

Change Is Possible

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Austin was a fifth grade student who was diagnosed with autism. Due to his diagnosis and the need for special education services, he attended his local public school rather than the Catholic school where his mother taught and siblings attended.

In the spring of his fourth grade year, Austin took the fourth grade LEAP, a required standardized test for grade promotion. Unfortunately for Austin, he failed it. Even though he attended summer school and took the LEAP test at the end of the summer, he failed it again. This second LEAP failure resulted in Austin being retained in fourth grade. Austin was devastated that he had to repeat the fourth grade. His Mom, therefore, switched him to the Catholic school where she taught, where his siblings attended, and where I provided speech therapy services.

When Austin started speech therapy with me, he was a shy child, unable to complete his thoughts, spoke in the tiniest whisper, and appeared to live in his own little world.

The standardized test that I gave Austin at that time revealed the following scores:

Listening	59	Organizing	73
Speaking	59	Grammar	54
Semantics	67	Spoken Language	56

A 77 and below is needed to qualify for speech therapy services in the school system. Austin's scores were significantly below this level.

As I began to work with Austin, it was apparent that he could easily become over-focused on certain things and could not move beyond it. For example, if he made a bad grade on a test, he wanted to stay angry for a few weeks until something else came along to distract him. Once I began the MNRI® protocol from the *Children With Challenges Class* with him, Austin's frustration soon changed to relaxation and peace. His classroom aide saw significant changes after our speech therapy sessions; he was always calmer and his thinking processes seemed clearer. Things began to change quickly as Austin's inability to find words changed, and he could actually participate in conversation. It did not take long before he was able to socialize and blend in with other students because he finally had the ability to communicate.

As his reflexes began to integrate, he giggled all of the time. After 1-2 months of receiving MNRI®, Austin's giggles turned into reflections that upset him. The trauma of failing the LEAP surfaced and Austin's perception of this event led him to believe that his old school was a monster that had kept him from coming to the school where his family (mother and siblings) was. I began to incorporate Dr. Masgutova's 'Good Day' and 'Bad



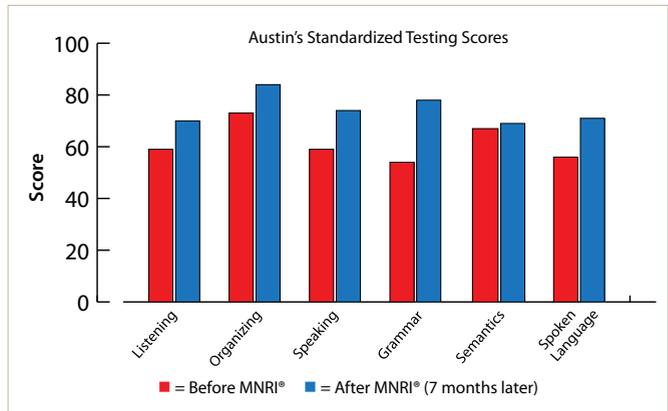
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Day' drawings in between our reflex work during therapy session. The following is a brief summary of Austin's drawing:

Austin's 'Bad Day' drawing was his old school (the public school where he failed the LEAP). It was drawn as a monster that kept him from attending his new Catholic school where his mother and siblings attended. Austin drew himself as a stick figure saying that he did not want to go back and leave his family. His 'Good Day' drawing showed his new school saying that he could stay with his family. Austin drew himself as a stick figure saying that he was happy at his new school with his family. It was encouraging to see Austin then change his 'Bad Day' to his 'Good Day,' by turning the old school, that was drawn as a monster, into his new school, which was the Catholic school where his mother and siblings attended. He changed his statement of wanting to be with his family (a frustration of his at the public school) to a statement that he was happy to be with his family at his new school. This allowed him to come into the present and realize that he was safe and happy.

Austin soon came to the realization that he had autism and one day truly mourned at home with his parents. His mother told me that she had never seen him cry like that before. She stated that he was always in his own world. He was never told nor did he realize that he had autism. Autism was never mentioned in our sessions. His mother figured that something 'clicked' allowing him to remember conversations in the past that she had with him about receiving help at his other school because of his autism. As soon as Austin started therapy with me, we began the 'Good Day/Bad Day' drawings again with the MNRI® reflex work. Here is a brief summary of his 'Good Day/Bad Day' drawings:

His 'Bad Day' drawing revealed the word 'autism' and he stated that it was in his brain and he wanted it out of his brain. His 'Good Day' drawing revealed the word 'a-u-t-i-s-m' written with little dashes between each letter because he wanted autism to break up in his brain. With astonishment, I watched him change his 'Bad Day' drawing into his 'Good Day' drawing by drawing a ghost that was eating his autism and breaking it up in the 'Bad Day' drawing. He was now smiling and ready to continue moving forward. Several months later, he states, "Mrs. Lisa, I sure don't get upset about autism anymore or my old school either."



Seven months later, a reassessment revealed the following scores:

Listening	70	Organizing	84
Speaking	74	Grammar	78
Semantics	69	Spoken Language	71

The graph at right shows the progress. In the 13 years that I have been a speech language pathologist, I have never seen changes to this extent with a child with autism, especially within a 7 month period. Scores can change by 15 points in 7 months, especially with MNRI®!

Austin continues to do well as he and his family embrace the MNRI® journey. I cannot wait to see where he is a year from now. This work is such a blessing and a true journey that accomplishes what once was thought to be the impossible. It restores hope again as the saying, "Change is possible" becomes a much appreciated reality!



I would like to thank Austin and his family for joining the MNRI® journey and trusting in the MNRI® process. It has and continues to be an honor and privilege to work with Austin! He is a great teacher and student! Here is to the rest of the journey ... where the impossible becomes possible and dreams come true! – Lisa Ortego