



## STEPPING BEYOND THE SCHOLARSHIP

# Eduardo Rivero's amazing turnaround



By **GEOFF FOX**

Eduardo Rivero was a sixth-grader reading at a fourth-grade level when school started last year. He was also behind in math and had trouble concentrating.

As he begins seventh grade at Kingdom Academy, a pre-K

through 8 private school in Miami, the 12-year-old is reading at an eighth-grade level and thriving in math. The amazing turnaround has left his mother, Jovanna Rivero, pleasantly surprised.

"I sat down with his teacher at the end of the year, and they showed me the (reading) score and, oh, my God, I was so emotional and happy," Jovanna Rivero said. "It was like opening up a box with a surprise in it. I didn't think it would be so good. Even the teachers and staff thought it was amazing by how much progress he made in that time."



*Jovanna Rivero with her sons Julian and Eduardo, each of whom attend Kingdom Academy in Miami.*

Besides Eduardo's hard work, she said teacher Xiomara Carrera was instrumental in his success.

"She saw that he was falling behind in his studies and understood that he was missing the previous year's foundational understanding of math and English," Rivero said. "Not addressing it would cause him to spiral into a failing year. The pressure of not understanding each day's advancing subject matter was hurting him not only academically, but socially as well."

“When I approached the school about this, they offered to add him in Mrs. Carrera’s after-school tutoring program. Unfortunately, by the second quarter of the school year the program was already full. Mrs. Carrera took the initiative to open her schedule and some personal time to work with Eduardo. It makes me so happy to see that teachers like Mrs. Carrera are willing to work with parents and truly care for our children’s success.”

Eduardo recently entered his third year at Kingdom Academy. His mother said he previously attended a local elementary school, but while he made mostly A’s and B’s, he was not happy there.

Jovanna Rivero learned of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program through a friend whose child went to Kingdom Academy. A single mother of two who works as a medical assistant, she applied for the program for lower-income families through Step Up For Students and Eduardo was accepted.



*Eduardo Rivero, a seventh-grader at Kingdom Academy in Miami, was reading on a fourth-grade level last year, but made a stunning turnaround. He is now reading at an eighth-grade level and excelling in math.*

While many students in the program realize academic improvements after receiving a scholarship, Eduardo was different.

“During his fifth-grade year, we noticed an odd behavior when it came to focusing on a task,” Rivero said. “Through counseling it was determined he had a mild learning disability. He was also diagnosed with attention deficit disorder.”

She doubts Eduardo would have gotten as much individualized attention at their neighborhood school. Her younger son Julian is now doing well as a first-grader at Kingdom Academy; he is also on the scholarship program through Step Up. When he isn’t astounding his family and teachers with academic progress, Eduardo enjoys computer coding, video games, Minecraft and art.

“So far, I want to be animator,” he said. “He draws characters from his imagination,” his mother said. “Whatever goes into his brain, he draws.”

She said Eduardo’s confidence has soared since his remarkable academic turnaround. “We’re very grateful to everyone at Step Up and Kingdom Academy,” she said.

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