

Ladies and Gentlemen of the committee:

My name is Kimberly Hope. I am the proud mother of three little girls. Bailey is my first born. We have always adored her and felt she was the smartest kid on the planet! At an early age she was very verbal and her Grammy was all too happy to spend hours teaching her letters, numbers, drawing, and reading books. Her first experience with formal education was at a private but large Christian preschool in pre-kindergarten. We were all so excited and she loved it. When we attended the first parent-teacher conference all the wind was let out of our sail as the teacher explained to us the Bailey was academically in the bottom half of the class. On the positive the teacher pointed out her artistic gift. The children were asked to draw a person. Bailey was the only one who drew a full figure of a person complete with fingers, shoes, a dress and earrings! Changes were made to her instruction and by the next parent-teacher conference we were told she had very much improved and was now in the upper middle part of her class. I do not know what interventions were put in place at that time. After that educational life was good....for a while. We also have two other little girls that we felt were equally as bright as Bailey. They too attended this preschool. When we went to Kaylees' parent-teacher conferences (my middle child) it was all gold stars! The teachers couldn't say enough about how smart she was and how they had to find extra things for her to do because

she caught on so quickly. Kennedy, my baby, being the youngest got the benefit of three years at the preschool. She entered the young threes class in September and turned three in October. At our second parent-teacher conference I explained to the teacher we felt she was not catching on to letters and numbers. The teacher assured me that she needed more time and she would catch on. By the next year she was in the older threes class. At the first parent-teacher conference we expressed the same concerns about letters, numbers, and colors with this new teacher. We were told we were probably comparing to her to her older sister who excelled easily and that they would concentrate more on the alphabet in pre-kindergarten. Here comes summer.

My nephew who is basically the same age as Bailey was struggling in school and was diagnosed with dyslexia. My sister-in-law got the necessary training in the Orton-Guillingham method of Alphabetic phonics so that she could tutor him. As part of her training she had to evaluate kids for practice and evaluated my girls now ages 9, 5, and 4. She found that Kennedy, my 4 year old, had red flags for reading difficulties. Kennedy could not rhyme words. My sister-in-law volunteered to start tutoring Kennedy for free. Private tutoring is very expensive. This is when I started attending workshops and reading what I could to educate myself as to what dyslexia is and is not. School started again for Kennedy in pre-

kindergarten and her teacher had taught both her big sisters. At the first parent-teacher conference her teacher expressed concern that Kennedy was not where she needed to be with her letter and letter sound recognition. Sound familiar? This is what we had been saying for the past 2 years. The teacher then made the comment that it was probably because Kennedy one of the younger ones in the class and that she would soon catch on. I stopped her right there and informed her that with Kennedy's October birthday she was already 5. I also told the teacher that Kennedy's aunt was tutoring her and requested she be in communication with her to determine the best strategies for Kennedy to be successful. Luckily for us Kennedy's teacher and her aunt were good friends. By the end of the year Kennedy had made great strides and letters were written by her teacher and aunt/tutor to whomever would become her Kindergarten teacher describing what strategies had worked for Kennedy the previous year. Kennedy, because of such early intervention and tutoring, has had a successful educational experience. She is now a second grader that is beginning to struggle in math. She reads very well although not very fast. She is in the top reading group for 2nd grade.

Now back to Bailey my now 9-10 year old.

As a second grader we noticed her struggles with math. At this time there were no outward signs of anxiety just difficulty

completing assignments and grasping concepts. Math homework took a very long time to complete. Though we addressed this as it continued with every teacher grades 2-5, we were told time and time again that she needed more practice with flash cards and math games. Fourth and Fifth grade is when the outward anxiety, frustration, and disdain for math became apparent. Bailey who enjoyed school and worked very hard was barely making C's on her report cards in math.

At the same time at another school my nephew was also struggling with math. The two began meeting with a tutor trained in Orton-Guillingham multisensory math. The tutoring continued into the beginning of 6th grade where the two had an extraordinary math teacher that understood dyslexia and dyscalculia, the latter of which I hadn't heard much about. This teacher understood that this was a processing issue in the brain and had strategies to work with the kids. In February Bailey was formally tested outside the school system at a hefty price and diagnosed with dyslexia, dyscalculia, and ADD. I am pleased to report the school and the teachers cooperated fully in granting Bailey a 504 plan with the accommodations she needed that were spelled out by the doctor that evaluated her. She has made the honor roll her entire middle school experience with A's and B's in math!

Though we have experienced success in getting the help my kids need I am frustrated with the lack of information and support teachers have to recognize this learning differences. Bailey went through 4 years of people telling her to try harder and practice more when she was already doing her best. When we feel ill and go to the doctor he or she does not look to us and ask what we suggest they do. They have studied and proven tests, methods, and assessment skills to determine a course of action. They typically have more than one! I want the teachers to be able to do the same. I feel they were ill equipped to offer me any suggestions as to why my child was struggling or how to help her to no fault of their own. We need this bill so that children who have or have not the support or resources (financial or otherwise) to pursue outside help can be recognized early. Intervention and setting them up for success and a positive educational experience instead of a waiting to fail attitude and remediation that can cause a negative educational experience! Let's fill colleges and not jails!

Sincerely,

The Hope Family

