

**When the teasing and bullying took over everything else, Agora helped Adam find his way out of the shadows and into a brighter future.**

Being a pre-teen adolescent boy comes with enough inherent anxieties as it is, along with plenty of exciting times. However, for Bloomsburg, PA resident, Adam Langenecker, the anxieties went well beyond the norm and the exciting times were completely overshadowed by teasing and bullying from his schoolmates because he was born with a bilateral-cleft palate.

While Adam faced a degree of teasing at private school, the situation intensified in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, when he made the switch from private to public school. The emotional turmoil, as well as distractions he found more pronounced such as students talking during class, made it difficult for Adam to concentrate on his studies. He fell further behind socially and became more and more isolated from his peers.

Within just a couple of months, Adam's mother knew she had to get her son out of public school as quickly as possible. She was considering homeschooling when an acquaintance suggested Agora Cyber Charter School.

"Certainly, the teasing and bullying made traditional schooling incredibly difficult for Adam, and it was disheartening to discover that the schools don't always do something to educate students and staff on interacting with students with disabilities," said Adam's mother, Connie. "But that wasn't all. Adam is an extremely bright boy, but he wasn't being challenged intellectually. There was so much attention on what was 'wrong' with him, he wasn't getting the proper attention that would allow him to grow academically according to his own needs."

All that changed when Adam enrolled in Agora as a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student. He quickly advanced from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as from being a synchronous student to an asynchronous one, and he became an honor student, graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade this year with a final grade of an A. Adam and his mother attribute his ability to excel to three things. One, Agora understood his situation and specific challenges and worked with them instead of trying to fight or change them. Two, Adam has a tremendous drive to succeed and Agora both challenged him and gave him the room, independence and responsibility he needed to grow. And three, Agora removed the distractions yet continued to nurture the intellectual as well as the social aspects that allowed Adam to develop as a well-rounded young man.

"I get very emotional talking about Adam's journey—his transformation—at Agora," said Connie, who is happy how much she can remain involved with Adam's schooling by working with Agora coaches. "He adapted so well and excelled. The family coaches were incredible for him and for me. He has developed into a lovely teenager, the person he always was but just couldn't become in the other schools. We've been two years with Agora and it feels like forever because they are like family. The sky is the limit for my son and words cannot express my gratitude."

For Adam, so much comes into play that makes his experience at Agora so wonderful.

"I can do my schoolwork without everyone looking at me and judging me during class time—and everyone is equal," said Adam. "There is none of the tension I felt every day when I walked into my other school. Agora respects me, and I have so many friends there, teachers and students."

In addition to Agora filling Adam's academic needs and hunger for learning, he loves the opportunities the school offers for socializing with classmates and meeting new people. In fact, Adam, who once was extremely isolated and far outside the "social bubble", is now thriving as a teenager doing "typical" teenager things, like getting together with his Agora friends to talk about hobbies and pursue common interests. If he can help it, Adam tries to attend the Agora Day Out events in his area, which happen at least once a month. Now, with a fairly active social circle and a ton of confidence from his school

achievements, Adam can't wait to start high school where he will be taking Honors courses in Algebra I, Earth Science, Literary Analysis and Composition AND World History. He IS the excited adolescent with a world wide open to him.

