

Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the committee,

I am a school-based occupational therapist and became familiar with Irlen syndrome when evaluating students diagnosed with the disorder. My seven-year old daughter, Jenna, started complaining that the entire room changed color or saw moving colored spots, I took her to her doctor. He referred her to the ophthalmologist who did a full eye exam and reported her eyes were perfectly healthy and her depth perception was better than average. I was surprised to hear this since Jenna tended to fall a lot and run into things frequently. She was referred to a pediatric neurologist that suspected she was having auras without the migraine and sent her for an EEG. The EEG showed pre-seizure activity.

We had not seen any seizure symptoms, but the neurologist asked us to track when she was seeing the colors/spots. This was September and I had asked her school to test her for a learning disability because she was struggling with reading and was already on medication for ADHD. Her testing showed she had a global ability index in the 120's (superior), but her processing speed was low and her reading fell in the low average range so she did not qualify for special education. After a week of data collection, I noted she reported the colors and spots primarily at school and only when taking a shower or having her bedroom light turned off at home. It dawned on me that those were all locations with florescent lighting. I pulled out some colored overlays I had in my work bag and tried them out. I was puzzled because I had tried them with her before and did not find that they helped her. This time I was more diligent and went beyond single layers. When I combined purple and aqua, she said, "Oh, that's better." I made an appointment the next day with Marcia Davis. Sure enough, Jenna needed spectral filters and a visor while at school. Side note, I also took the Irlen Screen Certification course after seeing Jenna's improvements and realizing there was a lot more to the overlays than I had originally thought.

Jenna's reading jumped five levels within a about a month and she seemed to be having fewer episodes of the color changing. Four months later I took her in for a re-check when I noted that she was angling her head a lot and she stopped progressing with her reading. She needed a color adjustment and this time I got a closer fitting eyeglass frame because she hated wearing the visor. With her new glasses, her reading jumped again and by spring conferences she was at grade level. About two months after getting the second set of glasses, she reported that she really wasn't having the color episodes anymore unless she stared directly at a bright light for a long time. She still needs her ADHD medication, but she went six months on the same medication the previous school year with minimal improvement in her reading. She also rarely falls down anymore. We've also seen improvements with her piano playing and with learning her taekwondo forms.

I can't thank the Irlen Method enough for helping our daughter when the only other option offered was seizure medication.

Sincerely,

Leslie Dobkins, OTR/L, SIPT-C