

Serving children with autism

By Patti Samsel

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Let It Shine Enrichment Academy in Austin was established by Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM) in partnership with Bethany Lutheran Church, Austin, as a preschool to serve children on the autism spectrum in a caring Christian environment. Since its inception, the school continues to see growth in attendance and a desire for services.

Let It Shine is a multi-sensory, holistic preschool program for children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, and also includes children with developmental delays, difficulties with socialization, and/or sensory processing deficits. Small class sizes allow teachers to give individualized attention and help children learn at their level. These children are often turned away or removed from standard early-learning centers.

In addition to the structured curriculum and therapies, students attend chapel weekly, engaging in Christian songs and Bible stories. Teresa Danner, occupational therapist and Let it Shine director, shared that a parent was amazed and overjoyed that her child was singing Bible songs learned in chapel.

With the first installment of their mission grant for the 2022-24 biennium, Let It Shine Enrichment Academy was able to award scholarships to students. Future installments will be used to purchase classroom materials and resources to meet students' unique needs, and provide teacher training. Staff wish to thank the Texas District for their continued monetary support and prayers.



Teresa Danner (center), Let It Shine Enrichment Academy director, is pictured with academy teachers, who are excited to work with these special children and give them a loving, welcoming, structured environment where they can learn, grow and thrive.



A child participates in therapeutic listening to promote regulation and auditory processing while completing a craft.



While gaining strength and endurance, a child uses his walker to play in the gym and kick the ball to a peer.