

Bradley's Story

My name is Debbie Unruh and God blessed me with twin boys, Bradley and Wesley. They were born in Alabama. They both were like other boys their age full of energy and always on the go. Around 4 or 5 years old I noticed a difference between the boys. Bradley was more active than Wesley and had a hard time staying on task when it came to playing games, following direction, and staying still long enough for me to read a small book to him compared to his brother. Also, he had some difficulty with some of his words relating to speech. I even noticed at home he would call the warm water cold and the cold water warm. In preschool the teachers also noticed a difference with Bradley compared to the other students in class. He wasn't able to keep up with other students in class and he had a hard time with his alphabet and numbers. He had difficulty putting the letters in order and remembering the names and sounds of the letters. He had a hard time with his fine motor skills when it came to writing. We moved to Kansas when the boys turned 5 years old. Because the boys' birthday was in August we decided to have the boys take preschool again so perhaps Bradley could get caught up with his peers. I worked with him at home with his alphabet and numbers but nothing seemed to help.

I took Bradley to Heartspring in Wichita to have him tested. The results showed that he was dyslexic and ADHD and had difficulty with his fine motor skills. Bradley went to Heartspring to help with his fine motor skills. The next year he went to first grade and everything seemed to get worse relating to his alphabet skills, putting letters in order, naming letters, and sounds. He wasn't able to read, write, and recognize his numbers. At the end of the first grade year, the teacher felt like Bradley needed to be held back for another year. We had already held him back in preschool. Being as he was a twin, I couldn't do that to him. I talked to the reading teacher and she accused us of not reading to him enough at home, which I read to him all the time. I told my husband that I needed get trained in a reading program so I could teach my son to read in the way he could learn. I also noticed that Bradley's feelings about himself changed. He called himself dumb and stupid, which broke my heart.

I talked to the people at Heartspring about a program that would help my son. They told me about Janeen Phillips, the founder of the Fundamental Learning Center in Wichita, KS. She was going to teach a class called Ort-Gillingham , Alphabet Phonics Program, for teachers or parents who would like to work with dyslexic children and teach them to read in the way they learn.

I took the Ort-Gillingham, Alphabet Phonics class that summer and decided to homeschool Bradley during his second grade school year. After a few months I saw progress in Bradley relating alphabet skills, sounds, writing, reading and spelling. It continued throughout the school year and at the end of the school year I could see a big improvement in his reading, writing, spelling, alphabet and math skills. The next year I enrolled him back at his elementary school, third grade. At the beginning of the third grade they tested Bradley and he had gone up two and half grade levels in one year in reading, spelling, writing and math skills. The principle allowed me to come into the school three times a week to teach Bradley the Alphabet Phonics Program. I continued to teach Bradley through his fifth grade year, when he finished the Ort-Gillingham Alphabet Phonics Program. He was then tested at the school and the scores showed that he was at an eighth grade level in reading and seventh grade level in spelling.

He is now at Manhattan Christian College, majoring in youth ministries and foreign missions. The Ort-Gillingham, Alphabet Phonics Program has changed Bradley's life.

I started teaching privately the Ort- Gillingham, Alphabet Phonics Program. Because I wanted to reach more students in reading in the school system, I went back to school and got my Reading Specialist Endorsement added to my Kansas Teaching Certificate. I was teaching students at St. Mary's Catholic School in Derby, Kansas, the principle, Richard Montgomery, saw the improvement in my students' abilities in reading and spelling. As soon as I finished my Reading Specialist Endorsement I was hired at St. Mary's Catholic School, Derby, Kansas. At the end of this school year I will have been teaching at St. Mary's Catholic School for 10 ½ years. I have taught the Ort-Gillingham, Alphabet Phonics Program along with other Ort-Gillilngham Programs to my students. Every year, according to school testing results, my students have gone up from 1-3 grade levels in one school year in reading. This has been the most rewarding job that I have ever had.

Being dyslexic myself I know the pain that my students feel when they are called upon to read out loud and their struggles relating to school work. The Ort-Gillingham, Alphabet Phonics Reading Program changed my life as well as the students I taught.

Research has shown that the 6th chromosome affects people who are dyslexia and can be diagnosed before a child is born. Dyslexia is a disability that affects about 20% of the population. Kansas has a great school system that cares about each and every student and wants them to have the skills for him or her to succeed in life. Continue with these standards by recognizing dyslexia as a disability so that "No Child is Left Behind".

Debbie Unruh