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FIE saved Anton from giving up on his education

Casuistry of Anton

Born October 2002

He has a twin brother with no signs of special needs

The family, both parents and their families are native Czech, moved after first year of age of boys to Belgium where they lived for 5 years and where boys attended a preschool. In the summer 2009 they returned to Czech Republic and wanted boys to start regular school in Czech republic.

Anton was at that moment of his development, more or less caused by meeting different demands of Belgium and Czech social and school system marked by teachers and later also by psychologists as „with difficulties“. These difficulties were observed by teachers in language and its use, understanding, speaking, expression of himself and also in drawing and other fine motor skills. Despite the troubles the psychologist at that time marked him as intellectually and socially mature to start primary education. More on that – he was going to be seven just two months after beginning the school year. He was physically mature in comparison with other children.

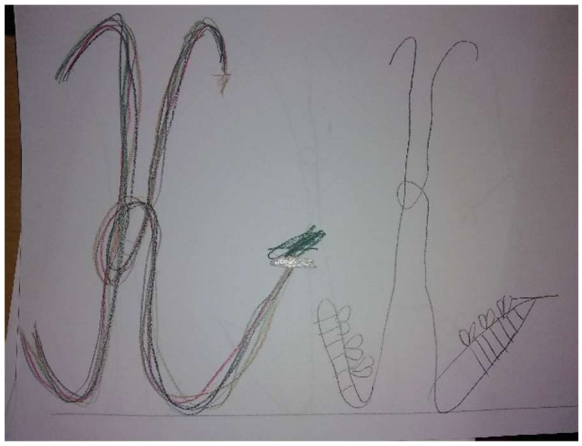
At the end of the second grade, he was examined by pedagogical-psychological facility with the results that despite his physical maturity there are conspicuously immature language and writing and reproduction of what was read. The only conclusion was he COULD be dysphatic, the school should treat him as dysortographic child and they should be aware of more problematic understanding of verbal instructions, difficulties in speaking and expression of his thoughts. The only recommendation was to learn with visual help.

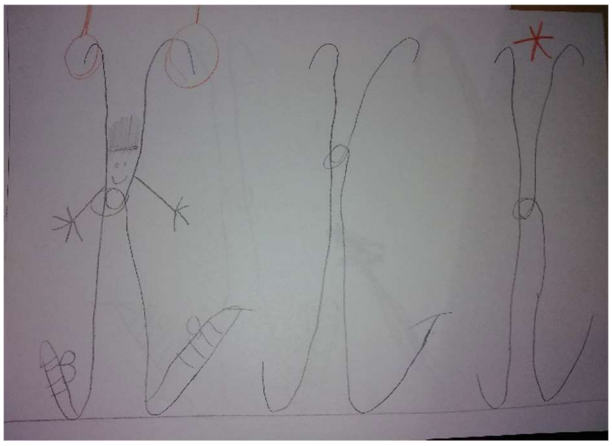
Parents referred big disappointments with all this process and mainly absence of functional recommendations which they wanted and were asking the most.

At this point they found organization DYS-centrum® Praha which specializes on children with special educational needs, mainly on learning difficulties. Anton was attending 3rd grade when we met. He was quite shy, quiet kid who had obvious troubles in verbal expressions. I am mentioning verbal expression at this point on purpose. From the very first time he impressed me by his complex drawings with many movements inside of them. We started to work on two levels – graphomotor skills and auditory

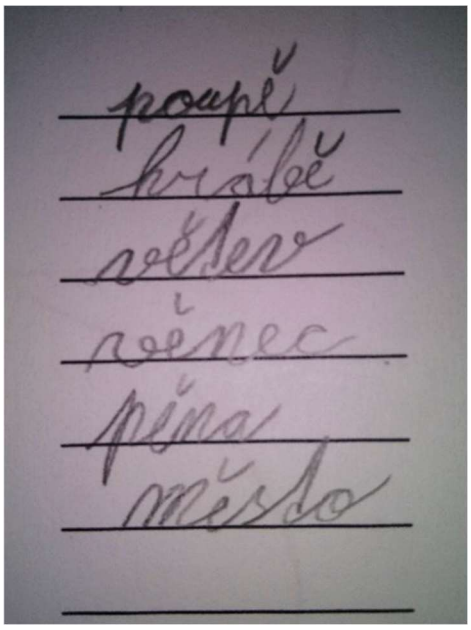
perception. Despite his love to draw, his writing and all his school notebooks where heavy-handed, he was tired very quickly when I asked him to write. He wasn't sure by shapes of the letters, he didn't know or wasn't sure how to link the letters together. More on this, he wasn't sure about presence and order of the vowels in the word when the word was longer than two syllables. We started to work on improving auditory perception, building vocabulary, understanding instructions and words generally and on improving his motor skills.

After 6 months of weekly lessons he started to be more aware of spellings and even letters and his handwriting looked more confident. So, after the summer holiday, from the 4th grade we decided to work with FIE instrument Organization of Dots. From the very first moment, Anton was feeling good about the type (modality) of exercises. We learned a lot about precision, we were building a vocabulary, we were bridging all the exercises and pages to demands on his school work, we were creating various learning strategies. When I saw his creative understanding of world and very beautiful pictures and drawings, I tried to support this amazing part of him. We focused a lot on how to switch to pictorial modality every single exercise and job which he should solve (whether it was for school or everyday life).

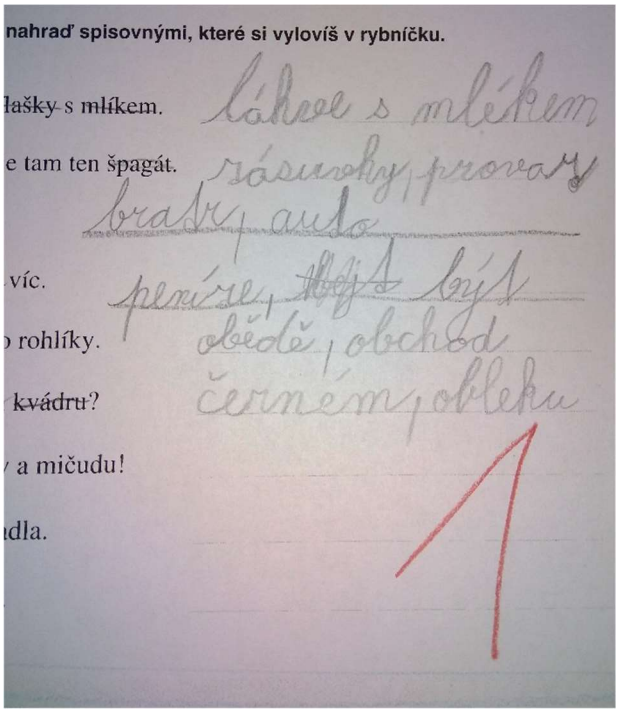




An example of his creativity. From almost everything he is able to do some figure. We were training the shape of the great writing letter K.



Here can be seen his heavy-hand writing of letters. It was very demanding to be precise.



After one year, handwriting is easier, more automatical. The letters are still quite big but hand is lighter and the shapes are more automatic. This is an example of work where A. should find a mistakes in sentences (which is a very complex task, not easy one) and was asked to write the mistaken words in the correct version next to the sentence. It was and individual work.

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This picture is an example of our work – building a vocabulary and learning the correct shapes of the letters. You can see a dragon, a house ("dům" in Czech), a door, the bird with concrete name in Czech beginning on "d" and the dad whose name also begins on "D".

At the end of 4th grade, family were supposed to move back to Belgium for another 4 years period (as father of the family works as a lawyer in diplomatic corps) so they asked for LPAD assessment with the goal of to get for Anton as precise and various recommendations as possible. After our whole year work the family understood the positivity of Feuerstein's vision. Very often they mentioned how A. is happy about making exercises, to do his school job which was an opposite attitude from the time before we'd met. They also saw his brother who was not on any training of his cognitive strategies and it happened many times that A. did his homework more easily and quickly than his brother.

In this place I need to appreciate the mindset of Anton's parents. Despite obvious troubles in the school Anton always felt the support from them and never heard anything about him not being clever, bright or smart. They always told him that there is some part of his duties in which he may be not as good as different children, but on the other hand there is always something in which he is doing marvellous. In his case it is drawings and pictorial understanding of the world.

The LPAD showed and validated my conclusion from the weekly observations that the pictorial modality is crucial. LPAD also showed and validated Anton's developed cognitive functions – looking for logical evidence, availability of various learning strategies and hypothesis testing. He easily worked with pictorial, graphical or numerical modality, verbal modality was quite problematic. It was shown that Anton even when he did not understand the exercise and did not solve it on the first try, he was able to

understand, to learn what was mediated to him and when he got a chance to repeat it, he became more confident and he understood more after repeating. He was then able to use newly retrieved knowledge or ability of thinking. He was able to keep and use the vocabulary learned during the assessment, even in different life situations.

After the 4th grade, in the year 2013, Anton's family moved to Belgium, where they live till nowadays. We made some sort of special bond. Anton and his father were sending me a Christmas card every year, sometimes we were mailing, even with Anton himself which was always very interesting. This summer, after 5 years we even met in Prague personally. Anton is tall, handsome young man who is doing well in his studies and is planning about his future. He wants to draw or make some graphics, he is thinking about some kind of art school. Despite his age of 16, he thinks a lot about assertion of the future studies for his life. I saw a self-confident young man who is thinking about his life very consistently. I can only guess if the Feuerstein's approach was the trigger but absolutely I can claim it was this same approach what saved him from slump and giving up on the education. He mentioned he would rather stay to study in Belgium or France, because French, despite the fact that it is learned language for him, is more understandable for his life.

Father's testimony:

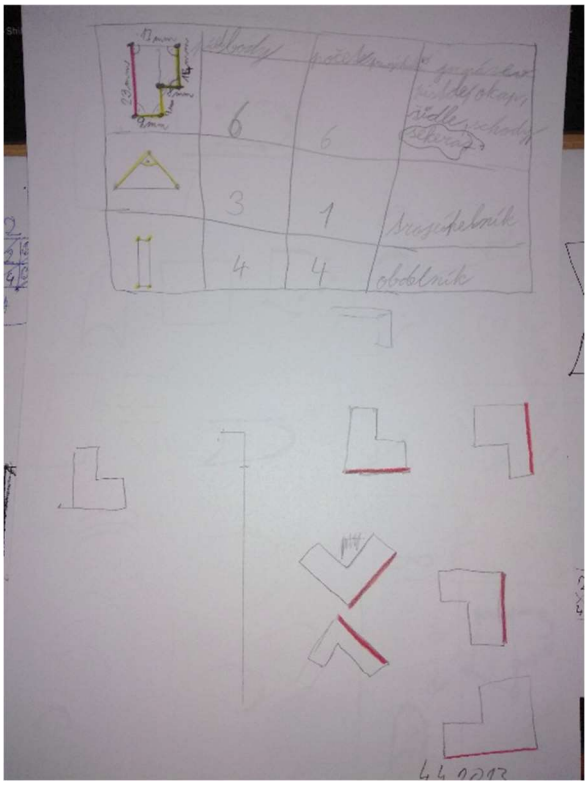
In the summer 2009 we were coming back to Czech Republic from 5 years long stay in Brussels, Belgium. Our sons A. and K., born in October 2002, were about to attend first grade of primary school. But with Anton we "crashed". The verdict of paedagogical-psychological centre spoke inexorably: dysphasia and other "strange" words, in one sentence – it is very bad. We were shocked. We didn't want to accept that, we looked around and found DYS-centrum Praha. We are glad till nowadays for that. From the beginning we were amazed by different attitude: more positive, friendly and more complex at the same time. Even the assessment and the report from it was like that. Not a verdict but detailed analysis and offering solution.

Anton could start to attend a primary school where he had some adjustments. Every week we were visiting DYS-centrum Praha. He was interested, all the exercises were given in an entertaining form. The methods were various, started on Logico Piccolo, later, we continued with Feuerstein's method. Apparently simple method, connecting dots, at first very easy, gradually more complex and difficult, though. I am not a professional, still I have the feeling that all the time it was more or less about the same: to learn how to connect items which belong to each other, in different words to learn to think logically. It was needed to think thoroughly to find the right solution, at the same time it was fun.

Today, Anton is in the fifth grade of the second level (so called S5) of European School in Brussels (after 4 years in the Czech school we return to Belgium in 2013) and I would say that he benefits from his regular trainings of his mind in DYS-centrum Praha are clearly visible still today. He even gets better grades than his twin brother! It seems to me that thanks to DYS-centrum and mainly the Feuerstein's he knows that it won't come without a work. And thanks to them, the work brings its fruits. With this in mind, he is willing to work (learn), even if the puberty "hits" him now.

Attachments

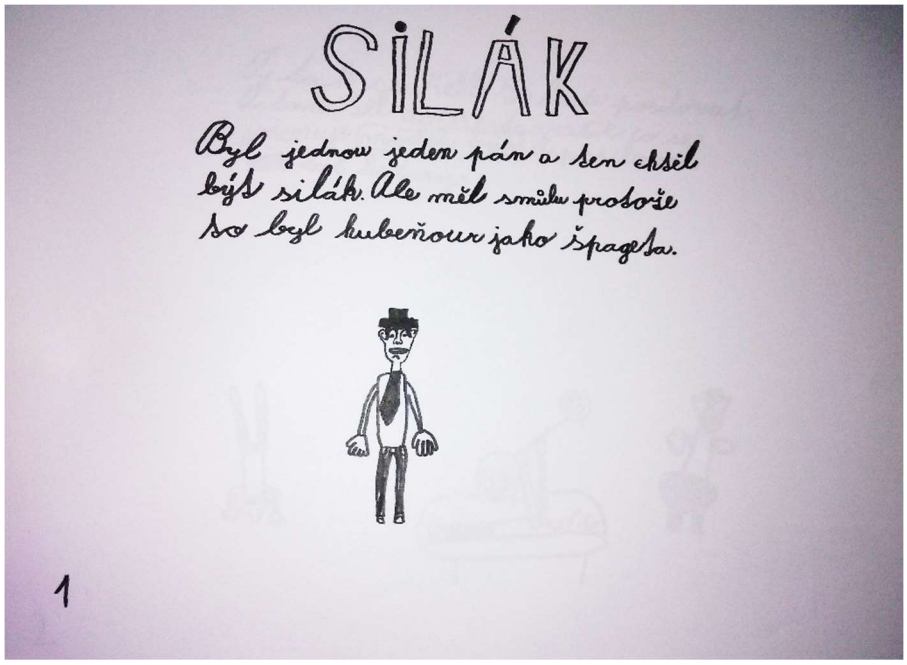
Preparation for one FIE page of Organizing of Dots:



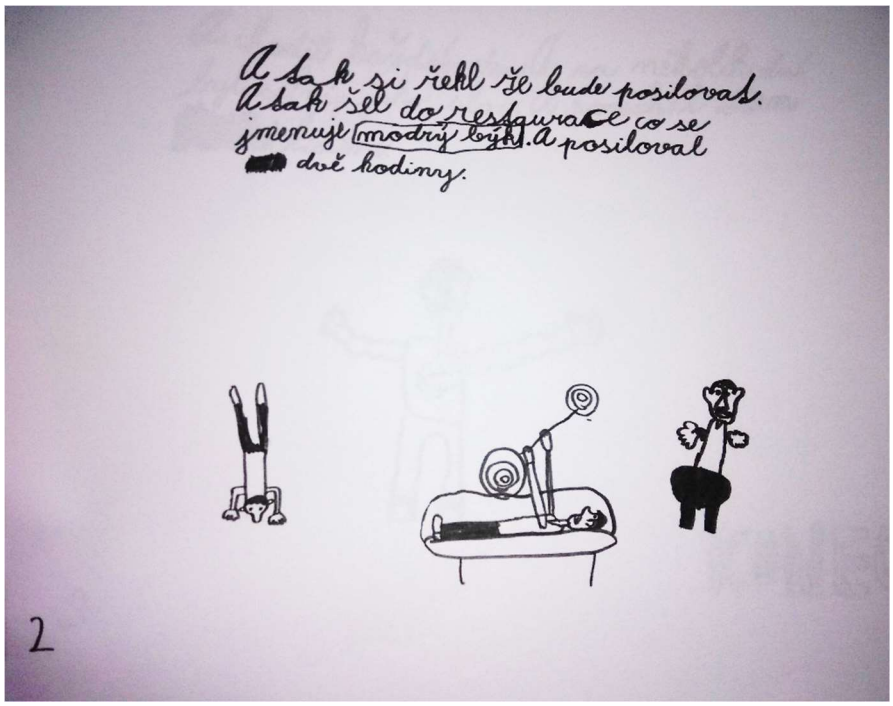
Anton's drawings – very often he draws comic strips on different topics

In the Africa

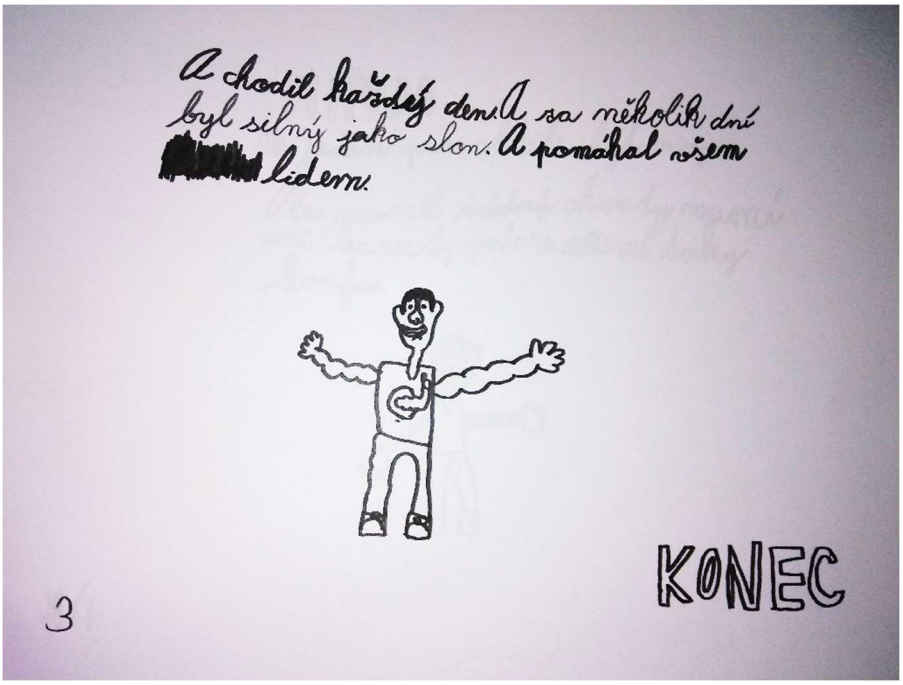
A story about a Strongman – here Anton makes even his own story which he illustrates with pictures

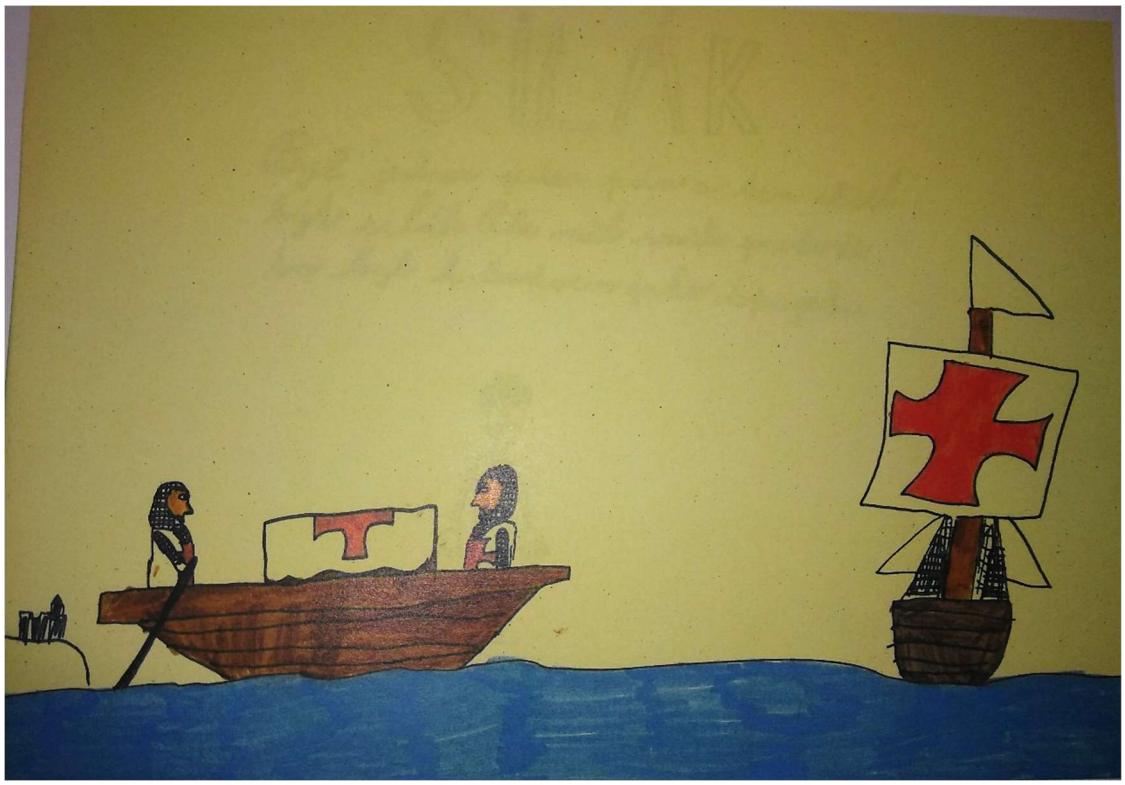


There was once a master who wanted to become a strongman. But unfortunately, he was skinny as a spaghetti.



So he told himself that he will do exercises to get strong. So he walk to the restaurant named The blue bull. And he did exercises for two hours.



And so, he did every day. After few days he was strong as an elephant. And he was helping all the people. THE END.

The following picture illustrates how broad his imagination is. He drew boats from different points of view which is very demanding. He made his picture roughly at the age of 10 years.