

March 10, 2015

Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Ethan Brinser: My oldest child, Ethan, is a builder and fixer. He can build anything with Legos and K'nex. He made a Valentines box that opened automatically. He can even look at how the garbage disposal is supposed to be installed and give me step by step instructions without referring back to the picture or instructions.

At school, Ethan excelled in math. However, by 3rd grade we started to wonder why he read slow, skipped words and struggled with big words. His writing was worse. It could take him 30 minutes to write three sentences. Even then, there were few capital letters, no periods and half the words spelled wrong. The weekly spelling tests were even worse disasters. Months went by like this as I continually said, "Ethan, you are not trying hard enough. How come you are being so difficult? Don't be lazy."

Ethan acted out, had tantrums he was too big for and felt miserable. His Dad and I noted his posture. His shoulders were slumped and he walked with his head down. My relationship with my son was slowly dissolving to nothing but heartbreak for both of us.

Two years past like this. I kept asking the teacher what I could do. He didn't know. Another teacher tutored him in writing. She didn't know what to do. Finally, my son was failing so much in writing the school tested him. When the test results came back, they said my son "qualified for an IEP" in writing. What does this mean? We took the test results to a child psychiatrist, Dr. Cynthia Arnold. She took a quick look at his testing and samples of his writing and announced to us, **"Congratulations your child is dyslexic." Due to the wiring in his brain he is fantastic at math and building but the literacy and writing pathways of his brain take the long route. How come we didn't know this before? Why did Ethan have to suffer? If I had seen the warning signs at 4 years old, I would have known he was dyslexic. How many other kids are suffering like my son?**

Now, Ethan is almost finished with 18+ months of really expensive, specialized Orton-Gillingham based tutoring for dyslexics. He types or uses speech-to-text for most written assignments. His last report card in 6th grade was straight 'A's. He knows I have worked hard to advocate for him and I am now his biggest cheerleader. Now I say, "Ethan, you can do it! Wow, you are really working hard, keep it up." But most important, his shoulders are back, his head is high and there is a smile on his face.

Epilogue

Finding out Ethan is dyslexic has been ¾ of the battle. I have since had my 2 younger daughters screened for dyslexia due to its genetic nature. Audrey is also dyslexic and has started tutoring. I have also given a talk on Dyslexia to my school's PTO and started a group called the Dyslexia Think Tank. We exchange ideas, discuss tactics and try to reach out to others. The school principal refers me to people who ask her about dyslexia. We also are part of Decoding Dyslexia Oregon

Please support Senate bill 612 to provide teacher training.

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