

by Lynn S., Westminster, Colorado

Of course, every mother thinks that her kids are bright. I have three boys. D___ is 16 and a junior in high school. He always did very well in school with very little effort. B___ and ___I are 11-year-old identical twins who are currently in sixth grade. They always did above average in school with some effort. All the boys are exceptionally good at athletics, so I was skeptical that they'd have reflex problems, but both B___ and W___ have benefited from going through the program at Anna's House.

Looking back, learning to read in first grade was frustrating for B___. Second and third grade seemed okay, but he had inexperienced teachers in both grades. Fourth grade was harder. B___ had an experienced teacher who immediately recognized there was a problem. Math was easy, but writing was an endurance test. He could grasp the concepts, structures and ideas, but he just could not get them down onto paper. His spelling was random – he would misspell the same word three different ways in the same paragraph. Through all this, he was above grade level in reading and math. Even in writing, he tested at grade level because he had complex thoughts. Teachers found him pleasant and he had an enthusiastic attitude toward school.

We decided to try tutoring and started at a traditional strip mall tutoring center. After testing B___, who was in fourth grade at the time, the center determined that he was below first-grade level in almost everything. When I questioned the low scores, I was told that he did not finish the four-hour test (he was only nine years old!). Not knowing what else to do, we started there for four hours a week. It was quite expensive – \$180 per week. B___ loved the tutoring and the people there loved him. He did make progress; his school reading teacher commented that he showed improvement particularly with sequencing. But the spelling and writing never improved. I felt like they were teaching him coping skills and not solving the root problem. Something didn't feel right.

I found out about Anna Buck from my neighbor, whose daughter and nephew are featured in Anna's book, *Miracle Children*. I am an engineer by trade and approach things very logically. I loved the measured approach at the tutoring center because I could see step-by-step progress with graphs and tests. Even though I had nagging doubts about the root cause, the approach felt comfortable. With Anna's approach, I was out of my comfort zone. When I thought about the big picture, it made perfect sense, but I couldn't reconcile the exercises with spelling improvement. My neighbor encouraged me to trust my gut and give it a try. It would take B___ about nine months to complete Anna's program and would cost 50 percent less than traditional tutoring. We decided to give it a try.

B___ showed some improvement with writing and spelling within a few months of beginning the therapy. (Anna first tested him during spring break of his fourth grade year, 2007.) In late October 2007 (fifth grade), he began the Listening Fitness component of the therapy. I noticed the change within two weeks. He had to read for 20 minutes each night. Before starting Listening Fitness, this assignment was agonizing and peppered with, "Am I done yet?" Then,

suddenly, he just kept reading even though his time was up. His writing improved and his spelling, while not perfect, was no longer random. When he took the NWEA math test, he showed 24 months of growth in six months (and he didn't even have trouble with math before). After completing the Listening Fitness program, he took about eight weeks of spelling tutoring through Anna's House. This was to catch him up on spelling rules he hadn't grasped in second and third grades.

School became so much easier. He didn't have to work so hard to learn, and he enjoyed learning. In the spring of his fifth-grade year, he came in second in the school spelling bee. Imagine that! He won the science fair. He willingly spent extra hours on a special, month-long literacy project that involved lots of writing. At the end of fifth grade, his teacher (who had been his fourth-grade reading teacher) told me the difference was incredible. He was skeptical when we stopped traditional tutoring but later agreed that Anna's results were far better.

W___'s story is a little different. Anna tested Wi___ as a training exercise for another instructor because she thought he would not show any symptoms. He had as many, if not more, than B___. I was floored – he compensated so well. W___ did not have to do the Listening Fitness program, but did have to go through some of the reflex exercises. He was already doing well above average in school and sports, but he was a little high-strung. I always thought it was a “twin thing.” Upon going through the program at Anna's House, his temperament evened out and he also showed academic improvement. He won the school Geography Bee and came in second in the Science Fair (behind B___). But his math is the subject that really took off. His NWEA score was slightly higher than B___'s and thought to be the highest ever recorded at the school. When he started middle school, we had the option of placing him in Algebra I (a ninth-grade class). In the end, we placed both B___ and W___ one grade level ahead in literacy (although they tested two levels up) and two grades ahead in math (though they tested two-and-a-half to three levels up).

For me, it's not really about the achievement. I won't deny that it does feel wonderful. Mainly, I'm pleased that they are now “unblocked” and learning is so much easier. I can see it in the time it takes to get homework done and the fact that there is so much less whining (reason enough to do the therapy!). It's like they are free to reach their own potential now. Though B___ and W___ can't really express the difference, I imagine that it's like running a race with heavy hiking boots – it can be done, but it's so much easier with running shoes.