

he following is a brief story of my daughter's struggle with Dyslexia.

My daughter, Rachael was diagnosed with dyslexia in 2007. She had just completed her sophomore year in high school. Because of a combination of ignorance, disinformation and perhaps misaligned values, multiple systems failed our daughter through 10 years of school.

We had Rachael tested for learning disabilities in 1st grade because her reading ability was below kindergarten level. The test results showed no learning disability.

Rachael then started 6 years of work at Sylvan Learning Center in an attempt to help her "catch up". I met with the director at least monthly to receive reports on her progress. She worked diligently but barely caught up to grade level.

When schoolwork became more challenging in 4th grade we had her tested again for learning disabilities. Again no learning disability was diagnosed.

Rachael always had to take remedial classes after every state assessment test. She often said how stupid she felt and, a shy child to begin with, she became more withdrawn.

We figured out little adaptations to help her process information and along with tutors managed to help her get through Jr. High.

Finally, when Rachael was no longer progressing at Sylvan Learning Center, the director informed me that they could no longer help her. I had discussed with the staff about her processing difficulties and the director offered that she should be tested for dyslexia.

I thought dyslexia was a learning disability. It's not. Sylvan Learning Center admitted that they didn't address dyslexia.

With the diagnosis of dyslexia doors were opened for Rachael, albeit much later in her life than all of us hoped for.

We secured a specially trained tutor for her who determined that at her age and ability the alphabetic phonics program, that is typically used to aid dyslexics with reading, would not be a priority. The tutor built on ways that Rachael had already figured out to process information and helped her realize the strength within her to go after what she now knew that she needed to complete high school and go on to college. This was not easy as the high school was willing to help but clearly had no idea how.

Between the tutor and I, we showed up most days at school. I was learning about the diagnosis and had to inform most of Rachael's teachers about Dyslexia and how accommodations would help her learn.

Rachael is now a senior at K-State majoring in early childhood education. She has had a much easier time getting educational support while in college- which could not be done without her diagnosis.

Because of undiagnosed dyslexia, Rachael has experienced anxiety, frustration, depression and hopelessness and it took much of the joy of childhood from her. I would give anything to be able to give her back that joy.

To get a diagnosis, a child must go through a battery of tests usually given by a psychologist and never covered by insurance. Once diagnosed the child needs a specially trained tutor, also at the parents expense as schools are not mandated to help these kids. Please help change this!

Thank you for your time.

Sent to you by Mary Fesen