OUT-OF-THE-BOX

ADVOCACY

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National Center for Learning Disabilities
The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed
# OUT-OF-THE-BOX ADVOCACY

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As the parent of a child with a learning disability (LD) or other learning difficulty, you’ve probably done your homework. You’ve read up on your child’s special needs, learned about what services he or she needs, and maybe even have a 504 plan or an IEP in place. You’re off to a great start.

If you’re like me, despite your ongoing efforts to work with your school and learn as much as you can, you may not be completely satisfied with the solutions in place for your child. Perhaps the school campus team is cooperative, but not necessarily very effective at implementing your child’s accommodations or IEP plan. Perhaps you’re struggling to get your school to recognize your child’s disability. Or, maybe despite your child being accommodated in the classroom, he or she is facing stigma, bullying or other hardships at school simply because she learns and plays differently.

You might be asking yourself—what else can I do? My short and sweet answer is a lot!

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Throughout my journey as the mother of two kids with learning disabilities and special needs (my daughter has dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD, and my son has high-functioning autism and ADHD), I have continually sought to think outside the box when it comes to both education about and advocacy for my kids with differences.

When I began my advocacy journey shortly after my children’s diagnoses, I quickly discovered my favorite resources, including NCLD and Wrightslaw. They helped educate me on what steps to take to help my kids. (Scour them thoroughly if you haven’t already!) After I tackled the basics, I embarked on a personal campaign to see what else I could do to create change for my kids at their school and in our community.

Over the past four years, I’ve written letters, started a blog, pitched my stories to newspaper and magazine editors, started a community support group, connected with my local state representatives, attended conferences, spoke before my school board, tweeted, posted, talked and even sung about how my children’s disabilities have affected our family and have both complicated and enhanced our lives.

I call these techniques “Out-of-the-Box Advocacy.” They’re ways to go beyond traditional advocacy to take a stand and create change for your kids. You’d be surprised how easy, fun and effective it is at creating tangible, meaningful change for your kids and others just like them.

Now, thanks to the NCLD, it’s my chance to share some of my favorite out-of-the-box tips on LD.org. I hope it opens doors to innovative and effective ways to advocate for your children with learning disabilities. Let’s take it to the next level!
When I began my journey as the mother of two children with learning disabilities, I quickly realized that the conversation about my kids’ unique needs was missing. It was missing from my chats with friends, from conversations with parents at our local park, from the parenting magazines I was reading, and from announcements on our school district’s website. That’s why I started looking for ways to talk about my amazing children in a way that would help others understand and accept them. One of the ways I do that is through Facebook and Twitter.

True, it takes a certain measure of confidence to “put it out there” on social media, and some parents may not be ready to share about their child’s diagnosis or the struggles and triumphs they’re facing. If you’re open to sharing, though, social media is both empowering and encouraging like no other medium I’ve found. Here are some tips to get you started, or to enhance what you’re already doing on social media:

**Twitter**

**FOLLOW THE LEADER**

Do you want to learn more about ADHD, dyslexia, or learning disabilities in general? Twitter offers tons of information! The breadth of info available, though, can make it seem overwhelming. Don’t worry: If you’re interested in specific topics, it’s fairly easy to consolidate the “Twitter-verse” into a space that’s comfortable for you. If you don’t have a Twitter account, sign up now—it only takes a minute or two. Once you’ve logged on, type in a search term and “Follow” the folks who are tweeting about what you want to know (@LDorg and @LD_Advocate were the first on my list!). Then, follow the people or organizations they’re following, and perhaps the people who are following them. It’s a quick way to start building your community.

**TWEET ALL ABOUT IT**

After spending some time observing your community’s messages via your Twitter feed, maybe you’re ready to jump in and take advantage of the 140 characters to share and encourage others. “Favorite” articles or comments that you love, retweet to show your support, and tweet directly at people with questions and comments. When you tweet, make sure to include the “@” or “handle” of the organization or person you’re tweeting about and, if you’d like, the hashtag (more on this below) of the message’s topic. For example:

“So excited that my #Dyslexic son made honor roll! He’s an inspiration to our entire family! @BrightonSchoolTX @LDorg #LDProudToBe #Dyslexia”
A simple tweet can share a simple, personal truth and help recognize the organizations that support your kids and causes you care about.

**HASH AWAY**

Hashtags are another great way to follow conversations about very specific topics. Type “#” followed by the specific topic that interests you in the search box, click on the magnifying glass, and tweets from others interested in the topic will appear.

Many organizations create hashtags. Project Eye-to-Eye, an organization that connects LD college mentors to younger LD students, coined #LDProud-ToBe. The National Center for Learning Disabilities started #LDChat, a forum where you can ask questions about LD.

Here are some of my other favorites related to learning disabilities and differences:

#LD  #IEP
#BullyFree  #ADHD
#SpEd  #Dyslexia
#SpedChat

**FACEBOOK**

**A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS**

You already know that your Facebook friends love to see pictures of your kids’ birthday parties. Have you considered that they might also love to hear about how you’re advocating for your child with disabilities?

Think of Facebook as your personal platform to garner support from the people you already know and love. Once you start to share, you may be surprised to discover that many of your friends are going through the same trials and triumphs with their own children.

**THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY**

Take some time to discover the value of the Facebook community for people who are facing similar trials. One example is the Facebook page for *The Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia*, a film that raises awareness about how people with dyslexia have unique talents and strengths that often lead to success. The Big Picture’s page is covered with comments from children and adults with dyslexia, parents, teachers, and friends. They share details about their personal experiences, and the result is a truly engaged and inspiring online community.

**POST IT**

Following organizations on Facebook keeps you in the know regarding who’s talking about topics you care about. Along with organizations that support people with learning disabilities, like NCLD, I follow my local school district and elementary school. If there’s a topic I’m curious about, I post directly on my school district’s (ISD) wall and ask about it. For example, our ISD had scheduled a dyslexia/education meeting for parents, but hadn’t posted about it online or sent much information to parents via the schools. After posting on our ISD’s page and asking if more information could be distributed about the meeting, I not only received an immediate response from our communications director, but the meeting was announced on the district’s website and a district-wide email was sent within days.

**NO COMFORT ZONE**

Out-of-the-box advocacy isn’t always comfortable, but advocacy rarely is—especially if you’re new to it. But stepping out of your comfort zone—if even just a little bit, with a simple tweet or post—could lead to exciting results, like sparking conversation about LD in your community and beyond.
Each time I put on my parent advocate hat I have two goals: to help my children get the help they need and to raise awareness about LD in the broader community.

In my first post I shared about how parents can use Facebook and Twitter to boost their advocacy efforts. Another online advocacy tool I use is Pinterest, a newer social media platform where you can curate and share your favorite LD resources.

**IT IS PINTERESTING**

**Pinterest** is a fun way to not only find information about LD, but to organize and share your personal scrapbook of LD resources.

If you haven’t been on Pinterest yet, here’s a bird’s-eye view. Pinterest is a virtual “pinboard.” Think of it as a compilation of favorite magazine clippings, a photo album, and your kitchen bulletin board rolled into one digital space.

**GET ON BOARD**

Pinterest is easy to learn and use. Just follow these steps, and you’ll be pinning away in no time:

1. **Create an account:** You can sign up using either your Facebook or Twitter accounts, or your email.

2. **Learn the basics:** Pinterest has a great “Help” page that explains the basics you need to know—from an explanation of what a “pin” is to their privacy policy.

3. **Brush up on pinning etiquette:** Pinterest prides itself on being a respectful, authentic space. Learn more about the etiquette.

4. **Install the “Pin It” button:** This will make it a snap to pin finds while surfing the internet. Learn more on the “Goodies” page.

**READY, SET, PIN**

Many Pinterest parents combine their personal interests (décor, gardening) with interests related to their kids (school, crafts). Create boards about all the things you love—pretty soon you’ll have a virtual collage of who you are and what’s important to you.

For parents of children with learning disabilities and difficulties, this will likely include information about how your kids learn and play differently. Pinterest is a great vehicle for raising awareness about LD and communicating with other parents.

Create a pinboard for “Learning Difficulties,” “Parent Advocacy,” or boards for specific topics like “Dyslexia Remediation,” “Handwriting Help,” or “504 Facts.” Pinterest offers tons of info for parents and educators, from helping you understand the IEP and 504 processes, to new ideas for your child’s tutors. Pin these resources to create a collection for yourself, to share with others, or both.
Where can you find these resources? Here are three places to start:

**Search and “Re-Pin” by Topic**

Search for keywords on a topic—like IEP goals, dyslexia or special education—in the search box at the top left. Once you find a pin you like, click on it to access additional information, including who originally pinned it, the source of the content, and often a link taking you to the actual information, such as a blog post or a book listing on Amazon.

If you like what you see, you can re-pin it directly onto your own board by clicking “re-pin” and choosing which of your boards you want to pin it to. And if you like what a particular person is pinning, follow that person or choose to follow just their specific LD-related boards.

5. **Follow Organizations Pinning About LD**

Many organizations that provide info and advocate for children and adults with LD have Pinterest pages. Or, if they don’t have a page, there are likely lots of pins pointing directly back to these organizations’ resources. Here are a few of my favs:

- **NCLD:** NCLD’s Pinterest page features videos, e-books, apps, and personal stories. My favorite NCLD pinboard is “Hidden Thoughts of LD,” which “showcase[es] the artwork that tells what life is like for those with learning disabilities.”

- **Child Mind Institute:** This excellent organization works to remove stigma from learning disabilities and children’s mental health. They offer tons of info on Pinterest.

- **Imagination Soup:** This innovative resource on education and learning provides tips on their “Learning Differences” board include items like “worry cards” to reduce anxiety and info on how to talk to other parents about your child’s learning difference. Plus, Imagination Soup blogger and mom Melissa Taylor recently wrote a book titled *Pinterest Savvy* with tons of tips on how to increase your Pinterest prowess.

6. **Pass It On**

Let folks know what you’re discovering about LD on Pinterest. Invite your friends and family to view your boards and add a Pinterest icon to your email signature and/or personal blog. Share your pins on Facebook to point friends and family to LD resources they might find helpful, too.
OUT-OF-THE-BOX ADVOCACY

TALK LD WITH LETTERS AND EMAILS

By far the most effective advocacy tool for my two kids with disabilities is letter and email writing. True, I am a professional writer, but even if you’re not, putting pen to paper (or actually fingers to keyboard in my case) is something that you can do.

Letters and emails have two major pluses. They are free and personal!

It doesn’t cost anything but your time to write a thoughtful, persuasive email that comes from your heart. And, when you send it personally to key decision makers that have a say in your child’s education, it gives you a powerful and extremely effective voice that can create change.

WHAT A LETTER CAN DO

THE 4 BIG E’S

A letter sent via email can:

- **Establish** a direct communication channel outside of the confines of IEP and 504 meetings
- **Enhance** accountability between the people who have been exposed to details about your child’s unique educational needs
- **Ease** your ability to restate points made during IEP and 504 meetings
- **For example, our dyslexic child is entitled to intensive, individualized dyslexia services on her school campus given by a qualified teacher using evidence-based, age-appropriate dyslexia curriculum according to Texas law. Based on my knowledge and research, I am able to clearly outline how and why in my emails.**
Enable key decision makers the opportunity to access resources, links, videos, books, etc. that you provide them information about.

SET A GOAL

After many months of IEP and 504 meetings asking for our school to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for our daughter, I realized that our only next option was either legal action or something else drastic. That’s when I had to think outside the box. I decided to try a little old fashioned communication, the most efficient way I knew how. Email!

Why couldn’t I step out of the “confidential” school IEP meetings and discuss my daughter’s LD-related needs with the people who were making decisions about her education in my school district and beyond?

My goal was to start up a conversation directly with the people who were responsible for and involved with my daughter’s special education.

WHAT TO WRITE

MAKE IT Plain

What should your letter say? Exactly what you would like for decision makers in your school district and beyond to know about what you feel is missing from the conversation about your child’s needs.

For example, did you read a great online article last week that helped you understand your child’s LD? Send a link to your child’s campus team.

In your email, explain in a positive way why you found the article helpful, why you think it’s important to share it and what you hope will result from their new or increased knowledge.

Other things to share:

- Your child’s own story or video about what it means to have an LD
- Links to your favorite websites and online LD resources like LD.org
- YouTube videos about LD that you find helpful
- Your favorite LD Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest feeds

Be creative and innovative. Think about what you would want to tell decision makers about LD if you had just 5-10 minutes of their uninterrupted time.

WHO TO WRITE

ORDER PLEASE

Once you’ve written your letter, the order in which you extend your correspondence is important.

Start by reaching out to your child’s campus team and principal, including your IEP/504 committee. This is a best practice in terms of respecting your local educational entity, and making sure your principal is in the loop about your correspondence.

CARBON COPY

Then, decide who else you would like to be in touch with and add them to your email list or copy them on your next email to your campus team.

This might include your school board members, district administrators, your district’s federally-required district 504 personnel, the personnel in your school district in charge of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress or maybe even your local state representative or other community leader.
STEP IT UP

Another great resource on letter writing is the NCLD’s Action Alert Center.

The Action Alert Center allows parents to write letters to their public officials to support LD-friendly positions on important legislation.

Maybe consider polishing your letter writing skills with your campus, school district and community leaders first, then expand your advocacy by elevating your concerns to your state legislators, U.S. Representatives and Senators with well written letters, as well.

WRIGHT ON

Want to learn more? Wrightslaw.com is one of my favorite resources on letter writing for parent advocates of kids with LD and special needs.
difficulties. The “mommy” or parenting blogging world is well worth tapping into for parents of kids with learning disabilities and special needs. Blogs feature real parents, sharing real-life events in almost real time. You just can’t get much more real than that.

RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE
One of the very first places I found encouragement when I realized that I needed help supporting my kids with disabilities was blogs. I could read, reflect, and sometimes regret – all from the privacy of my own home but while still directly in tune with other parents.

And these parents weren’t just blogging about LD. I spent a lot of time on all sorts of blogs written by struggling parents—blogs about kids with disabilities much more severe than my children’s, or blogs about families facing childhood illnesses like cancer. All were bravely posting their stories of triumph and survival.

INSPIRE ME
The theme throughout these many parent blogs was that despite the difficult circumstances, kids were still just kids, families still loved unconditionally and, despite unexpected events, parents repeatedly rose to the occasion to support and advocate for their kids’ unique needs. What was uncharted territory for me were familiar paths to these bloggers.

Blogs made me realize that I wasn’t alone as I faced the unexpected and feel empowered that yes, I could have an effective voice when it came to talking about my kids’ needs. Blogs gave me this support in a way that parenting magazines and books simply did not provide.

As I read, I gained both true perspective and a deeply rooted desire to share my own story about what our family was facing, so I that I might encourage others, too.

WHAT A GREAT BLOG CAN DO FOR LD

MAX IMPACT
Ellen Seidman writes regularly about her son Max, who has cerebral palsy, on both her personal blog Love That Max and on Parents.com’s To the Max. While Max’s special needs may not be exactly the same as a child with a learning disability, in sharing openly about Max’s differences and unique strengths, Seidman opens up an entirely new type of conversation about kids with all sorts of disabilities.
1. **Read and follow blogs from organizations and parents dealing with LD and related issues.** Below are examples of a few blogs that I particularly enjoy.

   - **LD Insights Blog:** One of my favorite recent LD.org blog posts was on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by in-house “LD Expert” Dr. Sheldon Horowitz, titled “What is Your Dream for Children with LD?”

   - **Special Education and Disability Rights Blog:** This blog by two special education advocates, attorneys and COPAA leaders includes detailed info on IEP/504 processes and procedures.

   - **ADDitude Magazine:** This helpful site hosts a variety of ADHD Blogs, including ADHD Mom, ADHD Dad, ADHD at School, and many more.

   - **5 Minutes for Special Needs — Learning Disabilities Section**

2. **Start your own blog.** Blogs are not just for reading. They’re for writing too. And yes, I mean they’re for you to write! You may already have a family blog where you post photos of your kids, ventures in crafting, and your holiday ham. Have you thought about sharing about your experiences with dyslexia, ADHD, or other learning difficulties on your blog, as well?

   Starting your own blog (or adding your experiences with LD to your current blog) gives you a place to chronicle your thoughts, struggles, and triumphs as the parent of a child with LD. WordPress is one of many web platforms you can use to start your own website. Believe me, it’s much easier than it sounds. Also, a site for basic blogging is completely free. You can sign up here. Give it a shot—you’ve got nothing to lose!

3. **Contribute to other LD blogs:** Not WordPress savvy? Contributing to others’ blogs is a great way to use your voice and expand your efforts to increase awareness about learning differences.

   There are lots of blogs out there that love to post articles by parent contributors. One of my favorite is the Special Education Advisor. They feature tons of parent contributions, allowing parents from around the country to share their stories.
“Out-of-the-Box Advocacy” is all about finding ways to start conversations about LD in an effort to raise awareness, remove stigma, and encourage others to embrace your child for who they are, despite their disabilities. While starting a blog or tweeting about LD-related topics may seem difficult for some, sometimes the hardest part of advocacy for many parents is actually talking about the realities of LD within their very own communities.

THERE ARE NO WORDS
Why is it so hard to talk openly at school and in your community about the challenges your family is facing due to LD? Why do parents feel the need to keep their family’s struggles with LD to themselves, when we share so many other intimate details about our lives with friends and families?

In my experience, one of the most common reasons parents don’t talk about LD is because we don’t think other people will understand what we’re facing. Another is that we’re afraid others we confide in might “label” our kids without taking the time to learn about and understand their LD and how it affects their ability to perform and engage with friends and teachers at school.

How do parent advocates like us combat this? By doing our part to make sure that the people around us have the opportunity to talk and learn about LD.

IT ONLY TAKES ONE
Once you start talking about LD and the challenges your children are facing, you may be shocked by how quickly others will feel comfortable in approaching you about similar issues. While having those first few conversations may seem very scary and lonely, be patient. Once I was honest and open with my friends, I quickly learned that a number of them were actually dealing with the same issues with their own kids. It wasn’t until I took a risk and started the dialogue that we all felt free to talk about these topics openly.

And it didn’t stop there. Now, just about every time I’m on my children’s school grounds, at least one mom stops to talk to me about her own child, a recent 504 meeting, or to ask how things are going with my advocacy for my kids.

Once you start the conversation in your community, get ready to keep on having it. I promise you—there are many parents around you just waiting for the opportunity to talk about their kids with LD, too.
JOIN THE CLUB
Once I realized how many parents at my school and in my neighborhood were seeking support, quality resources, and understanding about their children’s rights, I decided to start a neighborhood support group. It wasn’t anything fancy. We met once a month over wine and dessert in someone’s home to talk about our kids, answer questions, and point each other to new books or resources we’d found.

The group was diverse—there were parents of children with dyslexia, Asperger’s, Down syndrome, dyscalculia, ADHD, dysgraphia, brain injury and genetic abnormalities. And the astounding part is that we all lived within a couple of miles from each other, and most of our kids attended the same public elementary school. Amazingly, though, most of us had never talked about these topics in depth prior to meeting as a group.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER
As part of our neighborhood group, we began going through the book *From Emotions to Advocacy* by Pete and Pam Wright. It’s a powerful resource for parents that helps them navigate special education and lays out the steps to embracing and empowering children with disabilities. The book encourages parents to form support groups, which is exactly what we did.

TAKE IT TO THE STREETS
Now that you’ve discovered the power of talking about LD in your community, take it to the next level. Find the local LD support or advocacy groups in your area and get involved! And don’t just join the group—make the most of your advocacy efforts. Volunteer regularly. Help recruit members. Take on a leadership role.

Here are ideas of how to get plugged into LD organizations in your area:

- **Learning Disabilities Association of America**— find your state chapters
- **International Dyslexia Association** – join your local branches
- **Decoding Dyslexia** – join your state chapter
- Look for LD parent groups meeting in your community center or library
- Many private schools that specialize in LD hold regular meetings that parents of children whom do not attend the school can attend. Also, many of these schools have outreach departments tasked with providing services to the community. Contact them.
- Your school district’s Council of PTAs or your local PTA’s special education committee
- Your school district’s own LD parent education program (some are state-mandated, like in Texas). See how you can get involved to help plan meetings, find speakers, and communicate about the group with parents in your district.

Can’t find a local group? Start one! You can do something that can help change the face of LD in your community.

SPEAK UP FOR KIDS WITH LD
One last way to spread the word about LD and other mental health issues is to volunteer to host a “Speak Up for Kids” event in your area. These annual talks sponsored by the **Child Mind Institute** focus on raising awareness and removing stigma from mental health issues like ADHD, learning disabilities and autism in your community.
The Good Fight
For many parents of kids with disabilities, their child’s school is actually the hardest place to be an effective advocate. For me, it’s difficult to practice what I preach when I’m dealing with the people on my daughter’s campus team, be it her IEP/504 committees, her principle, or her classroom teacher.

I can tell you exactly why that is. Your child’s campus is where IEP meetings occur, and IEP meetings are where parents are often forced to put on their parent advocate hat for the very first time. Many a parent has IEP-meeting war stories to tell. And, let’s be honest—many of these stories are not pretty. I often say that the people who have seen me at my most vulnerable and uncensored are my husband, my OB/GYN, and my children’s IEP teams.

Turn It Around
It makes sense why parents like me (and maybe you) who have had to fight the good fight in the IEP setting might have a difficult time taking up that same fight in a positive, collaborative way when it comes to encouraging your school campus to accept and embrace kids with LD. But, if you can just manage to re-focus your negative feelings into positive, upbeat efforts to raise LD awareness and remove stigma, it will be well worth the effort.

Focus on Diversity in Your Child’s Classroom
The first place to start when advocating on your child’s campus is right in his or her classroom. In one of the first articles I ever wrote about parent advocacy, I described how I read a book to my daughter’s 1st grade class about what it’s like to be different. The book, titled Just Because, shares the story of a sister’s love for her sibling with a disability. After reading the book, I led my little girl’s classmates in one of the most touching discussions I’ve ever had about diversity and acceptance. Right out of the mouths of babes.

To this day, one of the children in my daughter’s classroom (a child whom I can see also feels different) runs over to hug me every time I see her on campus. We bonded that day—because I could see it in her eyes while I was reading, “Thank you for helping my friends understand that it’s OK to be different.”

Talk LD at Your Child’s School
Once you get started tweeting, writing emails, or talking to your friends and neighbors about LD, it gets easier and easier to make LD part of your day-to-day interactions and online conversations. As long as you’re sporting your advocate hat, let’s keep going by focusing on how to advocate for change on your child’s own school campus.
Other ideas:

- Ask your child’s teacher if you can do a craft with a diversity theme on your next volunteer day
- Suggest a field trip to a nursing home or other location where you will encounter people that seem different in some way
- Suggest a writing topic (for older kids) that focuses on diversity

Heck, I even made up a song once about being different and showed up at my son’s classroom with my guitar to sing it. (The kids loved it and didn’t care one bit that I messed up the chords!)

Make sure to end the event with a short chat about acceptance. You may be surprised how quickly you see a difference in the way your child with a disability is treated at school. A mere glimpse at how it feels to be the odd kid out really does go a long way in helping children put themselves in another’s shoes.

START A CAMPUS CAMPAIGN

What do you want to see regarding LD on your child’s campus? More information for parents about LD on bulletin boards, in e-newsletters, or on your school’s website? Maybe a quarterly parent education meeting about PTA/PTO-sponsored LD services at your school? Or how about a “No Bullying Day” or a campus- or district-wide “Dyslexia Awareness Day”?

So…make it happen! The best way to go about it is to talk directly to your child’s principle to see what your options are. Ask her to partner with you and other parents gather some parents first and then provide clear, concise information about what you want to accomplish, such as:

- flyers and emails sent out to parents on your campus announcing the day
- a short teacher training focus for that week on the LD-related topic
- an announcement made by a student with LD willing to share their story with the campus

Work with your principal to make your vision a reality. If you don’t get a positive response at first, be politely persistent until you gain the approval you are seeking.

THE TELLING TREE

I was watching an HBO documentary the other day called I Have Tourette’s, But Tourette’s Doesn’t Have Me. Part of the film focuses on a 10-year-old boy with Tourette Syndrome who’s made it his mission to tell his entire school about his difference so that they can understand his condition and what it feels like to be misunderstood.

He calls it his “Telling Tree” philosophy: if he tells one person about Tourette Syndrome, then that person might tell one or even four or eight people about it. From there, the effect is exponential and stigma-bashing—all because one person spoke out and took the time to educate others.

Now, that’s a powerful message—straight from the mouth of a child struggling to fit in while feeling undeniably different.

If a young child with a visible disability that puts him at risk for bullying and other forms of discrimination can speak up about the need to embrace diversity, then I believe that we as parent advocates can put aside the discomfort we may be feeling and work for change on our child’s campus.

Before you know it, your own “Telling Tree” will be one million strong.
Lyn Pollard is a freelance writer, parent advocate, and the mother of two kids who learn and play differently. A former journalist and change management consultant, Lyn writes, talks and tweets (@DiffyDoodles) about advocacy, literacy and safe schools for kids with learning disabilities and special needs.