

## Can we have a brief introduction to The New England Center for Children® (NECC®)- Abu Dhabi [recently renamed the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education or MRC-NECC] since its establishment so far?

MRC-NECC is a center dedicated to Autism Spectrum Disorder and is recognized as a global leader in autism services, in line with Abu Dhabi's vision to achieve a global level of healthcare and cultural inclusion for Abu Dhabi. The center serves UAE national autistic students.

In December 2007 the first classroom was opened, and in 2013 the new building was relocated to Mohammed bin Zayed City, where the Center now accommodates 212 students, including 100 students in partial and full inclusion classrooms in several local schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

### The “mission” of improving the lives of autistic children around the world through education, research, and technology, how is it applied on the ground (school program and program of total or partial integration)?

**مركز محمد بن راشد رائد احتضان أطفال التوحد**

10 متطوعين و3 مدربات يمثلون المركز في عالمية أبوظبي

فرصة لإظهار تقدم وشغف الطالب

**212 طالباً**

**حلوه عائشة تسلف الابتسامه**

**13 مشاركة**

MRC-NECC is primarily based on evidence-based education and on applied behavior analysis (ABA). We rely on research to help improve our teaching methods constantly by encouraging and providing studying opportunities for all teaching staff.

The Center is also based on continuous monitoring of student progress. Here we can shed light on the ACE® curriculum (Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia®), which forms the basis of each individual learning plan for each student in the Center, and which contains 2,176 programs in the software in both English and Arabic. There are two types of curriculum: basic skills curriculum and advanced skills curriculum.

The ACE software has a special account for each student that includes all of his information as well as his own assessments and the student's evolution towards his individual learning plan. These individual educational plans detail the teacher's implementation of the program and the criteria on which the student's performance is assessed on each program by providing a variety of sources, explanatory videos, and data collection papers. It is also possible through the ACE software to measure student progress over 3 years or more.

The ACE software provides a graph showing the student's evolution in educational programs towards mastering his goals and developing them from the behavioral point of view, which is shared with the parent on a monthly basis.

MRC-NECC focuses heavily as well on AAC [augmentative and alternative communication], which relies on images, signals, iPad programs, etc. AAC, in its various forms, provides a means of communication that the child can learn and use to express his / her needs. The use of alternative means of communication helps to strengthen the skills of verbal communication.

The Center also trains nannies, and conducts morning coffee meetings with mothers, workshops and lectures for mothers and fathers, and community workshops for members of society in general.

### **What is the impact of the Center joining ADEK?**

By joining us we are collaborating with educational authorities to help our students facilitate their integration into schools.

The partnership between Abu Dhabi and NECC began in 1997, when NECC was asked to provide a private consulting program in the region. Ten years later, in 2007, NECC-Abu Dhabi was established at the Mohammed Bin Zayed City in Abu Dhabi, to offer the comprehensive range of educational services, graduate training, and research similar to that available in NECC Southborough.

“All of us at The New England Center for Children are honored and proud to continue our relationship with Abu Dhabi,” said Vincent Strully, Jr., President and CEO of NECC. “We look forward to continuing our mission: Providing world-class applied behavior analysis (ABA) expertise and education services to children with autism and training UAE nationals to do the same in Arabic.”

### **How do you view (as specialists in the field) the UAE's hosting the Special Olympics?**

This is a spectacular event. We cannot express our pride and happiness in the hosting of our beloved country under the guidance of our wise leadership for this huge and important event that highlights the role of this privileged group in society. And here, we have to shed the light on the recent great picture that has been circulating intensively since the beginning of the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics of the athlete embracing H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed. He is our athlete Ali! It was one of the most spontaneous and glamorous shots and was a warm moment that expressed the love in the hearth of the millions of people toward Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed.

### **Who are the Center's participants in the Special Olympics?**

We are proud of our students, the amazing athletes and official representatives of MRC-NECC in the Special Olympics, and their families:

Ali Saif Semaidaa (golf player)

Saif Al Qubaisi (Golf Player)

Youssef Al-Jafri (tennis player)

We also mention the incredible coaches of the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education (Fatima Al Afifi, Rahma Farag, and Dr. Jennifer Bradley) for training, supporting and encouraging our athletes throughout the training and competitions.

We would also like to say that we were also delighted to host the country of Palau, our adopted country of the Special Olympics, and its three athletes along with their team. It was the Palauan athletes' first visit to the UAE, so it was a wonderful opportunity for many of the students to interact with the athletes of Palau through targeted sports events in the Center's building.

In addition, many of our students and staff are involved in a wide range of special events related to the Special Olympics since the end of last year, including the TriGolf event for Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) for children of determination, Open Golf Day in collaboration with Goals UAE, "Yas Links", and the professional photography workshop at Manarat Al Saadiyat. This workshop was the first unified photography workshop of its kind. The last great event was the music choir in collaboration with Emirati musicians (Mohammed Morshed and Iman Al Hashemi) and in collaboration with the CEO of the Music for Autism International (Jill Bradford) organized by NYU with its continued support.

### **We noticed a number of volunteers from the Center support the success of the Special Olympics event. How many and what is the significance of participation?**

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Center for Special Education focuses in particular on directing many activities and efforts towards inclusion. We are proud to highlight the award we received

for Best Inclusive Initiative in collaboration with the Emirates College for Advanced Education on December 5, 2018.

Our students in the vocational education department participate in many professional opportunities in many events. This is the second year in a row that we have sent a team of volunteers to the Special Olympics. This year we have a team of 10 students. This is a great opportunity for us to get our students into the community and demonstrate how much progress they have made, and to have fun doing it. This is one of the most important objectives of MRC-NECC, focusing greatly on the importance of preparing our students for employment as adults. The biggest challenge for our students is communication and independence. This is what we strive to achieve as a higher goal at MRC-NECC.

### **When was the announcement of the new name of the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education?**

On September 18, 2018, the Department of Education and Knowledge and The New England Center for Children announced the launch of the Center's new name, the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education (MRC-NECC), aiming to recognize the contributions of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, who continues to promote acceptance and inclusion of people of determination as part of the UAE leadership's vision to offer all children the best services possible, with emphasis on education, regardless of their status or condition.

The New England Center for Children® (NECC®), a global leader in education for children with autism, continues to operate the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education, offering Emirati children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) some of the world's best education services through a dedicated school and research center. The school has served 184 students in 2017 and expanded to 212 students in 2018.