

## SUCCESS STORY:

9-YEAR-OLD SID & HIS MOM,  
AMY DIX, PH.D., PA-C



This has changed our life. We have done all the things with occupational therapy, with counseling, with Barton intervention for reading, for dyslexia, for having an IEP at school ... We've done about everything I could possibly imagine. And really, had I found large print sooner, I think we would have had maybe fewer challenges.



# A Vision for Success: Large Print Leads to Reading Breakthroughs

How One Mom Found a Simple Solution for Her Son  
with a Common Reading Disorder



## BACKGROUND

Amy Dix knew early on that her son struggled with reading. In addition to being affected by widespread declines in reading proficiency from the COVID-19 pandemic, Sid was predisposed to ADHD and showed signs of a visual processing disorder. As a mother, a researcher with a Ph.D. in health sciences, and a neurology physician assistant (PA) who worked with patients living with visual disruptions, changes, and loss, Amy watched her son closely to see if

speech and language interventions were needed. When she realized Sid had a reading problem, she searched relentlessly for a solution to help him overcome his challenges. Her extensive journey for support led to a simple solution: large print books.

## A LONG ROAD TO THE RIGHT RESOURCES

From occupational therapy to vision testing to a 504 plan, Sid and his family tried everything recommended to overcome his barriers to reading. During their journey, Sid was diagnosed with saccadic eye movement disorder, a visual processing disorder that causes rapid, jerky eye movements (saccades) challenging his ability to shift his gaze from one point of focus to the next. This condition leads to issues with reading fluency, comprehension, and academic performance. However, even with this diagnosis, Amy still didn't have a solution to support her son.

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We are still working on visual tracking... but in the interim, having large print is allowing him to decode and to build up stamina and all the things that he wasn't able to do before by just changing one thing.

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One key change made a world of difference. When Laura Kelly, the governor of Kansas, signed a **bill expanding dyslexia resources**, Sid was able to connect with a vision therapist through his elementary school. This therapist said Sid was a candidate for an IEP (Individualized Education Program) and recommended he try large print books.

With a plan in mind, Amy still had more hurdles to test this new reading intervention: the Johnson County Library system in Kansas had only 236 large print books for youth readers. To expand Sid's reading options, Amy was able to access an extensive large print collection through a library in Dallas, Texas, with the help of her son's vision therapist.



Sid Dix reading the large print edition of *The Wild Robot Protects* by Peter Brown. Image Source: Amy Dix

## MAKING BREAKTHROUGHS WITH LARGE PRINT

When Sid showed interest in reading *The Wild Robot*, Amy decided to try it in large print. She was impressed by an immediate change in his approach to reading. “For the first time, my son read because he wanted to,” she said. “He read more than I asked him to.”

Sid quickly moved on from *The Wild Robot* series (three books he was excited to read) to *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, a book at the highest reading level in his class, with a Lexile level of 1,000. Even though Sid was classified in the 43rd percentile for reading, he was able to read a large print version of *Island of the Blue Dolphins* with the more advanced readers in his class. He was also actively participating in class discussions and answering questions.

According to Amy, large print has transformed her son's reading habits. Whereas before he had disdain for books, he can now read for 20 to 30 minutes at a time. When she asked Sid why he enjoys reading large print, he said, “I really like the large print book because you could really see the words ... you didn't always just get lost, and you didn't have to use a tracker.”

Discovering large print hasn't just helped Sid with reading, it's also helped him improve in other subjects. Sid was already fairly gifted in math, but when Amy and his teachers enlarged the text size of his math homework, they noticed his scores improved from an average of 90% to 100%.

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My mission at this point is to make sure everyone knows—whether they're behind in school or ahead in school—the benefits of large print as it comes to getting kids to enjoy reading but also helping them with retention and comprehension.

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## A MOM WITH A MISSION: SPREADING LARGE PRINT LOVE

After seeing large print transform her son's outlook on reading, Amy is determined to help other parents find this simple solution to overcome their children's literacy struggles. She stressed that even with her extensive background in studying visual disorders, working as a neurology PA, and consulting with multiple family members and friends who are educators and administrators, she and her family didn't discover large print as an answer to her son's reading challenges on their own.

Amy hopes to save other parents from going through the same frustrating journey by spreading the word about large print as a straightforward, effective literacy intervention and prescriptive learning accommodation.

According to Amy, large print can play a key role now, more than ever, in youth literacy. “17 states, including mine, may have a very sad reality next year when we don't have IEPs any longer for our children.” As students lose this individualized support, teachers and parents will still need solutions to overcome each student's unique learning barriers. Amy believes large print can help fill these gaps for many students who struggle with reading—all that's missing is the awareness for teachers, librarians, parents, and even healthcare providers to know that large print can make a difference.

“I'm committed to finding a way to help bridge the gap between the healthcare community and the educational community,” Amy says. “The pediatrician is the primary point guard for most of these children's care with ADHD, autism, visual disorders, etc., and they notice and refer them to the eye specialist. They just need to have a tool in their toolbox and to write a prescription for large print.”

## EXPLORE THE DATA BEHIND LARGE PRINT

Large print is proven to help improve student reading skills and mindsets about reading, and the format's benefits aren't limited to a small subset of readers. In the latest nationwide efficacy study, large print positively impacted below-grade-level readers, at-grade-level readers, students diagnosed with ADHD, and English language learners.

According to over 80% of teachers, below-grade-level students who read large print demonstrated greater confidence in their reading abilities, better retention, and longer sustained reading periods without distraction. For students diagnosed with ADHD, over half of teachers reported that large print books helped improve reading comprehension and decreased anxiety about reading.

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If you can get a student reading, you can get their endurance up, you can get their eyes tracking—it's going to make all the difference in the world. It's going to take my son longer to map those words because of his eye disorder, but he will map them.



## TEACHERS SAW NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENTS WHEN STUDENTS READ LARGE PRINT

### Below-Grade-Level Readers

**87%**

saw greater student confidence in their reading abilities

**84%**

said students read for longer without distraction

**84%**

reported better retention

### Students Diagnosed with ADHD

**61%**

said students read for longer without distraction

**58%**

noticed decreased student anxiety about reading

**55%**

reported increased comprehension

Teachers weren't the only ones who saw value in the large print format. Just under 90% of students in grades 6–12 said they enjoyed reading the large print book, compared to the initial 51% who said they did not like school reading.

Large print is a simple yet effective literacy solution. Key features like 16-point font, high-contrast black ink, increased spacing, and fewer words per page help students turn pages faster and stay engaged while reading. By making one small change—swapping the format of a book a student is already expected to read—parents, teachers, and librarians can make a world of difference for developing readers.

Want to learn more about how large print impacts youth literacy? See the research at [gale.com/thorndike/ylp-research](https://gale.com/thorndike/ylp-research).

Ready to expand your library or school's youth large print collection? Connect with your Thorndike Press rep at [gale.com/thorndike/rep](https://gale.com/thorndike/rep).

