

My name is Laura Carl and I am the mother to 4 wonderful children! My husband Detective Matthew Carl, of the East Windsor Police Department, and I reside in Barkhamsted CT, where we are raising and educating our 12,10, 9 & 5 year old children in multiple public school districts. We chose our home because we felt they would receive the best education here. As luck would have it we were wrong when it comes to our 9 year old son Nicholas who has been identified as having dyslexia & dysgraphia and is in 3rd grade.

Nicholas' struggles began at birth when he was born 16 weeks early at just 1lb 12oz. After Five touch & go months in UCONN NICU we were able to bring him home where he grew & thrived and was closely monitored by Birth 2 Three services. Nicholas had several developmental delays and upon his 3rd birthday he was transferred to the Shared Services integrated preschool program in Barkhamsted. There he spent 3 years and received services for speech and language, physical therapy & occupational therapy devised under an Individual Education Plan (IEP). During this time he struggled with basic concepts of rhyming, sequencing, speech, letter/number/color/shape identification and he was very impulsive during most tasks. However, I was told "Nicholas is such a sweet boy" & that he'd make great gains as he became older.

When Nicholas began kindergarten in a classroom size of 23 students all his services under the IEP were dropped. Since my husband & I were not knowledgeable about special education services we trusted that if Nicholas needed help the school would pick up on it & provide him with help he needed. Nicholas struggled throughout the year & was way behind his classmates. I volunteered as a "reading helper" & remember leaving the school so upset on several occasions because he couldn't read to me like the other students his age. The teacher assured me he was fine, that "he was a boy & he'd take a while but he'd catch up." Nicholas' writing was illegible and often times would refuse to do writing assignments because writing was "too hard." I began advocating for smaller class sizes for the following year but that didn't occur.

At the beginning of 1st grade I voiced my concerns to Nicholas' teacher about his inability to read or write. Some time passed but she to began to notice his backwards slide as most kids in his class were becoming proficient beginning readers & writers. Nicholas was evaluated in January 2013 & given some basic standards IQ testing. Following that Nicholas was found to have a low Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) reading level & was offered "TLC reading" w/a paraprofessional a couple times a week. Throughout 1st grade my husband & I received behavioral complaints that Nicholas was impulsive, handsy & had tendencies that mirrored ADHD. After an evaluation w/an ADHD doctor who's results were inconclusive, possibly because of his young age, it was recommended that we try medication & see if it worked. As 1st grade ended &

summer began I saw a completely different child. Nicholas was angry, emotional & unable to function on the medication, however because Nicholas had to spend 2 weeks in a "summer school reading program" we worked through it. After a pediatrician follow up we discovered Nicholas had lost 6 lbs & we took him off the ADHA medication immediately.

Then began our journey into 2nd grade when we discovered the classrooms would have approx. 15 students each. That being said, Nicholas' teacher went out on a permanent medical leave & a full-time substitute was brought in. I immediately requested a PPT to voice my concerns regarding Nicholas inability to read & write or complete/understand basic math. After that meeting, I felt my concerns were falling on deaf ears so we had Nicholas evaluated by an Independent Speech & Language Pathologist (SLP). The SLP's results were conclusive & the pathologist identified Nicholas as having dyslexia and dysgraphia. Based on these needs an IEP plan was put in place & he began to receive additional services, to included 30 minutes of Wilson reading a day and help in writing & math. However, Nicholas didn't make any advancements during 2nd grade, he hated school! His attendance records reflect many absences where he said he was sick & begged, pleaded & cried many tears in order to stay home from school. This was heartbreaking to watch & attempt to fix.

My husband & I had serious concerns going into the summer & decided it was in Nicholas' best interests to attend summer school at the Ben Bronz Academy (BBA) which is a school for dyslexia. The growth in him while he was there was amazing to us. Nicholas never fought or refused to go to BBA & enjoyed meeting other kids that had the same or similar learning disabilities as he did. When I ask him what his favorite part about BBA was he said "knowing I'm not the only one that has dyslexia & other kids do to." The confidence rose inside of him & although he worked throughout the summer he never complained once!

Nicholas is now in the 3rd grade and still has a reading level of a 1st grader! His writing is so poor that most of his assignments need to be scribed for him. As of this writing the "common core" program has his math class at the point where they are to begin multiplication & division. Nicholas can barely retain simple addition & subtraction facts & regrouping is beyond frustrating for him. Our PPT meeting occurred at the beginning of 3rd grade & his goals/objectives were unacceptable, therefore our SLP helped to rewrite what the PPT team should have already known but didn't comprehend. I'm constantly checking to see if Nicholas' IEP is being followed because of his lack of progress. As of this writing Nicholas is awaiting an Independent Educational Evaluation by a Neurological psychological evaluator. My husband and I are hoping to discover more answers to our seemingly endless questions.

Over the past 1 1/2 years Nicholas has been tutored privately 1x per week where he receives 1 on 1 Wilson reading instruction with his SLP. Nicholas also receives vision therapy 2x a month with a doctor & completes his vision assignments nightly. Nicholas is beginning to wilt & fade in a system that feels "he'll outgrow" his issues. Nicholas isn't a lazy kid in fact he's the opposite, he plays hockey for the squirt team & practices hard 3x a week often getting up earlier than when he has to for school! Nicholas asked me the other day "mommy do I have to go away someplace if I want a vacation, because I don't want to go to school anymore." In the beginning of his precious life he had to fight to stay alive when the odds were against him. Now I will spend my time advocating & fighting for the educational future he deserves.

Thank you for your time & reading Nicholas' story. Please share Nicholas' story as dyslexia affects 1 in 5 children. Knowledge is power & the more we educate ourselves, our community & our dyslexic children the further along we will be. Lastly I am in support of Senate Bill No. 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia but I'd also like to request additional supports be added to this bill early identification & educator training are critical.

Sincerely,
Laura Carl
Parent
Barkhamsted, CT