

FACES OF

BELONGING

MAX



Some progress is loud.

It looks like a child's first words spoken on a stage, big educational celebrations, or a child running confidently into a classroom without looking back.

And then there is the kind of progress Max shows, the kind that happens in small moments most people would never notice unless they were watching very carefully. Max joined our preschool community during the 2024–2025 school year. At first, new experiences felt big.

Transitions were hard, routines mattered deeply, and the unpredictability of a busy classroom could feel overwhelming. Like many young children, Max wanted to understand his world before stepping into it.

So he watched.

He observed circle time before joining it. He stood near the playground before trying it. He listened to other children during story time before raising his own voice to participate. His teachers quickly learned that Max wasn't refusing, he was learning. He was gathering information, building trust, and waiting until he felt ready.

Over time, readiness began to arrive in small but powerful ways.

A teacher offering a hand he didn't need anymore.

Walking into class with fewer reminders.

Putting on his own socks and shoes with intense concentration and quiet pride.

Max thrives in routines, and the consistency of familiar spaces helped him begin to take risks. The Nierman Preschool and our Social Skills classes have given him the chance to practice independence while still feeling safe. Engaging in dramatic play and story time became not just preferred activities, but bridges into participation with peers. Perhaps the most meaningful change has been his willingness to advocate for himself. Max is learning to communicate his needs, to pause before becoming overwhelmed, and to accept support when he chooses it.

Max has also quietly taught our staff and community something important: progress cannot be rushed.

In a world that often celebrates speed, Max reminds us of the value of waiting. Waiting for a child to process. Waiting for confidence to grow. Waiting for readiness instead of forcing it. When given patience and consistency, children do not simply comply, they participate and they thrive.

Today, Max walks into the classroom with increasing confidence. He joins activities more quickly, engages with peers more comfortably, and takes pride in the things he can now do on his own. Each step may seem small, but together they form something much bigger: a child who is learning to trust himself.

Belonging does not always begin with jumping in. Sometimes belonging begins with watching, understanding, and then, when ready, choosing to step forward.

Max shows us that independence is not measured by how fast a child moves, but by the confidence they build along the way.

While Max is truly one-of-a-kind, the Lawrence Family JCC is here for the entire community thanks to the dedication of our Inclusion team.

Please give today and help us open our doors wider to every child, every family, every ability.



Watch the video



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