

OWENS STORY!

I Am So Proud of this Remarkable Young Boy!

By Teresa Parker, Mental Health Coordinator for Kids Ranch

Owen was seven years old when he first came to Kids Ranch; he was in 2nd grade in the public school. His Mom contacted us because he wasn't reading; he hated reading! He announced that very clearly when he first came. His voice cried, "No! I don't want to! I hate to read!"; he could be heard throughout the building. Owen would shout from his hiding place under the chair when I first worked with him. Initially, he had several meltdowns to emphasize that he hated reading, kicking the table's leg for emphasis. And so, we began.

Mary Bowers, the Kids Ranch Educational Coordinator, initially tested Owen. He scored at the kindergarten level in both reading and spelling.

With all these behaviors in mind, I knew this little one would be challenging for me. Establishing a relationship with Owen was critical in the beginning. Through a series of talking exercises, we shared some thoughts and ideas.

Owen gradually told me what he felt like when he tried to read. He said, *"I just feel dumb, plain dumb. Cuz everyone else can read, except me! And the teacher talks too fast. And I don't understand what she wants me to do a lot of times. And when she calls on me, I feel embarrassed, and I don't even want to talk!"*

There were lots of challenges. From his very first days, Owen exhibited many behaviors that were hallmark symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. I asked his mom if I could do a thorough evaluation of him. She enthusiastically agreed. Mom and other family members offered feedback on evaluation forms and important anecdotal information. Owen had a high level of AD/HD features. According to Owen, his parents, and his teacher, this learning barrier created many difficulties for him in school and in his self-esteem and social skills.

My evaluation and recommendations were sent to Owen's pediatric doctor, who agreed with the diagnosis and prescribed the appropriate medication.

Fortunately, Owen's response to the medication was remarkable! His focus improved significantly, and his tolerance for periods of quiet activity and concentration on his studies increased. He could now effectively learn with his body calmer and his mind ready to attend.

Together, Owen and I persevered through the stages of learning to respect and like each other, and now I even get big hugs and a sincere 'thank you each time I work with Owen.

Owen gradually progressed in reading literacy by teaching him the program we use at Kids Ranch called "Synthesizing Phonics." This is a highly effective, brain-based, multi-sensory phonics technique that Kids Ranch uses to teach hundreds of children with learning barriers to read.

Over the three years I have been Owen's tutor, he has progressed remarkably. He is now reading at a 4th-grade level and has gained so much confidence in himself. His self-esteem has improved; he is very proud of his accomplishments in reading and mastering learning in general.

Last week, I asked him to write a sentence using a word he had just studied. Here is the photo that I took that day. Owen asked his mom to put the picture on Facebook, "So Everyone can see it!" (Owen's parents gave permission to share it). This week, Owen worked on a new vowel sound, the 'schwa O'. He asked me to take a picture of his spelling test at the end of the session. He also read a National Geographic book about wolves that he chose himself; the book was far more advanced than anything he had read before. He was so proud to read the book to me; some words were new to him, but he used the technique we teach with Synthesizing Phonics to sound out the unfamiliar words. At the end of the last page, Owen triumphantly declares, "There! I wanted to show you that I could do it!" (I knew it all along!)

Comment from Owen's Mom, Ashley:

"Kids Ranch has helped not just our three kids but me, their mom as well. This is such a great program for these kids. I'm so glad we had this opportunity to be involved with Kids Ranch because it has helped our three kids in multiple ways.

They have such great people working as staff members and all the volunteers as well. My kids have formed some great relationships, friends, and like another set of "family" members. I'm so grateful for Kids Ranch for all of their help, both for helping with literacy for all my kids, and for Teresa's help for their Mental Health needs.

Our kids have all improved several years in their reading! We are going to be sad... yet happy when they have "graduated" out of the Kids Ranch program.

I can't say it enough about all the wonderful stuff they are accomplishing for kids

at Kids Ranch. Our kids and our whole family are so grateful to all of you! 😊”

If you have a child who has difficulty reading or is struggling in school, please get in touch with our Kids Ranch team.