

I am writing this to give my testimony as the mother of a 10 year old dyslexic son. There is a desperate need to have dyslexia clearly defined and testing available for children who suffer from this disability. I am a K – 12 NYS certified elementary and secondary math teacher. I suspected my son had some learning issues prior to kindergarten, but at his kindergarten screening they insisted that he was ready. During his kindergarten year my concerns grew as I saw him struggle. His teacher suggested that he had vision problems. I had him tested and they determined that he had tracking problems and I pursued a year of vision training, not covered by insurance. I saw little to no growth despite hours of paid training and at home daily practice. . During first grade they slowly took him through the RtI tiers , which was not only slow, but delayed early intervention. At this point, I decided that I needed to write the letter to have him formally tested for a learning disability. The school psychologist told me there was no specific test for dyslexia. After the school tested him, they classified him with a learning disability, but not dyslexia. During second grade, I hired a private Wilson reading tutor(3x – 30 min. weekly) to supplement his daily school program. I also continued to pursue issues around his vision and had him tested by an Irlen reading specialist who diagnosed him as having issues and we got him blue glasses to help reduce the glare of the white paper.

He attended a Wilson reading summer school program through the district, but was still showing limited growth. Going into second grade, he was reading at a kindergarten level, despite the extra tutoring, vision training and daily resource room. Third grade proved to be more of the same, so I decided to have him privately tutored over the summer and tested outside of the school by a psychologist at Four Winds in Katonah, New York. I finally got the answer I was looking for. My son had pretty severe dyslexia, but he also had a very superior IQ. He fell under the category of gifted/dyslexic. I had been told by his third grade special ed teacher that he would never “catch up” to his peers. The testing done at school had not addressed how intelligent he is, and I was told to accept his condition.

After my private testing, I demanded that my son receive intensive one-on-one instruction, or I would hold the school responsible for his lack of progress. During fourth grade he was finally given the help and support he needed. He is now about 6 months “behind” in his reading level, but he loves to read and through the federal government has access to Bookshare. If I was not tenacious and assertive, my child would be unable to read or much further delayed. Why did it take private testing, hours of misguided searching, and thousands upon thousands of dollars out of my personal money to have my son’s disability properly diagnosed and treated. My son had me, but not all parents have my educational background, knowledge of the system or financial ability to help their children. As a society we have failed this population by our indifference to recognizing their needs and intervening as early as possible.

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