



Carmel Family Regains Hope with the Indiana Education Scholarship Account (INESA)

Will used to hide when it was time to go to school, and his sister Becca experienced school anxiety, too. Now, with INESA, both are flourishing in different school environments with new friends and bright futures.

INESA Students: Will and Becca Herrmann Location: Carmel, IN

Will is on the autism spectrum and has severe dyslexia, while Becca has vision challenges stemming from an underlying neurological issue. Will was perpetually “behind,” and both suffered from anxiety in school systems that weren’t set up to meet their needs.



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-Lindsey Herrmann, mother of INESA students, Will and Becca Herrmann

“I think I broke a record,” says Lindsey Herrmann of the five-hour IEP meeting for her son, Will, who is on the autism spectrum and has severe dyslexia. “It was during COVID, we were all masked, and they needed the room for something else. They wanted to just shut the meeting down, and I said, ‘No. I don’t care if we have to sit in a hallway, we’re gonna finish this.’”

Nathan and Lindsey Herrmann had been involved in monthly IEP meetings, trying to come to an agreement on how Will was going to learn. His teacher that year was particularly negative, hyper-focused on grades, and unable to see or comment on

Will’s strengths. It had gotten so bad that he hid when it was time to go to school.

“It was detrimental to our entire family, to our mental health all the way around. That day was our breaking point,” says Lindsey of the IEP meeting. “We decided right then and there that he needed to move, and it was a good choice.”

The Herrmanns had already been considering a private school for Will’s middle school years, but they withdrew him from public school in the middle of fifth-grade. They enrolled him in Midwest Academy, a school in Carmel, focused on students with learning differences.

From Bullies to Buddies: A Boost in Confidence

“It was a night and day difference,” Lindsey remembers. “The school was much smaller. There were fewer kids and a lot more personalized attention. And the teachers worked exclusively with kids with learning differences, so they knew how to handle situations, how to be positive with them, and help them learn to their best abilities.”

Will experienced a boost in confidence as a result of his new learning environment and some new buddies.

“Since he’s on the autism spectrum, he’s got a certain quirkiness to him. In the public school, there was some bullying, some ridiculing. I know the school works hard to prevent it, but it still happens, especially when your kid is different,” says Lindsey. “So just having people that he could associate with and who accepted him was a big deal.”

Will is very social and likes to talk, act, and sing. Midwest Academy’s choir and drama programs have been the perfect outlet for him to develop his talents. Lindsey shares that he’s quite good and has even had some lead roles.

Finding INESA: A No-Brainer

The Herrmanns were happy and relieved that Will was flourishing in his new school, but the cost of private education was daunting. When Lindsey happened upon an article about the Indiana Education Scholarship Account (INESA) in *Indy Special Needs Living Magazine* (now *Uniquely You*), she was intrigued and scoured the INESA website to find out more.

“Well, this is a no-brainer,” she thought. He was already in a private school, he already had an IEP, and they met the income requirements. They applied and soon were able to use INESA funding to secure specialized tutoring for Will, something they hadn’t been able to work out in the public school.

“He was pulled out constantly for interventions and was missing instructional time,” explains Lindsey. “And they were only offering 30 minutes of resource assistance once a week during science class. It was a vicious cycle and he wasn’t getting anywhere. It just wasn’t worth it.”

With INESA funding, Will was able to get two hours a week of after school tutoring with the Barton Reading and Spelling

program, which is specific to dyslexia, and so much more beneficial to him.

Bringing on Becca

Meanwhile, the Herrmann’s daughter, Becca, was experiencing her own challenges in school due to a vision issue that significantly impacts her peripheral vision and depth perception and causes double vision. They decided to enroll Becca in INESA and place her in Midwest Academy also. They reasoned that an easier academic year would allow them to really focus on the vision therapy she needed, funded by INESA.

“The public school had worked to accommodate her by enlarging the print and giving her audio and extra help,” says Lindsey, “but the vision therapy gave us the tools to actually improve the functional vision that she does have.”

After a year at Midwest Academy and focused vision therapy, they transferred Becca to Mission Christian Academy in Fishers, which offers a general education setting, a more typical peer group, and more book-based learning (a crucial element since computer screens contribute to more eye fatigue and headaches for Becca).

“With a few accommodations in place, she’s succeeding, and that’s something that I don’t know she could have done a year ago,” reports Lindsey.

Becca also uses INESA funding for Tae Kwon Do, which helps with her overall body awareness and proprioception (the body’s ability to sense movement and location). It has also helped grow her self-confidence.

Facing the Future with Hope

With both kids nestled into nurturing learning environments and excelling in extracurriculars, Lindsey is hopeful.

Will’s reading has improved drastically. He’s gone from reading at a third-grade level in the seventh grade, to functional

reading with ease in the 9th grade, and continuing to progress. He’s not yet decided on a career, but has always been interested in how things work – car washes, roller coasters, street sweepers, water slides, and more. Lindsey foresees him being fulfilled in an operations role.

Becca holds firm that she wants to be a special ed teacher. She has seen the impact and has a heart for kids with special needs.

“I feel a lot more positive now than I did a couple of years ago,” Lindsey says. “They’re happier and they’re both getting what they need. They’re making positive strides towards future endeavors and adulthood. I see real future potential now.”

Lindsey’s Tips for INESA Parents:

- 1 Apply early.**
The program has grown, more people are aware of it, and now there is a waiting list.
- 2 Be Prepared.**
You will need to put in time and effort as a parent to sort through the long list of providers and find the best ones for your child.
- 3 Continue to be an advocate.**
Work with INESA to find providers. If there’s something out there that your child needs, that isn’t on the list yet, go after it.