



ALL of a students' needs met at one amazing school

OAK CREEK ACADEMY, which opened in 2013, is a nontraditional PK-12 school that operates year-round in the greater Killeen, Texas, area. The school emphasizes inclusion for all types of learners and provides on-site speech, occupational, physical, and behavioral therapies.

Oak Creek Academy founder and head of school, Tracy Hanson, MEd, was an educator for eight years when she opened Education Connection, a child development center for children six weeks to four years old. As Tracy started to see the needs of the kids changing in her center, she realized she wanted to do more to provide nontraditional instruction to these children. "The stress on the parents and students and the revolving door pushed me to do this," she explains. "Those students needing extra support are able to receive it."

At Oak Creek Academy, students are taught by certified teachers with a 1:5

teacher/student ratio using instruction methods geared toward the individual child. Having over 35 therapists on campus allows all of a student's needs to be met without leaving school. Tracy believes the school's biggest advantage is the in-house therapies and shares, "A parent doesn't have to interrupt the school day to take their child to various therapies. When they pick them up in the evening, they get to go home and be a family."

PARENTS are a huge part of the Oak Creek Academy environment

and know what goes on in their child's classrooms. Amber, a parent of an Oak Creek Academy student, conveys, "We all work toward the same goals. When a child is taken to speech down the road and brought back, the school has no idea what they just worked on. But here, the teachers can talk to the therapists about behaviors or trends they are noticing and the teacher can develop work in the classroom that will help them."

Amber adopted her son when he was three years old and knew he had developmental delays including autism, dyslexia, and dysgraphia. Amber and her husband were not aware of alternative options for their son's education, so he was enrolled in public school until fourth grade. Amber continues, "As he got older we needed to hold him back, but because he had special needs he automatically progressed to the next grade." Amber's son struggled to complete the work and was bullied because of his challenges.



He also had therapy appointments to attend during the day. "I was at one of his therapy appointments, and I told them that something had to give. My husband is a wounded warrior, so I have to work, and that's when I learned about Oak Creek Academy." Since being at the Academy, Amber's son has advanced two grades and has learned to be his own advocate.

Tracy Hanson is a firm advocate of inclusion programs. She believes that all children with all abilities can be successful in a stimulating environment that provides exploration and unique opportunities for learning. Tracy recognizes that "students can be auditory, visual, or tactical learners. In a nontraditional environment you have to teach in a setting that is supported by therapists, assistants, teachers, parents, and inclusion."

Texas A&M University-Central Texas (TAMUCT) students visit Oak Creek Academy to help with the students and observe. The Academy's vision is to partner with TAMUCT and build a center on the University campus for students to use as a lab to observe and learn about early childhood development and nontraditional inclusion schooling for all ages. Tracy believes this arrangement will help prepare general education majors for the classroom.



To learn more about Oak Creek Academy or sponsor a military child's attendance, visit www.oakcreekkilleen.org.