

My son is Michael Harrison, he is 9 years old, in fourth grade and goes to Bluestem Elementary school. He is a hard worker and wants to read more than anything. He knows he is struggling but until this year we did not know where to turn. I first noticed he was struggling at the end of his first grade year when he wasn't reading yet. At conferences at the end of the year his teacher said she thought he had tracking issues. She and the school nurse suggested I take him to Joyce and Joyce optometry since they had a program with the school that kids went to during the week for tracking issues. During the exam we discussed tracking and dyslexia issues and he assured me he didn't have either. He said he had astigmatism in both eyes and that was why he was having a hard time focusing. We then put him in glasses and I took him in every six months after that to make sure we stayed on top of it. His second grade year he went to title one reading. He was being pulled from math to go to title one reading and I didn't know this until the end of the year and so he had to go to title one math. His third grade year he had a very difficult teacher. All she would say to me was he would catch up. She was very discouraging to him during class and he hated going to school. Last year was very rough he was going to title one math and reading and fast forward reading. I did see some improvement on his reading but not where it needed to be. His teacher last year crushed any confidence he had or any enjoyment he had for school. At the end of his third grade year he was two points shy of reaching his AR goal. He had never missed his goal before so I asked his teacher if I could come up during his recess and help him finish getting his goal. She was visibly very unhappy that I was helping him and after I left she asked him very rudely if I was going to hold his hand forever and was I going to go to the high school and do that for him. That really hit him hard. I saw a piece of him want to give up. I told him that as long as I was here I would not let him fail. It took a lot of time and encouragement to bring him back. Teachers do not realize that what they say can cause so much damage to a child that is already struggling. We both had a hard time getting through that year. Bluestem has not offered summer school for the past three years due to budget cuts so that was an option we were unable to explore also. This summer I knew he was still behind and didn't know what to do about it. We read and did sight words. At parent teacher conferences this year his teacher said if he didn't improve he would go to special ed. That was a shock I didn't realize he was to that point. She told me to talk to Kim Hickman she might be able to point me in the right direction and that is how we found Fundamental Learning. Michael is so smart and works hard and wants to do well in everything he does. I may be wrong but I don't feel he belongs in special ed. We both want to find out what is blocking him from reaching his potential. I have always been totally honest with him about his reading level and everything that I have discussed with his teachers. I feel like the title one reading and fast forward reading is not benefitting him the way it should. He misses so much class time and has to make up work and misses recesses because of them. He already feels like he is different because of his reading problems and I just want to do whatever I can to help him achieve his best.