



## Is the Student Lazy or Does the Student Have Dyslexia?

By Shawnta S. Barnes – October 20, 2018

October is National Dyslexia Awareness Month. According to the International Dyslexia Association, “Dyslexia affects 1 in 10 individuals.” I did not know much about dyslexia, a learning disability that can cause difficulty with reading and writing, until my second year in the classroom. My second year in the classroom was my first year at a charter school. The school opened that school year so all of the students had previously attended another school. Anytime I called home,

whether to give a praise report or to discuss a discipline issue, parents many times shared why they pulled their children out of their boundary school and took a gamble on the charter school.

One parent told me her daughter had problems with comprehension and she knew her daughter needed help, but the boundary school wouldn't help her. She said the previous teachers thought she was lazy and she was adamant that I help her improve in reading. She was concerned her daughter, who was in middle school, would never get caught up and therefore wouldn't graduate from high school.

This student was smart and always participated in class discussion, but anytime she had to read independently she struggled. Being a novice teacher, I didn't know what to do so I consulted the special education teacher. Later, this student received a dyslexia diagnosis. This diagnosis was helpful because you can't solve a problem if you don't know what the problem is. Before she received help, she felt like she was dumb. That was far from the truth; she was one of my strongest students. The strategies she learned helped her not only in my English class but in all of her classes.

Years later, she returned to her boundary school. She wrote me an email to tell me she was in honors English in high school. She thanked me for believing she was smart even though I didn't know what was going on with her at first.

Students can learn to manage dyslexia if they know they have it. Unfortunately, many educators don't know much about it. Indiana did not even have an official definition for dyslexia until 2015 when Indiana House Enrolled Act 1108 was signed. I hope this push for awareness helps students get identified sooner, so there aren't more students like my former student who are seen as lazy when they just need to learn strategies to help them learn.

Click [here](#) for more resources and information about dyslexia.