

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the topic, Literacy. My name is Mindy Patrick. I am a resident in the Olentangy School District. I am a parent of two, with a daughter in college and a son finishing up his freshman year of high school at Olentangy Liberty. My son, Mason, struggles with dyslexia.

All the signs of dyslexia were there, no one could help me put the pieces together for years. He was late to talk. He couldn't identify or say his ABC's consistently. He couldn't rhythm. He couldn't remember the names of colors and he struggled with speech. He walked at 7 months, yes 7 months I was told because his motor skills were so advanced that other areas of development, like speech, may lag.

His speech was so delayed I had him evaluated at age 3 and 4. Both times he fell at the very bottom of the Median and didn't qualify for an IEP. I later found out speech delays are one of the 1<sup>st</sup> signs of dyslexia.

Then came the kindergarten evaluation. The principal actually went over his results and said, in front of my son, "We have never seen a score that low. Maybe this wasn't the place for him, he may need more support." He wasn't recommended for an evaluation, he wasn't screened for a learning disability, and basically they wanted me to put him in a program somewhere outside of the district.

Kindergarten was painful, 1<sup>st</sup> grade was worse and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is was intolerable! He would hold it together at school and would then explode daily at home. We're talking BIG explosions. He first took a knife to his chest and threatened to kill himself at age 7. He also attempted to jump from my car on 315 because he couldn't stand how was "stupid" he was. When his 3<sup>rd</sup> grade word fluency scores dropped from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> percentile we made the decision to move Mason to

Marburn Academy. So for 4<sup>th</sup> grade he was at a school that delivered structured literacy for students with Dyslexia. It was there he realized that many others learned the way he did and he began to read. It was working. I noticed the little things like his ability to read street signs. But my “Ah Ha” moment was Easter morning. The Easter Bunny always hid their baskets and left scavenger hunt clues. His older sister always had to read the clues to him. This particular year was different, he read them on his own. I cried when he read “Look in the place where you keep your food cold”. That sounds kinda sad but it was a milestone.

With the help of my in-laws and the Peterson scholarship we got Mason the help he needed. However, that is when I got really angry ! Why should it cost \$25,000 a year for my son to read, unacceptable! We are the lucky ones. What about the single-working mother in Columbus? Or the families out in the rural districts that don’t have access to a Marburn Academy or the means for private evaluations and tutors or the time to fight the schools? Reading is the Core mission in education. If kids can’t read, we have failed them.

I was grateful that the TGRG had come along, but frankly, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is too late. These kids need to be screened and put into structured literacy right from the beginning. Their brains can be rewired but the window is narrow. And with only 40% of 4<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the U.S. reading at a proficient rate there isn’t time to waste.

So today I stand before you not only as a parent but Vice-President of Olentangy Local Schools and the co-found of the the Olentangy Dyslexia Network (ODN).

I made my mission the Administration’s mission. I can proudly say that Olentangy now has a structured literacy curriculum K-5, they have

implemented a screener K-5, our student registration has a family history inquiry (the cheapest screener you can possibly implement) and we currently service over 765 students with Orton Gillingham instruction. Our 2019 spring Terra Nova results show that 94% of our 1,614 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have met the benchmark. We have only retained one student since the inception of the TGRG. If Olentangy, a district of almost 22,000 students can address I have no doubt it is possible for all others.

Ohio adopted the legal definition of Dyslexia and declared October Dyslexia Awareness Month, thank you Senator Brenner for sponsorships of those bills. Now it is time to catch up to other states and screen our students. Time is of the essence and kids in Ohio can't wait. I took care of my child, he reads. I am standing before you of behalf of all the others behind him. They have the right to read and we owe them that. There is nothing wrong with these kids, there is however something wrong with the way we teach literacy in this county. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of identifying these students so can go on to be successful students and contributing members of society. This is a problem we can fix, but it starts with identification.

Thank you for your time today and thank you on behalf of kids in Ohio with dyslexia.