

Hello Senator Ted Kennedy,

03/12/2009

My Name is Tracy Bowman, I was born and raised and still live on Cape Cod. Our families went to the same church in Hyannis. I have a very interesting story about myself and my daughter I thought you should hear. **My daughter was having great difficulty with school, as I did, and I couldn't find anyone to help us, other than hiring a tutor at \$40.00 an hour, year-round.** My daughter, Dayna would not read even though she knew the words. I also noticed that her friends read much better than she did. She never finished her work at school and trying to get homework done was a daily battle. I was worried.

**Dayna told me that when she tried to read, the print moved, pulsed, each letter had a halo around it and the white page seemed to glow.** She was also in the schools nurses' office daily complaining of headache of a stomachache. So I took her to the pediatrician and she said "She's fine." So I took her to the ophthalmologist and she said she was fine. Now the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher told me that there was something wrong with Dayna and we needed to figure it out immediately what the problem was or we might lose her.

I got a job at the school, in the kitchen so I could talk to the teacher every day and be a support system. We used all kinds of strategies it helped a little, but nothing really worked consistently. Dayna and I would fight about homework every day. We had her tested at school to see if she had a learning issue twice, with no results - no learning issue and she had a high average IQ. One teacher wanted me to be mad with her because she thought she was not trying hard enough. Dayna would cry and say "**no one understands.**"

One day someone at the school tested her for something called **Irlen Syndrome** and sent home a report saying she was "severe." I had never heard of this. I took this report to my school contact, the social worker, who said that she had never heard of it either. I spoke to someone at the local tutoring center who had heard of Irlen Syndrome. She gave me the book "Reading by the Colors," written by Helen Irlen. I couldn't believe what I was reading. I was reading about myself. Irlen Syndrome is a visual perceptual processing problem; a person doesn't see the written page as others do. I learned that eyesight and vision are two different things. We never know what a person sees unless we ask them. We (in general) never ask our children how a page looks to them. We only ask "What is that letter? What is that word?" or say "Sound that out. Read this sentence."

I learned that about **15%** of the general population has this issue and doesn't know it. If a person has a reading or learning problem there is a **46 - 50%** chance that they are suffering with Irlen Syndrome. They are born with this and never grow out of it. They don't have any comparison of what others see, so they are unaware there is a difference. **I learned that what I see is different than others at 50 years old and was unaware.** WOW! When I learned this about myself I was sad for myself and wished I had had this intervention when I was young. Maybe I would have gone to college. I sure would like to think so.

This issue defines a person's life and their ability to find a good paying job. Because it runs in families, a low income family may never ever achieve better, always staying a low income family. Some people can make compensations in their life and do well and others cannot. Always staying in low paying jobs and never going farther and only thinking they are not smart enough, always blaming themselves. This weighs heavily on a person's self-esteem because it has nothing to do with intelligence. What really gets me is, what happens to that young girl who feels she is not smart enough and feels she only has her looks to fall back on - teen pregnancy, drugs, alcohol, prostitution. And because it is hereditary the cycle repeats itself. Or that boy who thinks (because he fee feels stupid), "I'll show you how stupid I am," gets arrested and goes to jail and his life is ruined. What about drugs? If you don't have good self-esteem how are going to stay away from doing drugs? Or selling drugs? We don't seem to understand that. **These people are suffering inside!**

**When I heard there was a Bill in the State House here in Massachusetts, I got mad because this information has been available for some time and we are not hearing about it.** If this had been a public school mandate, my daughter and many others would not have suffered. They would have had a better chance of learning and much money would have been saved in the school systems. **The House Bill is to help identify those individuals who may have Irlen Syndrome and to provide them with the proper colored overlay to help them see the printed page more efficiently, a very low cost, but high impact solution.**

I have been lobbying the State and educating the Representatives and Senators on what Irlen Syndrome is, how to help people with this issue and how much money they can be saving the towns and the State. It costs approximately \$7000 to educate one child per year. For a child in special education that cost doubles to \$14,000 per year. **With the proper colored overlays, many children may no longer require any other special education intervention. Or there remediation will be more affective for the first time.** My daughter, Dayna uses color filtered Irlen glasses to help her see the written page more affectively.

**Irlen Syndrome is a sensitivity to light that will distort the written page. With the use of color it filters out that part of the light you are sensitive to and helps you see better.**

**That's it, COLOR! Not drugs!** Who knew that a simple tool like a plastic colored overlay on a written page is the tool to help a child feel successful and good about themselves. But we don't do this for our children, we don't give them the tools to be successful. **There are 40 to 45% of our children in Title one – for The No Child Left Behind Act. We should be looking at these children.** I have been at a school meetings for parents about Title one and hearing the desperation in some parents asking "How can I help my child?".

Schools don't screen for this, maybe because it may cut down on the amount of Special Needs teachers we have now that make the special ed. departments afraid. This Irlen Syndrome looks like ADHD in the classroom that a teacher is so quick to say your child has and recommends drugs. We screen every child for Scoliosis in school that maybe 1% of the children may have, but there is a huge population of kids that have

Irlen Syndrome. What is wrong with this picture? Now with the No Child Left Behind Act a child suffering may never be able to pass the MCAS test so they never get a diploma, what does that tell you? Now with a huge dropout rate, we need to be aware of this and not dismiss it. **The Irlen Method is used all over the world, why can we** also make it available, it only makes since, and it is just a tool. An inexpensive tool with countless amount of research.

**Now that my daughter got this intervention she is now in middle school, 5th grade with a solid "B" in English and Social Studies, with a real feeling of Yes I can, just with the use of color.**

**She is so proud of herself now, and so am I.** If you are getting a headaches and stomachaches everyday and the page is distorted while you are trying to look at it and everyone else can do it, why can't I? .....

**Imagine what a simple overlay can do.**

**Please help me bring this to all our children.** No child should be left to feel this way when we know there is something out there that can help them feel successful. The many people that have used this Irlen Method and have success are immeasurable. All children should feel this way.

For more information go to;

**[www.irlenconnection.com](http://www.irlenconnection.com) or [www.irlen.com](http://www.irlen.com) or [www.readingandlight.com](http://www.readingandlight.com)**

This is really something to watch.

Thank you,

Tracy Bowman,

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