

## Iowa State Representative Tells Her Son's Success Story

*Vicki Lensing, Reading Recovery Parent, Iowa State Representative*

I first learned of Reading Recovery in 1992 when Nick, my youngest son, entered first grade. His teacher approached me about a new program that might help his reading skills.

She tried to explain what Reading Recovery was and how it would help Nick, and she suggested I visit with the Reading Recovery teacher for more information. I tried to understand how this would be helpful for him while at the same time feeling guilty that Nick's skills were so far behind. His father and I reflected, wondering whether what we had done or not done figured into his not being able to read as well as his siblings could at that age or as his classmates could now.

We came to the conclusion that for whatever reason, Nick needed help to bring his skills up to the level necessary for him to be successful as a student. We visited with the Reading Recovery teacher, and she shared that



*Nick Lensing, first grade.*

while this was a new program, it had good success rates.

As parents, we were hoping to talk to other parents whose children had gone through Reading Recovery and hear their comments, that this was the right thing to do and receive some reassurance that Nick would not be stigmatized by being in Reading Recovery, but because the program was so new, he was among the first students to go through it. Even his classroom teacher didn't know a lot about it. I remembered from my childhood the children in my class who had to go to special reading and how everyone knew they needed help.

Parental remorse kicked in again: Nick had just gotten glasses which was fairly traumatic, and now we were placing him in a special program. But the Reading Recovery teacher kept reassuring us that this would be very beneficial for Nick and that we would be able to participate and see the progress he made. So Nick began Reading Recovery. And we saw him learn and grow—and read.

Today, Nick is a freshman in college. He is a good student, and I attribute his success in high school and college to Reading Recovery. Had he not gotten the strong foundation in his reading skills in first grade, he would not have been able to achieve the skills and confidence necessary to continue in his academic or his personal life.

This personal experience with Reading Recovery has made me a strong advocate, especially in my current role as a state legislator. I support



*Nick Lensing, high school graduate.*

this program and its growth statewide. Facing the challenges of budget cuts and funding issues makes it difficult for programs like Reading Recovery, but if children do not get a solid foundation in reading early on, they will continue to struggle throughout school and later life.

As a legislator, I get the opportunity to go back to schools and visit Reading Recovery sessions. I get to watch children read and excel. I see their pride and confidence. It is imperative that children continue to have the opportunity to participate in Reading Recovery. It made the difference for my son, and I know how powerful that can be. I am proud to know that he is a Reading Recovery graduate.