Riley

Riley’s a very active boy. Going to kindergarten he had speech and hearing issues.   
We knew from a very young age that Riley was going to have some challenges.

My name is Cathy Wright, I’m a primary school teacher and I graduated from La Trobe University.

Riley came to me when he was in grade 2. Because he struggled he experienced a lot of frustration. Frustration spilled into all areas. In the play ground, in the classroom. He would have been in the bottom half of the class academically. He was quite disruptive and frustrated.

Being with Cathy in grade 2 provided a safe haven for Riley. It grounded him and he knew that that was a safe place. She was very attentive to Riley but also was able to spend time with me as a parent and we could work together to work out strategies that would be best for Riley.

Often there’s kids that need to move, they just need something to do with their hands so a stress ball is one of their strategies . Other strategies that we put in place that they got to go out and do little jobs so there was time to move. We just tried a whole range of different things. I gave him quite a lot of one on one support and tried to make him feel really good about himself. If you feel good about yourself you’re much more likely to improve in what you’re doing and keep persisting. It’s been a struggle for him most definitely.

If I was frustrated Mrs Wright would talk to me, calm me down. Mrs Wright is always there.

In primary school grade two to three is a really big jump. There’s homework, there’s a lot of different expectations. Riley understandably was quite anxious at that point so I spoke to his year 3 teacher and said when Riley’s had enough in the classroom send him down to me and bring down a book to read or some of his writing. So he would come down and read his stories and my grade ones thought he was just the ants pants because you know he was the big kid and he got to be the king of the kids.

From kindergarden to year 6 when he was handed the Vic Captain pin you could see mentally how he had changed within himself and show himself that he was able to achieve. He was up against other kids that were equally deserving of the position but for him to of received that from his peers meant so much to him. He came home shaking and smiling with this huge smile on his face and for him it was like I’ve done it, you know, I’ve achieved this.

When Riley graduated from grade 6 he was confident, articulate, he got up at the graduation and was able to give a speech in front of a room full of adults walking tall and being proud of what he has achieved. What I have taken from La Trobe University was an ability to cater to the individual differences of all of my students.

She was very caring and very genuine in her approach because you could see that she loved what she was doing, she loved her students, she loved teaching and you could just see that coming through.

That’s why we do this. You do it so you can see improvements in what children can do. That’s why you do it.