



**Penelope's Rocking Chair**

By Foundation Board Member Michelle Stohler

Grant Recipients: Kate Barton -Chapelwood, Morgan Gonterman - Maplewood,  
Nicole Monkul - Chapel Glen

Imagine being five years old and already wondering why there was something different about you. Hearing your family and caregivers talk about what seems to be a collision of labels... "She can't sit still. She's constantly on the go. She doesn't follow simple instructions when we ask her to perform a task. She seems disconnected and can't seem to engage in any one activity. Penelope (*name is changed to protect identity*) doesn't really play with the other children because she is so impulsive and doesn't have the social and emotional skills that most kids are beginning to utilize even at a very elementary level, like Kindergarten. Sometimes people even use words like "special" to describe her, but we know they don't mean it in a monumental or outstanding way, instead they mean something entirely different," says mom. Imagine hearing those words over and over throughout your short life. Imagine searching for that stability all day long, but never quite finding it until you walk into your new DK (Developmental Kindergarten) classroom and find it sitting there just waiting for you... comfort, movement, security and peace.

Penelope makes it to her mini rocking chair and sits crossing her legs, looking super fashionable. "It's like night and day difference," comments her teacher, Kate Barton. The support and structure the rocking chair provides is unique. It is completely unlike sitting at a table, desk or on an alphabetical letter or number on the floor. Many students have a strong awareness of what they need and they will search for it by roaming the room, rolling on the floor or trying to climb all over their teacher or peers. Rocking provides the comfort they can't find anywhere else in the room. The circle of rocking chairs has changed the way the classroom feels. Ms. Barton states, "Penelope will be able to continue to utilize what she has learned through academic planning as she grows." Parents comment that it's not something they see everyday. The circle of rocking chairs has changed the way the classroom feels.

Penelope settles into her routine. She sits back, puts her head up, her arms on the armrest, both hands in lap, back touching the chair and her eyes on the teacher. Yes, one could describe Penelope as "special". Penelope is a unique and amazing human being. She is definitely very special! Looking around the room, it is obvious that this is an extraordinary place where imagination takes flight and abilities soar. Penelope is in the just the right place, sitting in her rocking chair, listening intently to a story about a Llama in room #5 at Chapelwood Elementary.