



I have many stories about my son, Sam. The one I will share today is about getting Sam back to in person school after the disaster of distance learning. The pandemic and the disruption to a carefully crafted schedule was terrible for his mental health and education. We did the best we could, but it wasn't nearly good enough.

In the midst of this, a friend of mine put me in touch with the Oregon Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorder. OCASD wanted to hear from parents in situations like ours. We connected, and OCASD brought together a group of stakeholders from the autism and education community to discuss how best to help autistic students return to in person learning. You can see the results of our efforts [HERE](#). Only by bringing together voices from different backgrounds and parts of the state did we truly see the enormity of what was happening for autistic children in Oregon. Through our conversations we were able to come up with some practical tools and advice to help kids, families, and teachers transition back to brick-and-mortar school. And the Commission is making sure these tools are available to everyone, not just Sam.

As fall approaches, I will be using the tools in [this toolbox](#) to help Sam have success upon his return. The number one tool I would suggest is the person-centered profile that lets the staff working with your child understand how the pandemic and distance learning affected them. It also gives you a platform to be clear about what works and does not work for your child. You can find samples of person centered plans [HERE](#).

No matter how you plan to return to school this fall, from the bottom of my heart I wish you and your child peace and success.