

## **Dyslexia: Oh, no you didn't...**

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Go ahead, say this with a finger wag and a head bob and then fantasize about doing that during an IEP meeting. It'll be fun. Ok, so I had a little fun with the title when thinking about all of the crazy things I have heard in IEPs lately and I wanted to make you smile and relieve some IEP stress; I could spend all my time lambasting people, but I thought it would be more productive if I used the comments as a springboard to describe what the underlying problem is when you hear these types of comments and how they help you advocate for a child with dyslexia (how is that for a run-on sentence I couldn't figure out how to fix – Oh, no I didn't).

### **Heard in a middle school IEP meeting for a child with dyslexia:**

Local Educational Area (LEA) representative: "*Well, kids with dyslexia really can't learn to read after elementary school anyway.*"

Oh, no you didn't.

As a former adult literacy professional for over twelve years, this one made my skin crawl. This statement reveals a lack of dyslexia awareness and knowledge. It also reveals a bit of a hostile IEP team who isn't buying the whole 'dyslexia thing.' This is very common at the middle and high school level. This is your opportunity to educate the team. You can remind them that much of the brain research using fMRI technology actually used adults as their subjects and they did show a remarkable brain change as well as improvement in reading. This is also your opportunity to educate them about brain plasticity and the remarkable way the brain can change with the appropriate instruction – at any age. You can remind them that people with strokes recover with physical therapy all the time. Finally, you can guilt them by reminding them that millions of adults in literacy programs all over the world would be disappointed to hear a school tell a parent that their child doesn't stand a chance to learn to read. I wonder if you will be able to hear a pin drop when that conversation is over...

### **Heard in a sixth grade IEP meeting at an elementary school:**

Resource teacher responding to my question about whether or not she was trained in the LiPS program she was offering to use: "*No, I am not trained, but my next door neighbor is.*" Oh, no you didn't.

You know, I am not sure if this needs an explanation, but I will give one anyway. This comment reveals to you that the resource teacher is unaware that she does have to have some training to

implement a program like LiPS, just ask the good people at Lindamood-Bell. This was even more egregious though since the principal leaned forward and said to the teacher in question, “But YOU are trained in LiPS, right?” and the teacher leaned in right back to her and said, “No, I am not.” So, I took the opportunity to ask her again, for the record, are you trained and she maintained that she was not. This reveals to you that the principal and IEP team was trying to pull a fast one on us (the teacher was being honest and professional; the principal, not so much). So, this would be your opportunity to continue the line of questioning about which program they are using and who will implement it. As an aside, this teacher went on to tell me she didn’t want to end up in one of my articles, but it was too late – she was already infamous in my mind and on my keyboard. If that teacher is reading this, my apologies, it was too good of a learning opportunity to pass up, but I do appreciate your integrity.

**Heard about a third grader with dyslexia during a conversation with a parent of a child who had just been identified with dyslexia:**

Resource teacher: “*Well, he can’t have dyslexia because he knows some sight words and kids with dyslexia don’t know their sight words.*”

Oh, no you didn’t.

Wait, what? What exactly does that mean? Because he knows some sight words he does not have dyslexia? Let’s be really clear, this is ridiculous. This reveals to you, once again, a lack of awareness about dyslexia. This is particularly disturbing to me because this teacher has actually taken our courses and she was speaking to a parent of a child that I had just assessed. Luckily, the parent is savvy and knew this was rubbish. However, if this were to happen in an IEP meeting, this would be your opportunity to educate the team about dyslexia. Perhaps share this short 4-minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zafiGBrFkRM> or bring a copy of this article: <http://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/All-About-Dyslexia.pdf>. The next step is to request an IEE.

**Heard in IEP meeting at the end of second grade:**

Uttered by the reading specialist: “*I don’t want to write a spelling goal because spelling is just too hard for him.*”

Oh, no you didn’t.

Isn’t the fact the spelling is too hard for him the very reason we need to have a goal for him? What this tells you is that the IEP team is teetering dangerously close to lowering the bar for this child. It may also be telling you that the team does not know how to teach spelling to this child and therefore is avoiding it. This is your opportunity to remind the team that the needs drive the

goals and the goals drive the services. Therefore, the need for spelling instruction dictates the spelling goal. Sheesh!

So, there you have it. The most absurd things I have heard in the last six weeks, yep just six weeks. Trust me there were many more that we just couldn't remember. I hope it made you smile, but more importantly, I hope it helped you with your own IEP experiences. So, next time you hear something nonsensical, what are you going to fantasize about doing? Oh, no you didn't...