

CASE STUDY

Ben entered The Wolf School in 2001 as a third grader, experiencing social, emotional and learning difficulties that prevented him from engaging with other students. At his prior elementary school, Ben had been placed in a separate room away from his peers as the teachers struggled with his behaviors. His parents recall his attitude toward school before he arrived at Wolf: "Very early on he had melt downs. They were awful, hours spent under a desk or table. We understood it as frustration and not aggression, but he was isolated at his old school. He had a full time aid, and they kept him self-contained and quiet. He had no learning goals, only behavioral goals. He had so many social challenges."

For Ben, assessing where he was prior to his arrival at The Wolf School proved challenging as he refused to take tests. However, in a neurological evaluation done before entering Wolf he scored below average on the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and in the third percentile on the Test of Early Written Language. In addition, Ben struggled with reading social cues and managing the classroom structure, which inhibited his ability to learn.

With its innovative immersion model, The Wolf School strives to assist each student in recognizing strengths and utilizing individualized coping skills. Founded in 1999, the school integrates clinical and educational programming to meet children's needs in areas of language processing, sensory integration, and social communication.

At Wolf, Ben received individualized attention and specialized lessons, including speech and language support embedded in the curriculum and daily sensory integration work which enabled him to move ahead educationally.

After the first six months at the Wolf School, the evaluator who had observed Ben in his prior school setting and later at Wolf wrote: "Ben has made unequivocal progress in six months, both in the domain of academics and behavior."

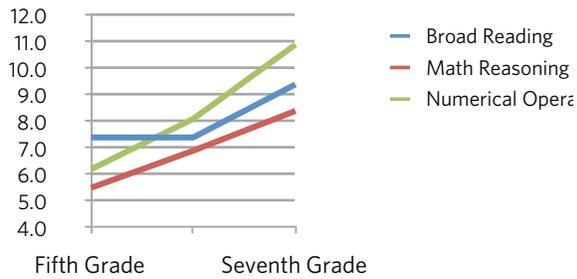
Even now, ten years after arriving at Wolf, Ben still remembers some of the specific techniques that paired sensory and language supports to accommodate his learning style. "We did vocabulary and Orton-Gillingham (a phonics-based reading program) with a basketball," he explains. "We took a lot of breaks in the day when we were able to move our bodies around, and it was a lot easier to learn that way."

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Ben recalls this part of his education with comfort and clarity noting the ease in which he learned. While his achievement of Eagle Scout and class president clearly point to his social success, Ben has similar evidence as to his academic success. He reports receiving high honors in high school and notes that he has difficulty naming his favorite subject as he enjoys them all.

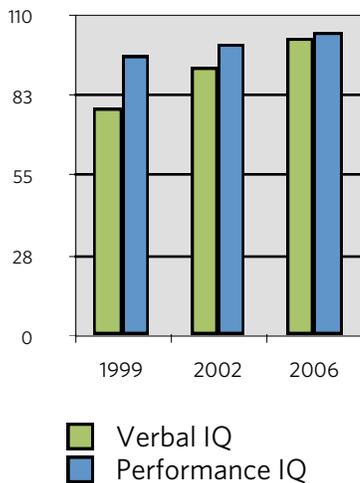
By the time of his graduation from Wolf, Ben scored on or above grade level on his Weschler Individual Achievement Tests (WIAT).

Table 1: WIAT Scores



Another noteworthy measure of Ben’s gains can be seen in comparing the WISC scores completed prior to Ben’s admission to Wolf with similar assessments during his time at The Wolf School.

Table 2: WISC Scores



After 3 years at Wolf, Ben’s verbal score improved by 14 points to the average range. A similar increase in scores was noted 4 years later with a gain of 10 points in the verbal domain. Over the course of 7 years, Ben’s verbal scores on intellectual screening improved by 24 points. As an evaluator explained, “A gain of that magnitude speaks to the efficacy of the immersion program which allowed Ben to unlock his true cognitive and learning potential.”

Beyond test scores, however, Ben learned something very important about himself and others during his time at Wolf. “The most important thing I learned is that all of us are the same yet we came here for different reasons. Teachers at Wolf teach each student the way he or she needs to be taught. And that means the students will have a much greater time.”

For his parents, who remember his pre-Wolf School educational experiences, the increase in Ben’s self-worth and sense of pride means as much as his advances in his academic pursuits and his test scores. “The Wolf School taught him to be flexible and deal with issues that upset him,” they note.

“He has learned about himself, and he is not afraid to try anything. He knows life has struggles, but he also knows he can do it. That’s the real measure for quality of life and real world functioning.”

In June 2012, Ben led his senior classmates across the stage at his high school graduation as a student council member, class president and an Eagle Scout. Ben credits his educational experience at The Wolf School with enabling him to learn the coping skills required to achieve his success. According to Ben, “Sending me to the Wolf School was one of the best decisions my parents ever made.”

For more information about research at The Wolf School contact Lise Faulise, Director of Research at lfaulise@thewolfschool.org or visit our website at www.thewolfschool.org