing and daily masking requirements.
- Occasionally, illnesses closed classrooms and staff had to pivot to online learning.
- Enrollment and referrals dropped due to Covid-19 safety concerns from some families of medically fragile students.
- Average daily attendance dropped due to Covid wellness-checking policy and illness.

### Percentage of IEP goals and objectives met



### WHAT WE LEARNED

- The students were very eager to return after a year of at-home instruction. Our students with visual impairments especially love going to lessons with their specialized vision services and mobility instructors who help them reach their potential.
- Our students thrive in learning environments where expectations are predictable, and activities include repetition so that they can confidently engage. Popular PE and movement activities helped link students back to site-based classes.
- We are able to be onsite and manage the risks of Covid-19 safely as a medically-fragile school community.