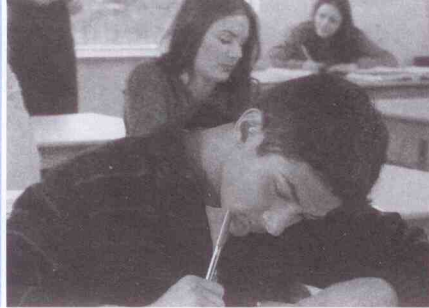
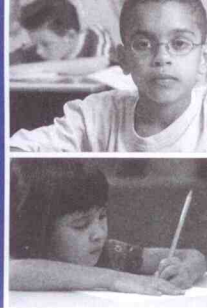




Therapeutic Education Centers



Dedicated to meeting the academic and emotional needs of the exceptional student through individualized and innovative educational programs.



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The Olive Crest Therapeutic Education Center (TEC) was invited to work with Mustard Seed Ranch in the Fall of 2007. Since then, an average of six students has been chosen each semester to work with the horses once a week to fulfill their counseling needs through equine therapy. The students involved in the program attend a nonpublic school and have a wide variety of unique needs that are addressed through behavior interventions, counseling and modified curriculum. For many students, a visit to the ranch is a whole new experience as many of them have never been exposed to that type of environment or animals of any kind.

Students from TEC who have been involved in the Mustard Seed program have greatly benefitted from the experience. The mere presence of horses demands the respect of physical boundaries. Students quickly learn safety rules and are often in awe of the horse's size and power. It is important for students to practice observing physical boundaries so they may resolve their conflicts using proper communication and treat those around them with respect.

In terms of communication, the students are also encouraged to use pro-social language with their peers and other adults present on the ranch and to control the volume of their voices around the horses. As tasks presented to the students become more challenging, the students are assisted with learning how to express their frustrations in a productive and appropriate manner. While working with horses, it is also imperative the students learn to manage their impulses and behave in a calm and purposeful manner so the horses do not startle and tasks are completed.

The students have been observed to help their peers when directed to do so and also on their own volition. The ranch experience naturally requires hard work and the students quickly discover that work is made easier with the help of a peer. As the students care for the horses through grooming and giving them attention, they are rewarded by the unconditional affection only a horse can give. Receiving this affection and experiencing a special bond has increased many students level of confidence and self-esteem. All of the social skills and life lessons learned at the ranch directly relate to the goals the students work toward at school. Back on campus, staff has observed a change in the students who have been a part of the Mustard Seed Ranch experience and have commented on their positive attitudes, improved communication skills and willingness to work hard.

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