Where Are They Now?

*Remembering a Year of Learning for the Student and the New Teacher*

by Allison Puissegur, St. Charles Parish Public Schools

It was the beginning of the school year in August 2006, in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana — a small river parish located 25 miles west of New Orleans. I was just beginning my first year as a Reading Recovery teacher. A range of emotions filled me as I understood the potential impact my planning and instruction would have on my students.

Bryce Rochelle was a first-grade student at Norco Elementary in 2006. He was selected for Reading Recovery® and was assigned to me. Realizing the impact that I could make as I guided him along his path to literacy learning was both exciting and humbling. I remember Bryce as a curious child whose interests included everything active and outdoors. He enjoyed fishing, playing ball, running, and more running. Some family members even referred to him as “Mr. Activity.”

His initial interests in books and school took a backseat to other things. Bryce was a struggling reader. According to him, some of his memories were “not so great” back then; he had trouble reading and comprehending. He describes his early experiences with reading as “being a hassle” and remembers feeling scared and especially fearful of being asked to read in...
front of others. I recall his first lesson. He entered the room and opted to find a place under the table instead of sitting at it ready to read and write.

Bryce was ready. Although he had yet to discover the joy of reading and writing, it was my job to meet him where he was and show him how much potential he truly had. Following him along his path to literacy learning was my responsibility and, over time, he learned more about reading and writing. He preferred writing because “it was where I could write my thoughts and my memories down and no one could judge me for it, because it was my work and only my work.”

Because of Reading Recovery, Bryce learned to read and write. His reading and writing would continue to develop with every new opportunity. According to his mom, she was excited for him to be a part of the program, as she had faith and knew he would get the extra support he needed. This early intervention gave him the confidence to know that with effort, he could achieve whatever he set out to do.

Bryce shared that throughout school, he has always tried his hardest on homework, quizzes, and tests no matter what.

“Being a successful and fluent reader makes a great impression,” Bryce said. “If you are a great reader, you will be able to understand any problem to solve in any class.”

This confidence and perseverance has allowed him to accelerate and experience the success he worked for throughout school. Now a senior at Destrehan High School in Destrehan, LA, Bryce’s current course load includes AP calculus, AP biology, world history, and English IV. He proudly shares that he has made honor roll every year in high school. He has maintained steady grades, winning numerous academic awards while playing on the varsity baseball team. He even earned a spot on the first all-district team last year.

Today, his mother is most proud of the fact that he is a responsible, caring young man who takes his classes very seriously and strives to maintain good grades while balancing a busy athletic schedule. He expects to graduate with honors and anticipates being awarded a TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) scholarship to Louisiana State University where he has been accepted and will study engineering.

Allison Puissegur continues to impact students as a Reading Recovery teacher leader in St. Charles Parish Public Schools.