



# No Match for Adeline: Terre Haute Student Busts Through Barriers with INESA

*Primarily nonverbal, Adeline disliked school and was reluctant to join in with other kids. Now, after one semester with INESA, her limited vocabulary has doubled and she LOVES going to her new school and playing with friends.*

INESA Student: Adeline Fisher

Location: Terre Haute, IN

Adeline was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at 18 months old and has been primarily nonverbal, speaking less than 25 words.



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*– Crystal Fisher, parent of INESA student Adeline*

The Fisher family is filled with grace and gratitude but acknowledges the profound grief that surfaces when your child has a disability. Their happy-go-lucky daughter, Adeline, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at 18 months old.

“If you’ve never walked this path,” says her mother Crystal, “you have no idea the struggles and the burden it puts on families.”

She describes visits to Riley Hospital and the heartache of witnessing the harrowing circumstances of some children and families.

“We’ve had it rough, but it’s so humbling to see those in more difficult situations and realize it could be so much worse. I feel for those families. In that respect, we feel very blessed and grateful.”

## Cast Aside: Is This the Best We Can Do?

“I honestly didn’t know what her education would look like,” admits Crystal. “I’m truly grateful for all they did for her in public school, but she had a lot of anxiety around drop-off and pick-up.”

Adeline was also mostly confined to her special needs classroom, limiting her exposure to age-appropriate social interactions and developmental milestones. She mirrored the behaviors of her classmates with more severe challenges. Therefore, she wasn’t progressing – academically or socially.

Additionally, Adeline thrives on a routine, and anytime that routine is upset – such as when the primary teacher is away – she is frequently agitated. With fewer than 25 words in her vocabulary,

she sometimes resorted to physical aggression to communicate. The family relied on sign language to help mitigate frustrations. Still, the day-to-day challenges took a toll on the whole family.

“My biggest frustration as a parent is that she was either overlooked or cast aside because she couldn’t respond like other kids,” Crystal notes.

### **INESA: Divinely Appointed**

Some might call it happenstance, but Crystal credits God for her discovery of the Indiana Education Scholarship Account (INESA) which provides funding for special needs students.

Life Academy in Terre Haute, where her older boys attended school, hosted a breakfast for elected officials. During that breakfast, one of the representatives talked about the ESA. A teacher thought of Adeline and approached Crystal with the good news.

“It was a divine appointment,” asserts Crystal. “We are a family of faith and we believe that God orders our steps. The ESA was ordered into our steps. The timing was perfect. It could not have worked out any sooner.”

Believing that “faith without works is dead,” the Fishers immediately applied for INESA and were thrilled when Adeline was accepted.

### **A Better Generation**

The Fishers have used INESA funding to place Adeline in Life Academy where she is in a mainstream classroom of only nine students. With the remaining funding, they

hired a one-on-one tutor who stays with Adeline during the school day.

This combination has been a game-changer. If Adeline gets overwhelmed in class, or if she becomes a distraction to other students, the tutor will take her out of class to walk it off and return when she is ready.

Being in a mainstream classroom means that Adeline is challenged to level up. She now mirrors the behaviors of her classmates without disabilities, which has helped her to grow more competent and confident in self-control and social skills. It also means her neurotypical classmates are challenged to learn how to include kids with special needs.

“They’re seeing that she’s not a label,” Crystal explains. “It’s raising a classroom of kids who see that not everyone is like them, but they shouldn’t be discredited.”

“It’s okay that we have differences, but I can still love you and help you,” she continues. “And if they can get that as kids and learn that as they are growing up, that is a better generation.”

### **Brilliant Minds: Busting through Barriers**

With the right resources and support, ASD is no match for Adeline. Her optimism and strong will have positioned her to bust through previous barriers. Her vocabulary has doubled in just one semester. It’s been gratifying for Crystal to practice spelling words with her and listen to her say and spell the words out loud.

“Adeline is capable of so much more. I truly believe these kids have brilliant minds,” she suggests. “They’re just waiting for someone to take a chance on them. They just need the right resources.”

It’s also been gratifying to watch her social/emotional development blossom. Previously, Adeline did not enjoy school. She didn’t want to play with anyone or join in activities.

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## **Crystal’s Tips for INESA Parents:**

### **1 Pursue it.**

The worst that can happen is a ‘no.’ But on the other hand, if you’re accepted into the ESA, a lot of possibilities are available to you.

### **2 Stick with it.**

It takes time to get the hang of everything, figure out what’s best for your child, and start seeing improvement.

### **3 Just hold on.**

Know that you don’t walk this path alone. Others are going through similar experiences, and we have advocates. The fact that the ESA exists proves we are not alone.