

Grant student accomplishes her “wildly important goal”

Grant Middle School eighth-grader Jessica Hamm is putting first things first as she leaves her wheelchair and continues to work on being more mobile.

Jessica, who is in Grant’s multiple disabilities classroom, has set goals over the last two years focusing on getting out of her wheelchair more often and walking with her crutches. Teacher Angie Lavery said Jessica is accomplishing that goal and learning how to be an advocate for herself.

“She had to be proactive and think win-win to get what she wants,” Lavery said. “It’s just exciting. She’s a happier person. She is a totally different kid.”

Jessica, who wants to be a doctor, continues to set goal.

“I want to be independent,” she said. “I want to be able to walk on my own someday when I get a job. I want to be a doctor. I think it would be a great job to work.”

Lavery said Ms. Duffy, Jessica’s sixth-grade teacher, started working with Jessica. Bus driver Mike McKay helped her get on and off the bus on her own this school year.

“She had to advocate for herself,” said Lavery, who said she talked to Jessica about speaking up more for herself.

She said Jessica has made great strides in the past few years as she walks more with her crutches. An aide will walk behind her and sometimes she uses a gate belt to keep her steady, but overall she is becoming more independent.

“We don’t do anything for her,” Lavery said. “She says she will do it herself.”

Students throughout Grant were told to work on “wildly important goals” as the school stresses goal setting. They also studied The Leader in Me’s 7 Daily Habits.

“She had to be proactive and think ‘win-win’ to get what she wants,” Lavery said. “She does a lot of things she didn’t do before. Now she raises her hand or learns to problem solve herself.”

“I’m so proud of her,” she said. “We sing a little song, ‘Get it girl.’ She has the most infectious smile. She speaks up. She’s standing up for herself.”

Jessica will use her crutches and will not be in the multiple disabilities unit next year when she goes to Harding. She said she is excited.

“I’ll get to go to different classes next year,” she said. “I’m looking forward to English.”