

“We did it!” Reflections on a journey through school with Dyslexia and an IEP.

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Today I scheduled my son’s last IEP meeting. When I hung up the phone and the gravity of the situation set in, I cried.

I have cried many times over the years due to an IEP meeting, and for many



different reasons. I didn’t know it at the time, but I would cry over every one of those meetings. Sometimes they would be good tears and sometimes they would be bad. I really didn’t expect to cry this time. My son was heading to college. He really wasn’t struggling in school. No one was denying him what he

needed to be successful. What did I have to cry about?

In the beginning of this journey I cried tears of anger and frustration. Frustration because I could not get the team to listen to me and acknowledge that my concerns were valid. I was constantly being told that they were concerned about my son.... but not as much as I was. I would also be told that his problems would work themselves out. He would just get it one day. I knew my son’s mental health would not be able to withstand the wait. When they finally did agree to test him and to provide him with an IEP I cried tears of anger. After being told that my son

was “The brightest child she had ever tested for a learning disability” I wanted to scream at her, “that is the very definition of Dyslexia!!”

“Dyslexia is an inherited condition that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.”

Susan Barton

The thought that they would put off helping my son because he was smart enraged me.

In the years afterward I cried tears of sadness after an IEP meeting. I mourned my son’s right to have a school system that worked with his brain and not against it. I mourned his right to feel normal. I mourned his right to be neurotypical.

Later I cried tears of despair and hopelessness. We had a really great special education

teacher at that time and I thought all our problems were solved. Never again would we need to hover over the school to make sure his accommodations were met of a daily basis. We were free of this terrible annoyance of babysitting the people in our son’s life in order to get him what he needed to be successful. Well, much like my son, we would never be free of the external watch that dyslexia requires. I cried out of despair and sheer exhaustion of the fight. Then I realized, it wasn’t

hopeless, and my watch was not over. For my son I still had the fight in me, and I



took a new tactic. **In the remaining years I committed to enhancing my son's life with advocacy skills.** One day I heard that he was successfully advocating for himself. Gaining what he needed and wanted on his own. After that IEP I cried tears of happiness.

So today when I scheduled the final IEP meeting for my son and realized how much work had gone into his school years I cried tears of pride. **We did it!** Me, my husband, and my son. I have a child that will walk into the world fully ready to live successfully with his disability. Thanks to hard work he knows what he needs and how to ask for it. He also knows what to do if he doesn't get what he needs. All the feelings throughout the years were worth it. Getting to the feeling I have now is such a great reward.



I have been a Barton Tutor for 9 years. I started tutoring just before my son was diagnosed. I live in the Columbia River Gorge and at that time we didn't have any tutors in the area and no way to get my son the help that he needed locally. I have been a member of the International Dyslexia Association for that same period of time. From the beginning they have been a great source of information for me and my family. I have attended many informational meetings put on by **IDA - Oregon Branch** and the support they have given me has been vital to my son's success and the success of the families I work with.