

Dear Mrs Lawson

This is a short history of my journey with my son. I am certain you have heard it all before, however if this can be of assistance to any other family struggling with a child like Alexander then I am happy for you to pass on the information. My search to find an Angel like you was long and at times emotionally draining but I am eternally grateful that I stayed firm in my belief that someone, somewhere had the answer to what I was searching for.

At the end of Kindergarten Alexander said to me "*the words wobble on the board*". This was the first sign that something was not quite right. It was also however a sign of Alexander's great intelligence to be able to actually explain what he was seeing and to identify that what he was seeing was different to what everybody else saw. He had not really grasped the concept of reading at all and having already two other children I was acutely aware that reading should be well underway by the end of kindergarten. For Alexander it was as if the whole year had been a waste of time. He had difficulty in other areas as well such as tying his shoelaces, remembering the alphabet, clumsiness and very poor handwriting. His handwriting was so poor in fact he would form the letters starting from the bottom rather than the top.

Alexander's struggle with reading became so tiring at times he would rub his eyes continuously, he would cover one eye to read, he would move his head around and headaches became a regular event. He became very self conscious of his reading difficulties. He would say to me "*I'm not as smart as the others, they can read*" or "*I don't want to go to school, the work's too hard, the teacher yells at me because I can't get it finished.*" As a mother your heart breaks every time you hear those words and I was hearing those words on a daily basis.

The teachers and school professionals had little to offer in the way of advice. They were unable to give me any name for what Alexander had. He was put into the general classification of "*slow learners*". They did not want Alexander to be aware of any problem so therefore we were not encouraged to try to find an answer. They wanted to use a wait and see approach. In the meantime they would "*tailor*" the work to suit him. In other words, he would not be on the same learning curve as the other children, the others would advance while Alexander would work at his "*own level*". This strategy distressed me and kept me awake most nights.

I then embarked upon hours of internet research, I borrowed every library book that ever existed about learning difficulties, I purchased various computer programs and reading aids. From my research I discovered a name that I thought fitted Alexander perfectly. That name was "*Dyslexia*". I excitedly told his teachers that I thought I had the answer. I was told that there was to be no "*labelling*" of his condition. Dyslexia did not exist and these sorts of children were simply "*learning delayed*". I could not believe what I was hearing. How could they ignore all of the other signs and symptoms and simply put Alexander into the same category as other children who may not have those specific symptoms.

Surely in their years of previous teaching experience they must have had a child like Alexander. Surely they must have directed that child to a professional that could help. Surely they must have had feedback on what works and what doesn't. The one thing I have learned from this experience is that teachers are there to teach a curriculum. I was completely wrong in my assumption that they would know what to do. The professionals will just keep pushing the child through the curriculum with a load of remedial work and that is their answer. Alternatively there are always drugs for ADD and this seems to be the only other option considered by the professionals. Somewhere in High School when these children become delinquents because they are bullied, lack confidence and cannot keep up with the work, the children are then placed into a specific school for difficult children.

The only piece of advice I was given was to have Alexander tested by the school counsellor and she would then make recommendations as to any further intervention. I clung to the hope that perhaps the school counsellor must be the person with all the answers.

After the testing process however, I was told the same message again. Alexander had difficulty processing things, his visual processing skills were poor, his memory was poor, his reading was very bad, his handwriting was bad etc etc. I had heard it all before. Again I mentioned dyslexia, again I was told I was not to put that label on Alexander. So what was the answer? I was told to seek occupational therapy. Excitedly I booked in. It was clear

after only a few sessions that the aim of the occupational therapist was to get Alexander to hold his pencil correctly. Some other exercises were recommended so that Alexander could learn to “cross the midline” but these, it appeared, did little even after following the routine for a number of weeks. The occupational therapy was certainly doing nothing for his reading difficulties.

Deflated but not to be defeated, I continued on my journey, unconvinced that “dyslexia” was a myth.

My journey took me to the following places:

1. A behavioural optometrist who recommended a light box be used for a number of weeks. He provided no guarantee of anything except that even after using his program Alexander would need extensive further intervention. After paying \$350 in tests and reports I decided I needed confirmation from someone else before releasing further funds.
2. An Eye specialist was consulted to confirm that visual training was necessary. Surely I thought he could confirm whether there was a problem with Alexander’s eyes. I was told that Alexander’s eyes were perfectly healthy. He could provide no explanation for Alexander’s reading problems.
3. I then visited a Paediatric Educational Specialist. Again I was sure that consultation with a specialist would provide the answer and lead us on the right path to whatever needed to happen. After all are these people not highly qualified and trained? After a day of testing and another \$500, I was told there were indeed problems, Alexander was ADD and would need remedial work and failing that there would be ADD drugs. I was sceptical however this Doctor was a Specialist, a very expensive one at that, I didn’t like his diagnosis but at least I had a diagnosis.
4. I enrolled Alexander in an after school remedial class. Unfortunately, however, whilst ever Alexander had difficulty focusing, he was not retaining anything he learned so more money and time was wasted.
5. I took Alexander to a cranial osteopath, desperate to try anything however strange it sounded.

6. I looked at the Dore program but it seemed a year or two of exercises was a long time commitment and if that did not work another year or two would have been wasted along with another \$5000 or so.
7. Alexander attended for several sessions with a Davis facilitator where he would build words out of clay. This was initially helpful as he managed to learn the alphabet. I am sure, however, if I had sat down for three solid days and concentrated solely on the alphabet I could have achieved the same result. The remainder of the program was to take two years, again for Alexander it was a time factor, I was not sure he had that amount of time to waste if at the end I found the program had not worked. The amount of funds I expended on the Davis program amounted to about \$700 and would have ran into thousands had I continued.

Remarkably I then heard of two people who had been to The Allison Lawson Clinic with astounding results. Unfortunately this was not a widely advertised program as I had never come across it throughout all of my internet searching. The program was short, the cost was not excessive and although the travel was extensive, it was not forever.

So we began. Suddenly I was hearing someone talk absolute sense and Allison was calling Alexander's problem Dyslexia, a word that had been cast aside by many professionals. Allison was talking in terms of a "cure", again this was a word I had never before heard.

We started attending twice a week much to the dismay of Alexander's school. Soon after discovering I was seeking alternative help for Alexander outside of the school system I was called to a meeting with the Principal, the School Counsellor and the Special Education teacher. No words of encouragement were spoken during that meeting but rather I was told not to expect anything, to be careful where I was spending my money, to not label Alexander or have him believe he has a problem and that I should leave his problems to the school system as they were of the view that they had adequate resources to cope with his problems. I enquired as to whether they could provide visual training. They could not. That however, was not their answer. Their answer was that, given time, a number of years and possibly into High School, Alexander would improve. His type did not improve at any fast rate and he would need extensive ongoing remedial work. I left the meeting feeling like the

worst mother in the world. Was I just on some sort of wild goose chase trying to find help for my child that didn't exist. Was he really that bad that he would never amount to anything without ongoing, constant monitoring. I clung to the distant hope that I was somehow on the right path, even though it seemed nobody else agreed.

It did not take long to notice a difference. After only a few sessions with Allison Alexander's reading became faster, words that he had not previously been able to spell were suddenly being spelt correctly. It was as if he had the information already stored away and that information had been unlocked from the dark hole.

After about five sessions and after hearing Alexander read incredibly well and fast I said to him "*What is it that you see now when you read, compared to how you used to read*". He said to me "*Before when I read my eyes would not move fast enough to the next word. Now I can see the next word*". He is only 7, he does not make up stories. He is and remains, incredibly perceptive and intelligent. His progress has been so incredible, in such a short period of time I struggle to believe that it is the same child whom I sat with only a few weeks ago and who would take many seconds to read a simple word like "the" or "they" or "and". Even if the word was repeated over and over within the same context, Alexander would still fail to remember the word. Now my child reads fluently. He still has work to do as there has been a period in excess of two years where he has learnt nothing. At least now however he can move forward instead of standing still.

From my journey I have discovered that there are many programs that may or may not assist children like Alexander. There are many people claiming to have the answer but many who are also charging ridiculous amounts of money and offering programs that take months and in some cases years to complete. Allison targeted Alexander's problem precisely with a program that was nothing short of miraculous. I wonder why on this earth there not others who do what Allison does. I wonder why there are so many so called "Professionals" who are highly qualified, who do not have the answer. I wonder why, in a system filled with children who can only function on Ritalin, somebody has never looked beyond the cloud of toxic medicine to find an alternative. The answer is right in front of them all. I believe that there are many varying types of children who are learning delayed. I also believe however that a large majority

are just like Alexander. They are not stupid, unfocussed or in need of drugs. They are simply in need of eye therapy to co-ordinate that part of their brain that has to date been uncoordinated.

It is now an absolute pleasure to hear my child read. I love hearing him read because now he is actually reading and not just sounding out each and every word. He does not struggle, he does not throw the book on the floor in frustration. He reads like an Angel now because he was taught by an Angel. That Angel is Allison Lawson.

With my best wishes for the future of your revolutionary program. I will be forever indebted to you for your help.

Jane