

Grace Louise is my first born daughter, tall with long blonde hair and a genuine smile that shows her kindness, trustworthiness, and warmth. She's a 3rd grader at one of the top public school districts in Kansas. She enjoys art, fashion, and roller skating on a junior roller derby league.

I first noticed Grace struggle with letter and number recall at age 4. I brought my concerns to her preschool teacher who said she would catch on. Kindergarten- the same, she was behind and although she would try so hard, numbers and letters were reversed, out of order. I would ask the school and they did acknowledgment a concern but did not know how to help.

I would bring up the "D" word; Dyslexia, at school with the teacher and they would say they can't diagnose, "a medical doctor has to do that." Medical doctor would say, "I'm not concerned until the school is concerned".

It took 3 years of ping-ponging back and forth to get an agreement that my child should be tested for Dyslexia.

She was diagnosed with Dyslexia at age 7. An IEP is in place but services have been fought for and instead of taking huge leaps to catch her up to grade level, it's been only baby steps.

Baby steps to educate her school about Dyslexia. Baby steps to show her teacher what works and what does not. We have had to hire an advocate that tirelessly worked to make my daughters IEP the way it needs to be to successfully educate a child with Dyslexia but it is still lacking.

Teachers need more training in Dyslexia. Schools need to understand that the "one lesson plan fits all" does not work. Children are falling behind because they aren't being identified. Parents are asking questions but get no answers. Children lose confidence in themselves because they don't understand their learning difference. This bill isn't the magic wand that will make public education the right fit for everyone but it will make positive changes for Kansas children.

I'll end this testimony with a quote from Rick Riordan, author of the best-selling young adult "Percy Jackson" series, "Dyslexic kids are creative, 'outside-the box' thinkers. They have to be, because they don't see or solve problems the same way other kids do. In school, unfortunately, they are sometimes written off as lazy, unmotivated, rude or even stupid. They aren't. Making Percy dyslexic was my way of honoring the potential of all the kids I've known who have those conditions. It's not a bad thing to be different. Sometimes, it's the mark of being very, very talented."

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