

ChromaGen lenses help some reading disorders

By [Liz DeCarlo](#)

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Stephanie Natalie of Mokena was skeptical when her son's eye doctor told her there was a new kind of glasses that might help with Steven's reading problems.

"But I thought, 'Why not give it a shot?'" she says.

Steven, 9, had struggled with reading since kindergarten and received special help at school. Anything that might help was worth exploring.

Dr. Jennifer Johnson, an optometrist in Mokena, Crestwood and Manhattan, had just been certified to treat patients using ChromaGen lenses, which can help correct color blindness and some reading problems. Johnson thought Steven's type of reading issues might be something the lenses could correct.

"A lot of these kids will notice that words move on them," she says. "They look like they're popping out of the page."

Johnson asked Steven to read a paragraph of simple words in different fonts and sizes.

"She timed him for a minute and asked him to read it. He was all over the place. He skipped words and rows," Stephanie remembers.

Then Johnson began working with the 16 different colored lenses that are inserted into a frame. The filtered ChromaGen lenses work by re-synchronizing and selectively changing the wavelength of light entering the eyes, which is the cause of many of the symptoms associated with dyslexia and color blindness.

"We go through all 16 colors starting with one eye, and the patient will look at a page of nonsense words and we ask them which one makes the pages look better," Johnson says. "They will do it for each eye and will have a different color in each eye." The entire process takes about 30 minutes, and Johnson and her patients can see the results immediately.

"She asked him to read the exact same paragraph, and in one minute he read seven rows without missing anything," Stephanie says. "He said, 'Wow, Mommy, that was so much easier because nothing was moving.' I was like, 'Oh my God, was it that simple?'"

Johnson says it's not so simple for everyone—only about 50 percent of children with reading problems can be helped with the lenses. And the glasses or contacts cost \$700-\$900, which isn't covered by insurance.

But for Steven, the glasses have made a huge difference in the four weeks he's been wearing them.

"He came home last week from school and said in the regular class with 30 kids (he is usually in a special classroom for reading), he raised his hand to read," Stephanie says. "I was so proud of him. He realizes the difference and it's giving him confidence, which is half the battle."

The colored lenses look like transition sunglasses and are offered through certified optometrists. To find a list of doctors in Illinois, visit ireadbetternow.com

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