

A Student Success Story

Catholic School Inclusive Education At Work

Michael* transferred to our school at the beginning of his fourth grade year from another Catholic School. He had a history of attentional difficulties and academic problems and his parents had recently divorced. Michael was a fourth grader who could read very little, was struggling in every subject and had difficulties with paying attention. Our initial placement testing determined that Michael's sight word knowledge and ability to decode phonemically was at the 1st percentile for his grade. His comprehension based mainly on vocabulary knowledge was at the 3rd percentile and his comprehension based on context clues was at the first grade, sixth month level. Michael was also struggling with math. He had difficulties paying attention and with organization.

Our on-staff clinical psychologist diagnosed Michael with a reading disorder, mathematics disorder, disorder of written expression and Attention Deficit Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified. The psychologist gave a long list of recommendations to help Michael. The family had very limited financial resources and could not afford all of the recommendations, such as Lindamood Bell or a private tutor or shadow aide. They were very cooperative and told us that they would do all they could for Michael. It was very important to the family that Michael receive a Catholic education.

We met with Michael's parents and developed an Individualized Learning Plan for him, outlining the adaptations that could be made for Michael in the classroom. This included small group reading and math classes. We placed Michael in our modified reading class. This is a class of up to ten students taught by a reading specialist. A direct instruction reading program, *Reading Mastery* is used along with *Academy of Reading*. *Reading Mastery* is a program developed for the dyslexic reader. The award winning *Academy of Reading* is a research based, proven computer program which helps at risk readers achieve rapid permanent gains in reading. Michael's math skills were almost at grade level. He needed extra help with learning his math facts. A parent volunteer began helping Michael with learning his math facts. Michael was enrolled in our homework club after school to help him with getting his homework finished. We developed a daily behavior note for Michael with some target behavior goals and an incentive program. Medication treatment along with the daily home note improved his ADHD symptoms.

With the above support in place along with some others along the way, Michael has been a successful member of us class for the last 4 years and is now in his 8th grade year. Michael's ILP has been updated each year at least twice. We have had many Student Support Team meetings at which Michael is now included.

Michael is very popular and has many friends. Michael spends weekends with his father and they spend a lot of time on and around his father's boat, swimming diving and surfing. Last year when Michael's class visited Catalina Island Michael's knowledge of marine biology really shown. Michael was awarded the "Camper of the Week." Recently, Michael was evaluated by the local public school and by our reading specialist. Michael is now reading in the 5th to 6th grade range and his math skills have improved to grade level. Michael's story is one that motivates us every day to continue supporting our students to become successful members of a Catholic School Community.

**For confidentiality purposes the student's name has been changed. The student attends a Catholic elementary school within the Diocese of Orange, California. This was submitted by the Learning Support Coordinator at the school. Used with permission.*

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