

# School Strengthens Learning Capacities

EATON  
ARROWSMITH  
SCHOOL

At Eaton Arrowsmith School (EAS), a student's challenges are met with the proper tools to fit each child. Here is Aaron's story...

Aaron had been attending a local Jewish private school. He was surrounded by a wonderful community of educators, who had worked diligently to support him with his difficulties with reading and written expression. More chairs than would comfortably fit around the rectangular table were present that day... filled with every staff member in the school who had even the slightest involvement with Aaron... that was how much they cared about this ten year old boy. Yet they knew that they had exhausted all of their school based options.

Aaron's family had heard about Eaton Arrowsmith School... in its second year of operation at that time. They were torn. They knew that Aaron was not thriving in his current location, despite the caring staff and excellent

instruction. Aaron, while an elite ski racer and charismatic individual, had many learning and attention difficulties that were preventing his true potential from shining through. "We want our son to have the ability to lead an independent life, free from the learning crutches he may need in order to pay attention, process and express academic material".

Aaron started at EAS in Grade 5. He worked on specific cognitive tasks designed to target the areas of his brain that had more weakly connected communication systems, or pathways. While he did math, English and PE, played soccer at lunch, participated in training for the Vancouver Sun Run and other extra curricular activities, the majority of his time was spent in his 'cognitive classroom.'

He and 20 other students were supported by his two cognitive teachers as he moved throughout the day

working on six individually targeted brain exercises, challenging weaker areas of his brain to become stronger. One can think of this process as changing country roads into super highways, weaving more strongly woven baskets, or tuning up his engine. In essence, Aaron was rewiring his brain to learn more effectively.



Aaron's program was a typical length... three to four years. It takes time, diligence and more time to change

the brain. Aaron was always challenging himself to work at a level just slightly above his current ability. This pushed his brain to always be in a state of growth. His parents could relate to the need to repetitively train the brain, as they have been a huge support to Aaron throughout his years of competitive skiing. However, as with any challenge, there will be times when you wonder if all the training is paying off. It's not like we can see the physical changes...without fancy machines, that is.

Two years later, a momentous moment occurred for his family, the Jewish community, and all of the staff at EAS, Aaron trained for and completes his Bar Mitzvah. Remembering and reciting a 20 minute Hebrew speech in front of a packed synagogue would have been impossible in the past. Aaron's brain has changed. His ability to remember the words as a whole... to really see them

in his mind... has gotten far stronger. His ability to sound out words and to express himself has dramatically improved.

In June, 2010, Aaron was named valedictorian of his class at EAS. He was headed to one of the top private schools in the area, and was to balance this transition with a demanding ski racing schedule.

He's stayed in touch. Aaron works hard, and advocates for himself, as he has missed some academic material during his stay at EAS. The good thing now... he has the strength of his improved reasoning ability, expressive language, written expression and attention control behind him as he works his way towards graduation. He receives B's to A's... and asks for assistance when he needs it.

This is just one story of amazing success at Eaton Arrowsmith School!