

# Brynn

## 4th grade student Brynn Hart excelling at Floodwood School

BY JOHN GRONES • *Publisher*

Brynn Hart is a pretty amazing little girl. The 4th grade student has a disease called Lebers Congenital Amaurosis (LCA) and has been blind since birth. That hasn't stopped this girl from excelling in and out of school.

Not only is Brynn above grade level in reading, but she is on par with her peers in math as well. The family is very happy with the team that has been put in place at Floodwood School.

"I love the team she has at school," said Brynn's mother Marsha. "All of our IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings have gone smoothly and all our requests have been met."

Marsha noted that this was a transitional year. "Brynn's long-time teacher for the blind and visually impaired, Gayle Rozell moved on and was replaced by Kathleen Fischer," said Marsha. "Her Orientation and Mobility instructor, Nancy Northard, is new too."

Kathleen works with Brynn on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings in the 4th grade classroom at Floodwood School. "I feel so lucky that I was given this opportunity to work with Brynn," said Kathleen this past Tuesday. "She is such a neat kid and this is a great place to work."

Joyce Holmes, Brynn's teacher and Kathleen both agreed that Brynn is at grade level or above in all areas of learning. The one challenge the team will face in the coming years will be when to back off and allow Brynn her independence. "She is really headed in that direction," shared Kathleen. "She already travels around the classroom and the school on her own. Nancy Northard works on her mobility and there are several watchful eyes providing assistance when needed."

Marsha is quite adamant that Brynn work towards independence. "It has been my wish that she not have a one-on-one para working with her at the school," she noted. "We want her to do most things on her own. She doesn't always need assistance."

There is only one specific instance that Marsha expects assistance—the fire drill plan.

The year has gotten off to a great start. Brynn loves her team as well. "I appreciate how much the school does to help me keep up with the class," said Brynn. "If I didn't have all my braille books, and maps, and clocks, and rulers and everything I needed, I wouldn't be doing anything in school. I would just be sitting there listening the whole day."

Everyone has a role in Brynn's day. Pam Rahja is the paraprofessional who prepares Brynn's braille list every day. "Pam has a whole box of tactile stuff for science and for social studies," added Brynn.

Kathleen agreed that Pam and Joyce work really well together preparing Brynn for success. "There is so much that goes into that," explained Kathleen. "Pam prepares her tactile graphics if she needs to feel something. You really have to be creative in that position and she needs to have them in real time when the other kids have them. It is always ready for them."

In addition to all the creative pieces prepared by Pam there are several devices that have made Brynn's learning possible. Kathleen explained some of the wonderful technology that is out there.

The first is the Brailiant: Refreshable Braille Device. Using this device connected to a computer or tablet, Brynn can read books downloaded onto the tablet, compose and receive emails, compose in Google Doc or other writing apps, search the internet and open and use various apps on the tablet. The refreshable braille device contains keys to compose in braille and has a braille display for braille reading. She is able to use the refreshable braille display to read whatever is on the screen of the tablet or computer.

She also uses Voiceover and Siri on an iPad, as well as several apps for individuals who are blind/visually impaired, that can be used on an



### MATH WINDOW:

Brynn is using a Math Window to perform a math problem. The Math Window is a magnetic board that contains magnetic braille numbers 0-9 and also various mathematic symbols.

**LEFT:** Brynn is using an adapted protractor and a Draftsman Tactile Drawing Board to create parallel and perpendicular lines along with acute, obtuse and right angles. The drawing board with special paper creates raised lines. Brynn also uses tactile arrow stickers to place on the end of her raised lines.

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