

I am a mother of four children, ages 15 through 27 years old. We have experienced Public, Private, Charter and now we have chosen to Homeschool our youngest child. If I could do it over, based on our personal experiences, I would not send our children to public school. Here's our story (the shortened version) :

1) 27 year old, Marissa, attended a public grade school and a public junior high school. In 8th grade, she spent the last two weeks eating lunch in the Principal's office because her life was being threatened by a girl that had gang affiliations. Needless to say, we removed her from the Public school system and she graduated from St. Mary's Academy in 2008.

2) 23 year old, Alexa, attended public school from K thru 12 because we could no longer afford the Private alternative. Alexa struggled throughout her entire academic career in the public school system due to a "hidden" disability, Auditory Processing Disorder. After years of asking the school for help, we were finally able to have her Independently tested. She was diagnosed her Senior year, when we received the test results that Spring. Up until her diagnosis (and even after), the Administration and the Teachers labeled her as being "lazy", "not taking initiative," "not interested in graduating." Her own Counselor didn't understand the diagnosis, so when we asked for specific books on audio, her response was, "but, I thought she couldn't hear?" So, she denied our request. For the last term, they put my daughter in a class for students that are barely passing with an envelope to complete in order to graduate. To imply she wasn't worth their time.

3) 19 year old, Stevie Ray, attended public grade school K-5th grade. He began Southwest Charter School at the start of 6th grade. I remember that phone call, we were ecstatic, he was no long on the waiting list! That is where Stevie's life had a new beginning. By the time we arrived at SWCS, we were desperate to find a caring and supportive environment for EVERY student. In 2009, Stevie was a scrawny, quiet, quirky boy that stayed to himself. He was broken and while he tried to put on a strong facade on the outside, inside he was miserable. After our last school experience, I wanted to be by his side 24/7 to protect him, but I knew that was not going to do him any good.

Southwest Charter provided the small classroom size and intimate learning space he needed, along with a support system that the previous school system lacked. In addition, their teaching environment was get-your-hands-dirty, exciting. In addition to the place-based learning done in the classroom, each year the students attend Outdoor school. Stevie was fortunate enough to spend his 3 years of Outdoor school at the following locations:

- 1) Mt. Hood with Portland Trackers organization doing archery, learning how to make bow, etc.
- 2) Pacific City - they studied Oceanography, caught their own clams and then cooked their own clam chowder.
- 3) Seattle - Their final 8th grade trip, they rode Amtrak to Seattle where they got to experience the big city, China Town, Pike's place market, etc

Place-based learning gives kids a chance to move around, investigate the world around them and learn about real-life scenarios. At my son's grade school, he was punished for standing at his desk (something that a child with ADHD has to do frequently).

While at Southwest Charter school, my son made some really great lifetime-friends, loved his teachers that still inspire him today and created happy memories that will last a lifetime. I don't know what we would have done without Southwest Charter School.

4) 15 year old, Victoria, currently being homeschooled.

Stevie's successful three years at Southwest Charter School gave him the confidence he needed to apply for the college-prep, arts based Charter High school, Milwaukie Academy of the Arts. He was accepted and began his high school career there in 2012, where he graduated in 2016. He is currently a Freshman at Western Oregon University and is back to his happy-go-lucky self continuing to make his college-mates laugh at open mic nights.

As you can see, I have had experience with all forms of schooling. Aside from homeschooling, I have found Charter schools to be the best option for many children that fall through the cracks. Teachers at Charter schools get more accomplished with a small budget than public school teachers and they don't complain either! There's absolutely no reason why Charter schools should not get the same amount of funding as Public schools do.

Stephen Levin – DOB 11/24/97

Deer Creek Elementary School – Timeline

(this includes notes from his school record & events):

- **October 2005** – Stevie has an accident at DC (pees his pants).
I ask Mr. Haag (DC Counselor) for checklist to complete to see if Stevie has ADD. He gives me the checklist for Mike & I to complete and one for Ms Wright to complete (Stevie's 2nd grade teacher). I procrastinate and in the process misplace paperwork. I don't follow through.
- **December 2005** - Stevie has an accident at DC (pees his pants).
- **February 2006** – Again, I asked Mr. Haag (DC Counselor) for the checklist to complete to determine if Stevie has ADD. This time he tells me, “we don't do that. You need to see your Pediatrician to have him diagnosed.” Then I reply, “but you gave them to me in October. I just lost it, so I want another copy.” Magically, he finds more checklists in his drawer and hands them to me.
- **February 2006** - There are no comments or communication in Stevie's school record Re: request for the ADD evaluation (in Feb '06). Also, missing from his school record is Ms Wright's copy of checklist she completed (Stevie's 2nd grade teacher).
- **February 24, 2006** - Mr. Haag denies reporting to Dr. Bueffel saying, "it was situational."
- **February 2006** - There is no record of DC's communication with Dr. Bueffel (our pediatrician). We did not seek a “2nd opinion” for ADHD diagnosis. Dr. Bueffel **does not** diagnose ADHD (without a referral from the school). DC would not refer Stevie saying that he “does not meet the criteria”. Dr. Bueffel suggested that we get him privately tested by a behavioral doctor; hence, Dr. Lawrence Krupa. (2009 evaluation says we sought a 2nd opinion)
- **March/April 2006** - Stevie is continually struggling with his weekly oral Math Masters test. Ms. Wright notices Stevie's anxiety over the tests and offers to do 3 problems at a time, has Stevie take a break and repeat, until he completes the 10 problems. She is making accommodations for him, but doesn't think anything is wrong?
- **April 24, 2006** – Chris Haag denies phone conversation with Dr. Bernard Bueffel (Stephen's pediatrician) stating ADHD “was situational”.

- **May 4, 2006** – 1) Stevie is required to stay in from recess to complete unfinished class work. 2) Ms. Wright completes “Teachers Report Form”.
Her concerns: “has a hard time staying on top of his things and assignments. Seems anxious when I try to talk about things with him, he has a hard time solving problems on his own. Has performance anxiety.”
Best things about him: “Enthusiasm: very focused on subject matter that interests him, creative thinker, good sense of humor.” **Comments:** “Other kids like Stephen a lot but at free play time he often chooses to play alone. He seems to have a good time doing so though.”
- **May 5, 2006** - Dr. Bueffel's report: "Mr. Haag: does NOT meet criteria for further evaluation.
- **May 7, 2006** - Dr Krupa diagnoses Stevie with ADHD combined type. Start him on Concerta (18mg). He also suggests that we have DC test him (IQ test and Achievement Assessment). We decide to wait till the Fall '06 to ask DC, since we're at the end of the school year.
- **May 5, 2006** – Dr. Bueffel says, “Chris Haag said, ‘Stevie does not meet the criteria for further evaluation.’”
- **May 19, 2006** – Dr Krupa comments on Ms. Wright’s checklist that she completed, “her scoring doesn’t match her comments.”
- **May 26, 2006** – I spoke to Ms. Wright and she says, “Stevie was completely overwhelmed and full of anxiety.” This was the last day of Math Masters. He did not pass his oral test, so she’s going to give him an extra week to complete the final 3 tests.
- **June 1, 2006** – Still no improvement. Dr Krupa suggests doubling his dosage (36mg) tomorrow morning.
- **June 2, 2006** – We gave him a double dosage today for the first time (36 mg). Stevie passes all 3 Math Masters tests (we had not studied for the last two tests yet). Ms Wright had Stevie call me from her classroom to tell me, so we could celebrate together.
- **June 9, 2006** – Asked Dr. Krupa if Concerta works that fast or is it a coincidence? He replies, “It absolutely does!”
- **June 14, 2006 (last day of school)** – Advised Ms. Wright of his diagnoses and medication. Told her when we doubled his dosage he passed the 3 Math Masters tests. **Her response: “but he’s a bright kid.”** ?? Obviously, teachers are not trained to educate or help children with ADHD.
 -Ms Wright’s comments show anxiety issues in 2nd grade. If we would have dealt with it then, we could have avoided the issues on Jan 8, 2009.

- **June 2006** – Steve is extremely sensitive, easily frustrated, doesn't vocalize his frustrations – instead he tears up and holds it in.
- **June 2006** – Two different activities with family friends and their kids (McDonalds & BBQ): Stevie is not interested in playing with other kids, he does not engage – instead isolates himself from others.
- **September 28, 2006** – Forgets things (lunchbox, homework, etc). He loses his jacket every two months!
- **October 10, 2006** – Met with Special Ed team @ DC. This was our first meeting with this team. They advised us to see a private psychologist to get the IQ test and Achievement Assessment test done (because they don't do it). DC's Special Ed team concludes "he does not have a need for Special Ed, he is performing well and even exceeding in some areas. His report card shows that, that is the Achievement Assessment. TESA will be another Achievement test that he can take." I mentioned Statute 94142 "ensures kids are provided with the least restrictive learning environment to do their best." Suzi Haywood (Learning Specialist @ DC) replies, "That Statute is referring to kids that are institutionalized."
- **October 26, 2006** – Bully on school bus (5th grader), no report in Stevie's school record.
- **January 1, 2007 & April 2, 2007** – Stevie has a migraine (head hurts, vomiting). "Words on my sheets are hurting my head." He has two migraines on above dates.
- **January 4, 2007** – Meltdowns – playing a board game, frustrated, instant boredom
- **March 14, 2007** – 1) Lunchtime issues (no details – he doesn't talk about it). He no longer eats his lunch, doesn't even open lunchbox (still true today – 4/22/09).
2) High Scores on TESA = TAG? Stevie is bored with homework. Very frustrated!
- **April 28, 2007** – Doesn't deal with disappointments, creates meltdown.
- **August 26, 2007** – Very self-conscious of his body (will not go swimming in the pool because he has to take off his shirt). Lowered self-esteem.
- **October 1, 2007** – Stevie has a seizure during the night. We call 911 and have him transported to Meridian Park Hospital for observation.
- **October 10, 2007** – has trouble remembering to do work.

- **November 2, 2007** – DC Auction @ Crown Plaza
 We sat at a table with several teachers from DC. Rosalie Brown-Lundh was one of those teachers. During the evening, Rosalie asked if Stevie was doing okay, she said he “**seemed sad.**” I thought she meant “he seemed sad THAT day.” There was lot of noise and activity at the auction when we were discussing Stevie. We were interrupted and the topic didn’t come up again that evening.
- **February 2008** – Writing Assessment “Let it snow” – bad experience on bus Does anyone read these assessments? (Assessment is in his School Record).
- **March 2008** – Organization continues to be difficult, no matter what system I use.
- **April 2008** – I noticed a decrease in self-esteem and self-confidence.
- **June 2008** – Since school finished, he has had several meltdowns. Trouble with no set routine and transitioning to different activities.
- **June 2008** – Roadtrip to California. Stevie will not go swimming because he doesn’t want to take off his shirt (he’s too self-conscious).
- **August 2008** – Stevie has a meltdown when he realizes school is going to start soon saying, “**I don’t have any friends**” (crying).
- **September 2008** - Bullying incident – no report or record of the incident in his School Record.
 -Spoke to VB (Principal) in person and her initial comment to me, “he’s a bright kid and will be very successful when he grows up.” What does that have to do with the present? No empathy. She says she “has spoken to the two boys and it has been taken care of.” No plan on how to handle the situation. VB did not tell me to write a written report for the file. I expected her to keep a record of the file. We write a formal complaint Feb 2009 (advice from Petrea Hagen-Gilden-Director @ TTSD).
- **October 10, 2008** – Spoke to Tricia Claire from the District, “the IQ test is not required for an Assessment.”
- **October 16, 2008 – 1)** Fall Conference with Mrs. Cummings (Stevie’s 5th grade teacher). She will provide these accommodations for Stevie: a) have a volunteer organize his binder weekly, b) weekly email communication to make sure homework/assignments are complete. When we asked if he is marked down for incomplete or late work, she replied “not in grade school, but it will be a problem in middle school.”

October 16, 2008 – 2) We hire Rhoda Golden, an Educational Consultant to help us with our meetings with the Deer Creek Special Ed team (the “team” is very intimidating and plays on our lack of knowledge).

- **November 3, 2008** – Rhoda Golden (educational consultant) observes Stevie @ DC for 2 ½ hours. She is most concerned about his, **“flat affect, no smile, non-engaging, lonely, roamed perimeter of field @ recess (by himself).”** This is the first that I have heard of his behavior at school. Stevie is completely invisible to DC. No one has noticed his change in demeanor over the last two years. I expected DC to be my ears and eyes when I am not there.
- **November 4, 2008** – We meet with the Special Ed team @ DC to “decide if he qualifies for an evaluation”. Rhoda Golden attends this meeting with us. We express our concerns about Stevie and their response is “he is doing fine academically.” I raise my voice and say, “I am so sick of Benchmarks!” They decide to “gather more information before making a decision.” We plan to meet again on January 23, 2009.
- **December 2008** – Meet with Dr. Willis (Endocrinologist) to discuss Stevie’s growth (he is two years behind in his growth).
- **December 9, 2008** – 1) Jenny Leonetti (School Psychologist) completes a BRIEF evaluation on Stevie.
2) Where are the first 13 pages of the “Executive System Intervention” report (there is only one of 13 pages in the school record)? I request the entire report and receive it from Jenny on March 3, 2009.
- **December 12, 2008** – When Stevie **came home from school, he was almost in tears.** He didn’t want to talk about it, didn’t want a snack or a drink. He went straight to his room and stayed there for over an hour. I tried asking questions again, but he responded with one word answers “good”, “fine”, “nothing”. His body language told me different.
- **December 13, 2008 – January 5, 2009** – DC is closed due to snow and Winter Break
- **January 3, 2009** – Dr Krupa speaks to Stevie to check his “emotional well being”. I requested this based on Rhoda’s assessment in November at Deer Creek. Dr. Krupa, confirms **“Stevie is fine, you don’t have anything to worry about (him).”**

- **January 8, 2009 – 1)** I receive a call from Chris Haag, Counselor @ DC, “Stevie was talking to the High School Volunteer at **recess about suicide and asking about different ways to do it.**” Stevie says, “I don’t know why I am here.” (See full report in school record).

2)In DC’s evaluation report it claims we did not mention any emotional or social concerns about Stevie to Dr. Matthew Sleasman prior to our first appointment in December 2008. Our sole purpose to see Dr. Sleasman was so he could administer the IQ test and Achievement Assessment for Stevie (because DC said “we don’t do that, you need to get that done through a private psychologist”). There was no reason to tell him about our concerns regarding anxiety, emotional & social issues.
- **January 9, 2009** – Jenny Leonetti (school psychologist) calls me to tell me about her discussion with Chris Haag (counselor). She says, “included in their Safety Plan for Stevie is the option to stay inside at recess. She will make a list of his favorite things for him to choose as options during recess.”
- **January 11, 2009** – Stevie goes to Alex’s house to play. They are both very excited about playing together. Two neighbor kids ask to play with them outside. When we pick up Stevie 3 hours later, he has a meltdown. Cries all the way home, difficult to get him to stop crying. Very disappointed that he didn’t get to play with Alex (without the other boys).
- **January 12, 2009** – Chris Haag is to discuss Safety Plan with Stevie so he knows about all of his options.
- **January 19, 2009** – Bowling with Varney & his family. He refuses to put the bumpers up. He gets very upset with himself because he is not bowling well. By the 3rd frame (of the 1st game), he was full of anxiety. 4th frame, he was crying and wanted to go sit in the car by himself.
- **January 23, 2009** – During our meeting with the Special Ed team, Jenny Leonetti (school Psychologist) comments on the results from her BRIEF report. She says, “areas of executive function might be of concern and he may have some issue with it.” Jenny “plays down” the concerns on the BRIEF. Was the BRIEF report shared with the other staff present in the meeting? We don’t actually see the report until 4 days later.

- **January 27, 2009** – 1) Stevie’s spacer breaks at school – I pick him up at 1pm.
 2) Stevie asks, “**what does r-e-t-a-r-d-e-d mean?**” He can’t say the word, he has to spell it. When I ask him if he has heard the word before, he replies, “not really”. His body language said otherwise.
 3) We receive the BRIEF report and evaluation report.
 We receive the actual report in the mail and it states 7 out of the 8 areas in the BRIEF are reported as “concerns” for Stevie.
- **January 29, 2009** – Dental appointment to mold the spacer and make a new one.
- **January 30, 2009** - No school – We meet with Rhoda Golden (Educational Consultant) at Starbucks. This is the first time Stevie meets her. Her response, “**this is NOT the child that I observed at DC.** He has a beautiful smile, he’s smart, funny and sweet.” Rhoda could not believe he was the same child she observed at DC in November.
- **February 2, 2009** – Stevie has an appointment with Dr. Downey (dentist) to put in a new spacer. He is absent today.
- **February 3, 2009** – He is absent again today, because his new spacer is hurting him.
- **February 4, 2009** – I pick him up from school at 1pm for an appointment with Dr. Sleasman.
- **February 5, 2009** – We receive the completed 504 report from Chris Haag (our requests are not honored, wording changed, see comparison).
- **February 9, 2009** – 1) Someone from another Tigard School suggests that I call Petrea Hagen-Gilden at the District. She has the information I need regarding District policies and procedures for the 504 plan, Bullying incidents, etc. At this point, I don’t know she is our Principal’s immediate Supervisor. This is my first conversation with Petrea. She is very informative and helpful. I feel like she is an advocate on “my side”.
 2) Assignment sheet does not include “valentine box”. If I had not asked him about it on Wednesday, he would not have remembered to do it. Again, another accommodation we requested on the 504 (written directions). It was denied.

- **February 10, 2009 – 1)** Received “504 Compliance Procedures” from Petrea Hagen-Gilden (from TTSD). Clearly, DC has not followed the District’s procedures that are in place.

2) I find a drawing of a skull in Stevie’s binder with a caption that reads **“Sorrow is all I feel”**.

3) Sue Todd (our neighbor) calls to ask if it is okay for her to give Stevie a ride home (she is working @ DC as a sub). I answer “yes, he would love that!” Mrs. Cummings (his teacher) does not allow my neighbor to take Stevie home, says she needs a written note from me. Sue Todd is on my emergency form authorized to pick him up from school. **Stevie cries all the way home on the bus.** It is obvious he is upset, crying uncontrollably as he walked in the door.
- **February 11, 2009 – 1)** Stevie goes out to recess, **miserable! He doesn’t know he has the choice to stay in (volunteers wouldn’t let him stay him).** I thought the 504 was already in place and everyone is aware of it? I asked for choices to be written on cards, so he can “see” his choices. He doesn’t know he has the option to keyboard in the library. I explain his options to him again at home that night.

2) There is no written instruction to decorate a shoe box for his valentines for the party on Friday.
- **February 12, 2009 –** Stevie is absent from school. When I ask him about recess options, he doesn’t know what they are.
- **February 13, 2009 –** Valentine’s party at school
- **February 17, 2009 – 1)** Chris Haag speaks to Ms. Wright (Stevie’s 2nd grade teacher) regarding Stevie 3 years ago. Her comments are “my comments reflected my perception of his affect, I was never concerned about his on-task behavior.”

2) Stevie’s reading project is due. He forgets to turn it in. Teacher does not ask for it. There are still 4 pages of completed math assignments in his binder that he forgot to turn in from the previous 4 days.

3) Stevie forgot his reading workbook at school today, can’t do his homework.
- **February 18, 2009 – 1)** Stevie does not complete cursive writing assignment. It is not mentioned in our weekly email update last week.

2) picked him up at 1:30pm for an appt. He still has the reading project and 5 pages of math in his binder to turn in (he forgot). I sent him to his classes with reading in right hand and math in his left hand. He turns in his reading

project and comes back to the office with his math still in his left hand. This is truly an ADHD issue. DC doesn't understand.

3) My Dad is admitted into the ICU at St. Vincent's hospital that night.

- **February 19, 2009** – 1) I picked up Stevie's school records from TTSD (requested through Petrea). 2) Stevie **completes a spelling assignment and writes about a bullying incident** (for his homework). While he is working on his homework in the car, **he tells me, "Mom, this story is really funny and just so you know, it's make believe ok?"** (copy of assignment is in my binder).
3) Stevie brings home his reading project that has been corrected. He is marked down for not coloring two cards. This is the "busy work" that I was trying to include in the 504 (I requested "no busy work"). Again, my request is ignored, DC doesn't understand what issue this addresses.
4) He left his book at school and cannot complete his homework without it.
- **February 20, 2009** – 1) Stevie is absent due to "family emergency" (Friday) – My Dad is in critical condition in the ICU at St. Vincent's Hospital.
2) I spoke to Petrea re: Stevie's school records. There is a copy of two phone messages regarding the bullying incident. There is no report, action taken or notes about it. Petrea says that it is not too late to "file a formal report" regarding the Sep '08 incident. (a copy of the letter is in the binder). I request to meet in person with her, "my husband and I have more questions". Our meeting is set for February 27th.
- **February 23, 2009** – Stevie is required to stay in from both recesses to complete work he missed on Friday (because he was absent). Why not send the work home to complete? He needs time to decompress, we discussed this issue at our January 23rd meeting with the Special Ed team. Email from Chris Haag – March 2nd – says, "Stevie had to stay in to complete reading assessment from the day that he was absent." The teacher has sent the reading assessments home before, why was it different this time?
- **February 24, 2009** – HW: "study sample test" – Stevie doesn't know what that means, can't find a "sample test".
- **February 26, 2009** – 1) Late to school – rough morning.
2) Stevie has to stay in from recess to finish missing assignment for math. Again, we asked to have "incomplete work sent home to complete" as an accommodation in his 504, but the Team decided it wasn't important. When does he get to "decompress"? During 2nd recess (and lunch) he was in Leadership Group.

- **February 27, 2009 – 1)** Meet with Petrea Hagen-Gilden at TTSD (Rhoda Golden attends the meeting with us). Petrea has all the “politically correct answers” for us. After explaining and showing her documents of the last 3 years, she asks if she “could transfer Stevie to Alberta Rider Elementary, would that make everything ok?” We choose our 1st grade daughter to that school since Sep 2008 (for other issues). Petrea is rushed off to another meeting and says she will gather more information and look over the file. She will call us in a couple days. (Petrea’s response is in binder).
2) We go to see my Dad at the Hospital – Stevie is absent from school.
- **March 2, 2009** – Absent – visit my Dad in the hospital, Dr Bueffel appt.
- **March 3, 2009** - I observed Stevie at school for four hours, where it was obvious none of the staff was aware that a 504 existed (see separate report).
- **March 4, 2009** – Stevie has an 11am appointment Dr. Krupa.
 *We receive Petrea’s email with her decision. Copy in binder.
- **March 5, 2009** – Stevie absent from school – visit Dad in the hospital.
- **March 11-17, 2009** – Stevie is absent from school. We spent time with my Dad before he passed away.
- **March 12, 2009** – I email the Special Ed team asking to postpone our 3/17 meeting due to our family emergency (we plan to bring my Dad home from the hospital tomorrow (March 13) for hospice care. The Doctor doesn’t expect him to live through the weekend.
- **March 13, 2009** – 1) DC sends a reply to my request for postponement, “we will continue to meet on 3/17 and will follow up later to reschedule a meeting with us.”
2) My Dad passes away.
- **March 16, 2009** – We meet with OrFirst for assistance to help with attaining an IEP for our son. OrFirst writes two letters on our behalf, one requesting a plan in place regarding bullying & the 2nd letter to request an evaluation for Social Communication (verbal and nonverbal) and an evaluation for Occupational therapy (fine motor, coordination and sensory).
- **March 17, 2009** – 504 Progress check meeting (that DC would not postpone) – Rhoda, my husband and I arrive on-time for scheduled 9am meeting at DC. At 9:03am, the DC office staff person advises us that Tricia Claire, from the District, thought the meeting was at 9:30am. She is on her way to DC now. It is clear that they were not planning on meeting that day

(until we showed up). Everyone is in the prospective offices and they haven't gathered in the meeting area yet. We are told to wait in the entrance of the school until the meeting begins. At 9:40am, Tricia arrives for our meeting and we are gathered into Mr. Haag's office. The topic of discussion is Stevie's absences and tardies during 2009 (See notes of 3/17 meeting in binder). It is supposed to be a "progress check on the 504".

- **March 18, 2009** – 1) Stevie arrives 5 minutes late for school. He is supposed to check in with Mr. Haag when he arrives and again in the afternoon. Mr. Haag is not in – the principal says "he just stepped out and will return in 30 minutes." There is no one else for him to "check in" with.
2) Dr. Sleasman appointment
3) Stevie forgot books at school (another accommodation we requested – 2nd set of books at home, they denied it).
- **March 20, 2009** – 1) Stevie forgot his binder at home (no homework is turned in). I emailed Ms. Cummings and she said it would be ok for him to turn it in when he returns from Spring Break.
2) Mr. Haag emails me the revised copy of Stevie's 504 (revisions discussed at 3/17/09 progress check meeting)
- **March 23-27, 2009** – Spring Break - Stevie attends the Young Players Drama camp at Alberta Rider. He is chosen as the MC for the final mini plays on Friday's performance. He was fantastic! He had the audience laughing the entire time. This was the Stevie I knew and missed. I want my son back!
- **March 25, 2009** – My dad's funeral at St. Cecilia's.
- **March 30, 2009** – pick up Stevie at 11:30am from DC – Dr. Sleasman appointment.
- **March 31, 2009** – Stevie left his spelling book at school today.
- **April 1, 2009** – Tricia Claire emails me to reschedule our April 14th meeting (Ms. Cummings can't attend). I tell her to bring the form to the meeting that I can sign to "excuse Mrs Cummings from the meeting." She did not offer that, she expected me to reschedule the meeting.
- **April 2, 2009** – Stevie has to stay in from recess to complete a "thank you" card (assignment) for the dance teacher. 2nd recess is Leadership group. Again, no time to decompress. ***My mom falls and breaks her back.***
- **April 3, 2009** – When I took Stevie to school (5 min late), I spoke to Chris Haag and asked if he could encourage Stevie to choose a different recess option daily.

- **April 8, 2009** – Stevie’s first appointment with Dr. Nancy Bryant for the Independent Educational Evaluation. Stevie is absent from school.
- **April 13, 2009** – Session 2 with Dr. Nancy Bryan for IEE. Stevie is absent today.
- **April 14, 2009** – Meet with DC to discuss whether or not he qualifies for an OT and SLP evaluation (per our request on 3/16/09). The Special Ed team determines Stevie does not have the need for an SLP or OT.
- **April 21, 2009** – Absent from school – rough morning.
*Meet with OrFirst to discuss the results of our meeting on 4/14/09. OrFirst recommends we file a complaint with ODE.
- **April 22, 2009** – Faxed complaint to ODE.
- **April 27-30, 2009** – Stevie is home sick all week.
- **April 29, 2009** – Received letter from ODE Complaint Investigator (James Varner)
*Picked up assignments from DC, the school did not include the book to complete the work.
- **May 1, 2009** – Woke up at 4am with a “headache”.
Pick up book from DC (**forgot it** again).
- **May 5, 2009 - Meet with Special Ed Team to discuss 504 progress check**
Nancy Davidian, Counselor and Joan Joyce, the Associate Vice Principal of Twality Junior High also attend this meeting to start the transition process.
- **May 7, 2009** – Emailed Steve Woodcock-ODE amendment to allegation
- **May 8, 2009** – Meet with Dr. Nancy Bryant for **results of Independent Evaluation** (“possible Seizure disorder, ADHD, Depression”).
- **May 11, 2009** – absent from DC. Dad’s internment at Willamette National Cemetery.
- **May 18, 2009** – Absent from school - “rough morning”
- **May 19, 2009** – 1) Stevie tells me he was moved to Mrs. Cummings Math class because he did not take the Math TESA test.
2) Spoke to Rosalie Brown-Lundh (music teacher) at DC Carnival. Asked her about the comment she made at the DC Auction (11/2/07). Asked if she meant he was sad “that day” or “over a long period of time”? She said, Stephen had been **sad for a long time before she mentioned it.**
- **May 20, 2009** – **Forgot book** at school - again
- **May 22, 2009** – 1) Pick him up at noon from DC for appt with Dr. Ramsayer (sleep study). Mrs. Cummings sent work home to complete, total of 26 pages.

2) **Spoke to Dawn** – OrFirst (after faxing the IEE Results to her). She advises us to see a Neurologist ASAP, she is concerned that Stevie may have a seizure disorder.

3) **Email from Mrs. Cummings** says Stevie was moved to her Math group because Mr. Vaternick's math class requires more writing (there is no mention of the TESA test). Yet at our 4/14/09 meeting, the "special ed team" repeatedly said he doesn't have a problem with writing (including OT and SLP).

- **May 27, 2009** - Absent from school – rough morning, tired and stomach ache.
- **May 28, 2009** - Late for school, rough morning. Forgot book at school today.
- **June 1, 2009** - Late for school, rough morning
- **June 4, 2009** – 1) 504 Progress check – Again, the **IEP team says "there's no proof of bullying"**.
2) **Follow up appt w/Dr. Willis** – Endocrinologist (6 months goal (Dec 2009) = gain 5 lbs and grow 1 inch).

Lessons I Have Learned as a Public School Parent

Recently, I've learned some valuable lessons through my experience with the Tigard-Tualatin School District. By writing this, my hope is that no other child will have to endure what my son has endured. Don't get me wrong, there are many hard-working, loving teachers that don't get the recognition or respect they deserve. Unfortunately, this is not the case at the administrative level. My goal is for every child to be considered more than just a benchmark or a dollar amount in the district's budget.

My son was diagnosed with ADHD 3 years ago. Since then, I have been trying to secure a plan (IEP or 504) with the elementary school to formally document the accommodations he needs. Some of these accommodations are already being implemented at home and informally by his teacher. However, since my son is intelligent and meeting state testing benchmarks, the school has continually said there is no problem.

As the African Proverb goes, "It takes a village to raise a child." My biggest mistake was assuming the school's special education team, school administrators and the district were a part of my "village." We need to unite our village.

Some things to keep in mind, especially if your child has a medical condition or in special education:

- Educate yourself: About your child's disability, the law and your rights. School districts receive additional state funding for each special education student (maximum 10% of the total enrollment).
- Keep a journal: Include specific names and dates. Record symptoms, actions or reactions in your child's behavior and health (at home and school). Include report cards and work samples. Save notes from teachers (i.e. "I can tell you weren't paying attention when we corrected this paper in class.")
- Request in writing your child's school record each year: Include in your request to the school or district a copy of the entire school record including "notes and communication".
- Observe your child in the school setting: Visit your child at school at least twice a year. Observe your child in different settings (math, recess, etc). Note your observations in your journal.
- Read the fine print: Examine paperwork from the school just like you would any legal document. Don't assume a district employee will explain it to you.
- Communicate with the school and district via e-mail: You want an audit trail of your requests and their responses in writing.
- Control the communication between the school and your physician: Authorize only written communication between the school and your physician to eliminate a "he said, she said" situation (ask to have a copy of all communication).
- Read your child's work: Read their spelling assignments, English homework, etc. You can learn about your child through the stories they write (especially if they don't discuss how they feel).
- Compare report cards year to year: Note teachers' comments on your child's report card and at conferences. Compare areas that "need improvement" — is it the same issue year after year?
- Parents are their child's best advocate: Don't assume everyone has your child's best interest in mind; fight for your child's rights.
- Understand the TTSD Handbook: District policies are a vague framework, which allows the principal freedom to make up a plan of action based on each individual situation.
- Don't always assume your child's principal will "file a report" if something happens: Follow up conversations with your child's principal with a formal letter and cc the district, especially on bullying or special education issues.
- 10/80/10 Rule: Most schools are structured to educate the 80 percent of students in the middle. Schools either don't know how or don't have the budget to educate kids that are in the top or bottom 10 percent.
- Public school mantra: Budgets and benchmarks. Your child should not be either. The more you have documented, the better chance you have at achieving your goal of giving your child the education he or she deserves. (See "Free Appropriate Public Education" under Section 504 on the U.S. Dept. of Education Web site at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html).
- Public School is not the only option. There are other choices for public education. Do your homework!

Are you interested in a support group for parents of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder? Do you know someone that would be willing to speak about ADHD at a meeting? Do you have a school experience that you would like to share? If so, please contact me at deercreekparent@comcast.net.

Jessica Levin
Tigard, OR



5th grade



3rd Grade



4th Grade



PRESCHOOL



KINDERGARTEN



1st GRADE



2nd GRADE

