

Parent Voices: Jennifer Tyler

Connor Tyler is a snowboarder. His mom is a champion. She wrote the following letter, and when Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning Cathy Beck received it, she invited Jennifer to share it at a Summit (Colorado) School District Board of Education meeting.

March 15, 2016

I've never felt that I had failed my children until I found Connor curled up in his bed sobbing because he was having trouble reading. While he could read some words, he couldn't sit down and read me a book—even a short one—without some struggle. It broke my heart. I told him we would work on it over the summer, which we did, but he would give up so easily. In his mind he just couldn't do it. After speaking with some other parents, I was beginning to research reading/learning disorders and what I had to do in order to have Connor tested.

Once the school year began and initial testing through the school was completed, we were told that Connor would be enrolled in the Reading Recovery program. The change in Connor was seen almost immediately. Within two weeks we were sitting down at night to read and he wasn't in tears by the end of the book. He was excited to show us that he could read. He could figure out these words on his own. He looked forward to going to Reading Recovery so he could "get better" at reading.

A big part of our success at home was the constant communication we had with Pam Minard, his Reading Recovery teacher. I was able to tell her what I saw with Connor, including that I thought he was an auditory learner, and she used that in her teachings with him rather than discounting it and continuing on with "standard" methods. She provided us with the strategies and tools to use at home when reading with Connor to help him figure out the words on his own rather than waiting for us to give him the answers. She encouraged my questions and had real solutions to offer for any issue we encountered as his reading progressed. I feel like she really cares about Connor's progress. The excitement she has for his continuing improvement is evident every time I speak with her. Even now, with his program being finished.

I'm thankful that she will be there to closely monitor his progress for the next two years.

Not only has Reading Recovery improved Connor's reading and writing skills tremendously, it has positively improved his self-esteem as a person. His confidence levels in all aspects of his life have soared as a result of this. He's now one of the leaders in reading group rather than the one struggling to understand what's going on. I had another mother tell me her son asked if he can go into the Reading Recovery group because he recognized that these kids are "going in there not knowing anything and coming out knowing how to read." I love that it is viewed as a positive with the other children in school.

I believe Reading Recovery is absolutely essential for students like Connor who need the individualized attention of this type of program in order to recognize their potential. Without this added benefit I can only imagine the constant struggles Connor could have faced this year and into the future in all aspects of his learning. I hope this program is continued for the benefit of any child and family that has struggled with reading.

Very Best,
Jennifer Tyler

