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The dismissal of learning disabilities

I’m sure most kids have distinct memories of sitting at the kitchen table at an ungodly hour trying to finish and submit the last assignment that was sitting in the folder of their bag for a week straight. Whether it’s because you forgot it was due, you decided to wait until the last minute, or were simply struggling and couldn’t find a way to ask the teacher for assistance, so you pushed it back hoping to figure it out by yourself eventually. Organization and responsibility is taught at an early age, but the reality is everyone learns differently. There’s no set way to teach a student and expect them to automatically obtain the information. Some kids may learn better by observing, others may do well with hands-on activities. The point being, learning plans should be individualized for each student. With some children, extra assistance is necessary as they struggle to pick information up at the pace other kids may. The way the school goes about handling this issue is what affects the growth and development of the student, and in some cases, the schools are reluctant to help.

Growing up, my older sister Angela had been one of those kids who always had missing, late, or completely wrong homework. She struggled heavily with learning the material taught in class along with focus and organization skills. Her papers were spread out in her backpack with no folders or signals to separate each class, rips could be found on each paper. For the first year or so, this had flown over their heads as just her being a messy kid. When receiving her first test back for the school year, the appalling grade of 9% had shocked my parents, and they could no longer pass it off as her just taking longer to adjust to the education level at that school. From that point forward, my parents had Angela come home, sit at the dining room table and work on her homework right away. Additionally, to be sure that she was retaining the information they would set up little flashcards to use as a mini quiz. They would try to track her progress to see if any improvements had been made with what they were doing. This was all coming out of love, they truly just wanted to see her succeed in school and not fall behind, since at this point, they were unaware of the true issue. However, when all else seemed to fail they had finally made the decision to take it to school. They had tried everything in the book, but they were truly at a loss for what to do and how to help her.

Upon going to the school for a visit, they were immediately faced with rejection and denial of the possibility of something genuinely being wrong. My sister’s teacher had straight up told my parents that she was being lazy and not putting in the effort to make this work. Which was just ridiculous as they had literally had her studying daily along with private tutoring. Not exactly sure how to take the next step, they decided to continue her tutoring and give her more time to show an improvement. This continued for the next 3 years or so, and at this point, my parents were certain something was wrong beyond the ever-persistent school denying it, they had researched countless ways to see if she would be able to get tested or diagnosed but most searches led to a dead end that they could not consider.

Angela had started high school when she was finally given the proper attention she as deserved. Her 9th grade English teacher had actually gone to my parents are spoke to them about a concern in her learning development compared to her age and what it should be. The teacher assured my nervous parents that this was not the first time she had seen this, and that she would further evaluate Angela more closely based on her functioning at school in the next month or so. Once her CER report had been complete and the process was over she had been put on an IEP; Individualized Education Program specifically designed to aid in her academics and struggles.

An article detailing the consequences of undiagnosed learning disabilities states “These students tend to have relatively mild levels of disability, which explains why they slipped through the cracks during high school: While their peers with more serious disabilities were able to secure accommodations, tutoring, counseling, and other services, their own challenges never seemed quite serious enough, in the eyes of teachers and school staff, to warrant diagnostic tests or the creation of an individual education program (IEP). And because their disabilities were mild, they were able to struggle through high school and earn a diploma even without receiving such services.” (Schechter, 1). Children are being failed by the schools far too often as many cases of a learning disability will go unnoticed or be dismissed, like my sister because the teachers won’t take the time to thoroughly evaluate instead of passing it up as a lazy, unmotivated child. Teachers are reluctant to pick up genuine signs due to misconceptions and failure to see when a child needs help.

“48 percent of parents believe incorrectly that children will outgrow these brain-based difficulties, and 33 percent of educators say that sometimes what people call a learning disability is really just laziness” (Corcoran, 1). As told in the quote above, this again shows that many educators neglect the real issue at hand in favor of deciding it is laziness, and with probability as high as one in five, the chances of going undiagnosed are extremely high.

The future of students can and will rely heavily on the teachers they are met with while growing up. Students with learning disabilities are not just “lazy”, and if there is a suspected student in class who seems to be struggling, the best plan is to have a closer look because chances are, they are struggling, and it is not laziness nor is it something that will most likely go away with age.

WORKS CITED PAGE

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Reflection paper

I was prompted to write about this topic due to my personal connection to it, after watching my older sister struggle with this for years and be let down by the educational system. It is something that I feel very strongly about which is why I felt this blender assignment could be the perfect way to let out all of my thoughts on this. My audience would first and foremost be school educators, as my main point of addressing in this essay is how much learning disabilities are overlooked. Secondly, parents, as I feel if they feel something is not right it is important to follow up on it for the benefit of the child. In this essay, I used the genres narrative and expository.