

“That my child was able to receive amazing help and be safe at home was so important.”

When Owen started Grade 1 in September, his teacher could not believe the leaps and bounds he had made in his speech in just a few months.

“He can read a book to his teacher! He has never read a book out loud before,” says Owen’s mom Sandra. “He’s proud of it now, whereas before he really didn’t want to do it.”

Owen’s parents and teachers noticed in Kindergarten he was behind with his speech. While Sandra could understand what he was saying, many others had difficulty. Often Owen would just give up trying to speak out of frustration of not being understood.

His paediatrician referred them to Sick Kids where they determined he would benefit from speech therapy. The family got the call from Five Counties with his appointment to start therapy in March 2020. Then Covid-19 hit and there was concern that would change. The Centre had to close its doors to in-person visits. Another concern weighing heavily on Owen’s mom and dad’s minds was how could Owen attend in Centre therapy sessions even if the Centre reopened their doors?

This wasn’t his first referral to Five Counties. Owen is also medically fragile. He was born with half a heart and had received therapy as an infant from Five Counties for feeding support and occupational and physio therapies.

They weren’t sure how his speech therapy could move forward. Since the pandemic had been declared, Owen’s life and environment has been very restricted. But Owen’s therapist Ida called the family right away and told Sandra: we’re getting Virtual Therapy set up. Bear with us – I’ll be in touch. “And, sure enough, she was!”

Virtual speech therapy worked very well for Owen. Ida was creative, finding games that would interest him and keep him engaged, making sessions fun so he would want to participate. Also, Virtual therapy provided something different to look forward to in his lockdown routine.

“Owen loved the games. He loves to play games on my phone anyway and to him this was just one great game. He loved having that time that he knew was his.

“The only issue we had was when Owen’s younger sister wanted to participate too. But even then, Ida was terrific, giving Sophia a few minutes of time so no one felt excluded.”

Sandra especially appreciated how supported she felt. Ida provided coaching and support for Sandra at the end of every session. She also gave them homework to do between sessions so Owen wouldn’t lose any of the progress he made, always making it was fun so Owen would really want to do it. And if there was a problem or a question, they could contact Ida and she would get back to them within a couple of hours, or less.

“For Ida to take that time with me was invaluable. Being able to be there and a part of the therapy session gave me the knowledge and confidence to help Owen outside of sessions. Now Owen is confident, chatty and outgoing. He’s excited to try and he is succeeding.”



Owen and his mom Sandra on his first day of Grade 1



Building Abilities for Life

“Our therapist Ida was so patient with my son Owen and was always ready with fun ways to keep his attention”