

Cap and growin' preschool jewels

TO THE delight of teachers and parents alike, Helen Keller Services for the Blind Learning Center held its 28th annual preschool graduation Friday morning at Brooklyn's MetroTech.

Nineteen visually impaired and disabled 5-year-olds sang nursery rhymes, played instruments and received their first diplomas.

The children donned tiny blue caps and gowns for the joyous occasion.

"You see children overcome intense challenges," said Principal Garth White, 57, of Brighton Beach. "To see that type of growth is very rewarding."

White said the students at Helen Keller are no different from other children — they just learn differently.

The school provides academic, social and therapeutic support to its students through professionals trained in special education.

Five-year old Justin Villafañe enrolled in the learning center three years ago. His parents, Jose and Gloria, said the school helped him become more confident.

"The school has helped him to be more interactive, more independent, and more bossy," joked Jose Villafañe, 36, of Gerritsen Beach. "He's also more engaging."

Veronica Harris



Kids, including Amy Mejia (above) and Angus Lin (left) celebrate graduation from Helen Keller Services for the Blind in Brooklyn on Friday.