

# Student gets high-tech link to classroom

**The Talia Seidman Foundation has helped about a dozen kids across the country.**

By **JOAN HELLYER**  
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Emily Spivey believes that being able to take part in class activities from home will help her advance to sixth grade next school year.

She has taken part in her fifth-grade class at Newtown Elementary School via a videoconferencing setup since November. Emily, 11, started attending class high-tech style after undergoing a second bone marrow transplant in October to battle a relapse of acute myeloid leukemia, said her mom, Laura Spivey.

"If I didn't have the videoconferencing, I would have to do fifth grade all over again," Emily said. "It's helping a lot."

Most school days, Emily sits at home in front of a camera that's hooked up so her schoolmates can see her from their classroom. The fifth-grader watches on an adjacent monitor that's transmitting a video picture of teacher Rick Trout instructing his classroom at the Council Rock school in Newtown Township. The setup enables Emily to ask and answer questions, and follow the lessons.

## Talia Seidman Foundation

To learn more about the Talia Seidman Foundation, call 215-519-1993 or visit [www.talzee.org](http://www.talzee.org).

The Lower Makefield-based Talia Seidman Foundation provided the technology that Emily needed to keep up with her schoolwork and classmates.

The foundation was founded in the name of Talia, a 7-year-old child who died four years ago from brain cancer. The foundation's mission is to link injured or ill students to their classrooms, said Ron Seidman, Talia's father. He and his wife, Andrea, created the foundation in their daughter's name.

"We understand what it means for children to want to be in school," Seidman said. "These kids go through hell. But it is very important that they have access to school. Putting them in the classroom is a wonderful, wonderful thing to do not just for them educationally, but also psychologically and socially."

The foundation has helped about a dozen kids around the country, he said. Emily is the first Bucks County child to receive assistance from it.

She was diagnosed with the aggressive childhood leukemia in 2001 and under-

went her first bone marrow transplant in 2002. During a checkup in July, the doctors discovered the cancer had returned, her mom said.

The second transplant appears to be working, her dad said, because tests indicate the cancer is gone. But, as with all bone marrow transplants, Emily's immune system has been destroyed so she'll attend class from home while it rebuilds itself, her mom said.

"It's great. She can see her classmates. They can see her. We are very grateful," Laura Spivey said about the foundation's assistance.

Trout, her fifth-grade teacher, said, "She deserves a chance to learn just like everyone else."

Emily's classmates take turns sitting near the monitor to talk with her during dis-

cussion segments of lessons. They also relay information she might not be able to hear while Trout lectures.

During a talk last week about a narrative the kids are working on as part of their writers' workshop, students Jordan Fash and Alex Kanner encouraged Emily to share her work with the entire class.

"Read one of the sentences you had read to us," Alex, 10, said to Emily, who was reluctant to share her work.

"Yeah, that was good," Jordan, 10, added.

The other fifth-graders grew quiet as Emily read her narrative about visiting her doctor. When she finished, Emily's classmates gave her a round of applause.

"Good job, Emily!" the kids shouted.

Emily and kids like her who are dealing with a serious injury or illness deserve to have a link to their classmates and friends, Ron Seidman said.

"If we had not [started the foundation], children who

have been helped would not have been helped," he said. "And if we had not done something, our daughter's life would not have had as much meaning."

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3C



Fifth-graders Jordan Fash and Alex Kanner work on a personal narrative with fellow Newtown Elementary student Emily Spivey joining in from her home via a teleconference link. **KIM WEIMER** / COURIER TIMES