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I found this link on Facebook. I've tried to look it up again and it's disappeared. Gmail saved the address as a draft so I have no idea of the terms of reference.

Either way I have 3 neurodiverse kids so I have been on this road a long time!

1- 25 year old boy with moderate learning difficulties, severe epilepsy & ASD diagnosis. He attended mainstream for 4 years and then special needs school until he was 18.

2- 17 year old daughter with dyslexia. Only diagnosed when she was 13 and even then I had to pay privately.

3- 14 year old boy with dyslexia (another private diagnosis) ADHD & ASD diagnosis HSC trust diagnosis

Our experience has been good and bad.

1. With our eldest we had a brilliant Educational Psychologist who took the time to get to know him and try to understand his needs which were vast in mainstream. The primary school principal had just accepted her 1st principal job and had no experience dealing with special educational needs bearing in mind this was 20 years ago. She was so determined to get as much as help as possible. The ELB as it was back then tried to help but fear governed their actions because of his epilepsy. It meant I had to fight 10 times harder to get them to see him as more than a scary name on a sheet of paper. I was already exhausted. We eventually got everything in place ready for him to start P1 and then transport refused to help. I had to drive him everyday. When he transferred to the special needs school 26 miles away I was told he'd get transport. Guess what! None! I fought for 4 months being sent between the ELB, transport and the nursing team being given the run around. Each office blamed each other. I had to get our MP involved. Eventually we got transport sorted and for a while things would settle down. But then a new way to plan things would pop up with a new type of form that someone with zero experience had commissioned and this was the best way forward to helping your child.

It never was. It was just more useless red tape. He left the education system at 18 years old.

2. Dyslexia is a mine field. The EA refused to entertain my daughter's scores. Her reading age was brilliant so that was enough but when you looked at her spellings the scores were atrocious. I did everything the teachers asked to help her but couldn't understand why the scores never improved. One night I asked her to read her wee brother a story and it became apparent that what she saw on the page and what was actually there were very different. When I asked the English teacher in her high school about it she started to mention dyslexia so I researched. It's shocking how students are treated. We worked so hard with her and the high school accepted her private diagnosis. They took it seriously because they knew she was a good student. The A she scored in her English at GCSE standard was even sweeter than the other A and the 7 A*s she got- see she was a good student and willing to work hard. How did the EA help- she was handed a laptop and the English teacher and I fought very very hard for 20 extra minutes on her exam times because of her slow processing speed. 20 minutes- a joke but she took it and got the better smile at the end of it!

3. Repeat the mine field example for my youngest son with dyslexia but throw in ASD & ADHD on top of it. A perfect storm. The EA fought so hard to stop him having an assistant at all. Talk about a health & safety nightmare for the primary school. He never looked before he leapt and he loved to move a lot! We got one eventually and to her credit she has seen him through 5 years in primary school. She left to take on a role in the high school he was planning to attend and she's with him even now. The EA have even more lovely forms telling me how he's entitled to get a full education but heaven forbid we ask for help getting it. Another laptop is the answer for him. He's so easily distracted but the EA refuses to allow him to sit in a separate area for exams etc Extra time is a big doubt at this stage. A slow processing speed isn't reason enough apparently. Movement breaks are a big no no as well.

The thing is I'm not a whiny parent. I believe in hard work and discipline for kids and all 3 of mine got it and continue to get it now. The disadvantages they've faced have never been allowed to be an excuse to not try the best you can and work hard.

The system is overburdened and so many need help. What frustrates me is that the people in charge of giving the help have very little idea of what they're dealing with and tend to not research the area of difficulty that the child is facing. The condescending

things I had had to listen to over the last 20 years would make your blood boil but there's no point getting angry because the parent would be classed as "part of the reason the child has the issue in the 1st place"

What do you think of that example!?! It's a lovely thing to be told isn't it! Genetics mustn't come into it!

Anyway I've tried to give a small idea of what it's like to face the EA with special education needs requests and it's not a pretty picture. I really hope you start by understanding the harm that's done by not helping kids out and why parents are so frustrated!

Get back to the basics of more help in schools, more information for your workers in the office of the EA - we're not actually stealing their time by asking for extra time in exams, we aren't asking them to drive our kids to school when we ask for help with transport. They need examples of how making even simple changes can have a huge impact on a kids life! And here's the thing if our kids are ok then we the parents will be ok too!

Kind regards

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