

2026-08-07 - Exceptional Abilities on QR770

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♪♪ Since 2015, Exceptional Abilities Educational Consultation and Tutoring have been dedicated to supporting neurodiverse individuals in their academic, professional, and personal growth.

Michelle Siegel is the creator and owner.

Michelle: Started off, um, about 2015. Um, I just got a lot of requests for tutoring. And being a teacher and being, you know, raising my kids, it was easy for me to tutor. So, I started with, like, three kids around my sitting table. And then it grew, and it grew. And then in 2015, I finally decided to name it. We called it Exceptional Abilities because, um, I believe every child has something exceptional about them. Something they can do really, really well. And I want children to define themselves by what they can do really well, not by what they struggle with. So, I was having a lot of kids introduce themselves to me. And they would just say, I can't do math. Or I can't read. And I didn't want that to be the narrative. I wanted them to say, no, I'm really good at soccer. Or I can paint really well. Um, you know, I like to, I can sing. I like to write stories. Um, because when we focus on just the negative of what they can't do, then that's where kids stop. Right? And they just, they don't feel they can achieve anything more. Um, so we started off as tutoring. And then that slowly grew into other programs. So, I was asked to do workshops for community centres. For, um, offices and, um, schools. Just about what neurodivergence is. What autism is. Um, and how to help children who learn differently. Who are differently abled. We sort of started

to build programs as we saw a need. So, um, if a need came up in our community. And there wasn't a program for it. Well, we made it. For example, um, we have a learn-to-drive program. For neurodivergent individuals. And it came out because, well, I have two kids with autism. And one of my kids was told she couldn't learn to drive. Because she is autistic. And so, um, from that. I wanted to then have a program where people who are on the spectrum. Who have ADHD. Who are neurodivergent. Could have a driving program. Because that opens up a whole new world. For anyone. It's independence. Employment. Um, you know, and it's also that right of passage.

Talk about your role in the local community. Because you're obviously, uh, you know, making an impact. And what's some of the feedback you're getting from people you've helped out?

Michelle: Um, you know what? It's, um, interesting. We get a lot of positive feedback. In that everyone's welcome. So, um, one of the things, again. Uh, rose for money. Is when I was trying to put my children in programs. And I would say they have autism. We're often told no. We don't, we can't support them. We don't have the, um, accommodations available. We don't have the staff. And so, I wanted it to become the opposite. Where everyone's welcome. Where I don't say no. And I'm kind of known for that. Where, oh, there's, there's Miss Michelle. She doesn't say no. Um, because I feel like everyone should be welcome. So, some of the feedback we get from parents is just that. You know, it's five a week. Like, I don't have to go through the textbook of things about my kid. Um, they just know how to, how to work with them. Because they've all been trained. All my staff have been trained. Um, I have day camps this summer. And again, that arose out of a need. And, um, it's, um. It's just to make sure that everyone is supported. Everyone's welcome. Um, but if you need an aid, we have it available. Um, you know, if you, whatever need. Like, we had parents call and say, well, my child is on the spectrum. Can they go to your day camp? And when I respond,

of course they can. And they're like, you? Oh, I'm so glad. Right? Often parents, um, will not disclose everything about their child to, you know, an organization that they want to participate in. Because they're afraid of being turned away. So, when I invite, of course you can join. Right? Bring your friends. Of course they can come. Your sibling, of course. Like, you're welcome. Everyone's welcome. And I think that's sort of what I'm known for, um, for doing. It's mostly positive, um, feedback we get. Um, you know, our tutoring program is unique in that all of our tutors are actual teachers. So, I only hire certified teachers. And it's because they know, um, sort of the progression of learning that the child needs. So that if there's a gap in what they're learning that they can achieve to go back to where that gap is and keep the foundational skills. And so, um, that makes us quite unique in the community. And then, because of that, we do see, um, good results. Like we have kids come in and we know their marks are really low, and we can get them above passing within a few weeks or months or so of working with them just because we fill that gap that they're missing.

Exceptional Abilities.

A place where all are welcome and it's more than just tutoring. For the Better Business Bureau Local Business Spotlight, I'm Dave McIver.