

Parent Testimonial 1:

November 2025

My son is neurodivergent and was diagnosed with Autism in preschool. Since he was little, he has always enjoyed self-study, researching, and in depth learning about subjects that piqued his interest. He is outspoken and curious, creative and compassionate. He has a keen sense of justice and has always been interested in history and politics.

Sadly, all his interests and strength set him apart from his peers and made him a target for bullying at school. His teachers knew he was bright but often exacerbated the bullying by targeting him as the “other” child in class. He was placed in special education classes even though the curriculum was not the issue- it was his social skills and finding peers he could connect with. This took a terrible toll on his self esteem and mental health. Once he reached high school the bullying and frustration he felt over not being heard or respected by staff and students alike took its toll and things got even worse.

I was at a loss and very scared- he was so bright and so fragile and the public school system was failing him. I had known for many years he needed something better. Something different that could accommodate his outside-the-box way of learning and moving in the world. I seriously considered homeschooling, but then he would be lacking the key social component he so desperately needed.

Then his IEP advocate mentioned a brand new microschool for kids like my son that was trying to get up and running: Orchid Community School (OCS).

I immediately made contact with Mx. Wilder and just through several exchanges I knew it was exactly what he needed- an open, nonjudgmental and supportive learning environment where my son could learn core subjects in a smaller group but also have the ability to pursue his personal interests as part of his studies, rather than the generic pre-selected electives offered in public school.

Since attending OCS, his outlook on school has changed dramatically for the better. He actually enjoys going to school and has become more confident socially. He feels safe to express himself and knows that he is supported and respected at school. He is learning to play guitar and is researching politics in early 20th century Vietnam. Where just a year ago I was fearful for his future, I now know he will have the support he needs to forge one for himself. I truly cannot say enough to express how much OCS has made a difference in not just my child’s life, but in my peace of mind as a parent.

Parent of student currently enrolled, age 15