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**FILED**

June 23, 2016  
Carla Bender  
4<sup>th</sup> District Appellate  
Court, IL

2016 IL App (4th) 160095-U

NOS. 4-16-0095, 4-16-0096 cons.

IN THE APPELLATE COURT

OF ILLINOIS

FOURTH DISTRICT

In re: A.S., a Minor,	)	Appeal from
THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS,	)	Circuit Court of
Plaintiff-Appellee,	)	Vermilion County
v. (No. 4-16-0095)	)	No. 13JA123
ASHLEY SCHWARTZ,	)	
Respondent-Appellant.	)	
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In re: B.S., a Minor,	)	No. 13JA124
THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS,	)	
Plaintiff-Appellee	)	
v. (No. 4-16-0096)	)	Honorable
ASHLEY SCHWARTZ,	)	Claudia S. Anderson,
Respondent-Appellant.	)	Judge Presiding.

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JUSTICE POPE delivered the judgment of the court.  
Presiding Justice Knecht and Justice Holder White concurred in the judgment.

**ORDER**

¶ 1 *Held:* The trial court did not err in terminating respondent's parental rights.

¶ 2 On January 6, 2016, the trial court found respondent, Ashley Schwartz, to be an unfit parent. On January 20, 2016, the court terminated her parental rights after finding termination to be in the best interest of A.S. and B.S. (twins born in May 2013). Respondent appeals, arguing the court erred in finding her unfit and in terminating her parental rights. We affirm.

¶ 3 I. BACKGROUND

¶ 4 On October 17, 2013, the State filed petitions for adjudication of wardship with regard to respondent's children, A.S. and B.S. The petitions alleged the children were neglected pursuant to section 2-3(1)(b) of the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 (705 ILCS 405/2-3(1)(b) (West 2012)) because they were residing in an environment injurious to their welfare due to (1) unstable living circumstances (count I); (2) respondent's drug use (count II); and (3) abuse of the minors' sibling by respondent's boyfriend, Samuel Howard (count III). Following a shelter-care hearing, the trial court found an immediate need existed to remove A.S. and B.S. from the home.

¶ 5 On January 10, 2014, the Center for Youth and Family Solutions (Center) filed a client service plan. According to that plan, respondent was to participate in parenting classes, a mental-health assessment, a substance-abuse screening, and a psychological evaluation. Respondent was also required to obtain employment sufficient to support her family, attend counseling, and maintain suitable housing.

¶ 6 On January 16, 2014, respondent admitted the allegations of count I, *i.e.*, the minors were neglected because they were residing in an environment injurious to their welfare.

¶ 7 According to the March 6, 2014, dispositional report, respondent was unemployed but looking for work. Respondent was still living with Howard, who was still under investigation for abusing respondent's other child. While respondent interacted well with her children during visits, she was late for almost every visit and some visits were cancelled. Following a screening, it was determined respondent did not need substance-abuse treatment. The children were doing well in relative placement.

¶ 8 On April 10, 2014, the Center filed a second client service plan, which indicated respondent had not complied with enough services to have the minors returned to her. Moreover, respondent was still living with Howard, who had been charged with physically

abusing the minors' sibling. While respondent was engaged in weekly counseling, she continued to demonstrate an inability to make her own decisions. Instead, she allowed Howard to control her life. While it was reported she was making satisfactory progress with her counseling, respondent had not found a job and had not provided any financial documentation to her caseworker.

¶ 9 During an April 30, 2014, dispositional hearing, Johnson Flanagan, a caseworker for the Center, testified respondent was still residing with Howard, despite several suggestions from Johnson she should separate herself from Howard if she wanted to get her children back sooner.

¶ 10 According to the July 30, 2014, permanency report, respondent was working. She was still living with Howard. Respondent had to reschedule four of six parenting classes and was subsequently "kicked out" of parenting classes. The Center then arranged an individual "Nurturing Parent" class for respondent, which she completed, and she was having regular weekly visits with the children. She was also participating in counseling but had not followed through with a recommendation for domestic-violence services. The report found respondent had been cooperating with all services, but the one obstacle to return of the children was the fact she was still living with Howard.

¶ 11 During the October 8, 2014, permanency-review hearing, Melinda Dolan, a caseworker, testified, as of September 12, 2014, respondent and Howard were no longer living together. Respondent was working full-time, was engaged in all of her required services, had obtained appropriate housing, and had completed parenting classes. Dolan testified the twins were a year old and "a handful," but respondent handled them well and was very nurturing. Dolan stated respondent was "doing okay" toward the reunification goal. At the conclusion of

the hearing, the trial court stated respondent had clearly made reasonable progress and found visitation with the minors should be increased.

¶ 12 During the December 10, 2014, permanency-review hearing, Dolan testified respondent did not need to complete any other services but felt she should continue counseling. Dolan opined respondent might be ready to have the minors returned to her. The children were doing well in the foster home; however, they were frequently sick with upper respiratory infections and bronchitis. Dolan expressed concern about whether there was smoking around the children in the foster home, which was exacerbating their breathing problems. At the conclusion of the hearing, the trial court found the minors should be returned home with continued monitoring. The case was to remain open for six months.

¶ 13 The June 1, 2015, report of the court-appointed special advocate (CASA), Dee Ann Ryan, reflected the children had been living with respondent since December 10, 2014. Ryan expressed concern about what was happening in the home and the children's safety and care. Ryan had trouble making contact with respondent, resulting in less frequent visits to the home. During two unannounced visits in January 2015 and two in February 2015, Ryan observed overflowing ashtrays, lighters, and cigarettes lying around. During the second unannounced visit in January 2015, respondent was in the living room but the children were nowhere in sight. Respondent told Ryan they were in her bedroom. When Ryan opened the bedroom door, the children "barged out as if they had been confined and waiting to get out." There were lighters and overflowing ashtrays in the bedroom. Respondent told Ryan she had to take the children to Indiana for a hearing and, shortly after, they left with a man.

¶ 14 During one of the February 2015 visits, a man was smoking in the house. Ryan advised him of the children's respiratory problems and told him he should smoke outside. When

asked if he had been background-checked, the man responded he had, but he was on probation for drug charges. Ryan contacted Dolan to express her concerns.

¶ 15 In March 2015, Ryan had no contact with respondent because she did not return Ryan's phone calls. Dolan had no contact with respondent during this time. In April 2015, Ryan stopped by respondent's home and found the house was empty. Ryan was advised by Dolan's supervisor that Dolan had left the Center. According to Dolan's supervisor, Dolan knew respondent had moved and had visited the new home. Dolan reportedly found the home to be in compliance and the children appeared to be fine with respondent. However, Ryan testified when she was able to visit respondent, she observed the children were very quiet and did not want to play, which was unusual for the children. During the visit, a man walked into the house and went into a bedroom. Respondent told Ryan he came there to watch television, but it appeared to Ryan it was the man's bedroom. Respondent said he had not been background-checked. Ryan expressed concern about the emotional health and environmental safety of the children.

¶ 16 The June 1, 2015, permanency report from the Center noted the CASA's reports of unapproved people staying in respondent's home throughout the reporting period. Reportedly, the Center staff had monitored the home weekly and had not encountered any unapproved people in the home. However, the report also reflected there was a three-week period, in February 2015, where the caseworker was unable to make contact with respondent. Respondent had been laid off for a month but was called back to work and was working full-time. During the time respondent was laid off, she was evicted from her home for failing to pay the rent. She moved in with a female roommate, who provided babysitting for the children while respondent was at her third-shift job and while she slept during the day. The report indicated respondent was making

satisfactory progress with her services. The report further reflected the children were bonded to respondent, whom they called "mama."

¶ 17 Jessica Bennett, a foster-care supervisor at the Center, testified about her concerns regarding the stability of respondent's living situation. Bennett noted the initial reason for Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) involvement was inadequate shelter because respondent had moved frequently and had different people watching the children. This pattern seemed to be repeating itself. Respondent had moved in with a new roommate who began watching the children before the Center could do a background check. Respondent was having difficulty finding someone to watch the children while she worked her overnight shift and then slept during the day, causing a "slight" concern inappropriate people were watching the children. According to Bennett, there was a period of three weeks in February 2015 when no one could contact respondent, during which she had the children in her care. Bennett did not know how many times, if any, anyone had monitored respondent's residence since May 14, 2015. Bennett testified she believed the children were safe with respondent and the children should not be removed from respondent's care. Bennett acknowledged respondent had only attended 3 of 22 counseling sessions. The therapist had begun conducting sessions in respondent's home because of transportation issues.

¶ 18 At the conclusion of the hearing, the trial court ordered the immediate removal of A.S. and B.S. from respondent's care. The court further ordered the Center to be removed from the case for failing to follow-up, finding the caseworkers to be "clueless."

¶ 19 Ryan's August 24, 2015, report reflected the children had been placed in a foster home in Champaign, Illinois, after their removal from respondent. A few weeks later, they were placed in a foster home in Paxton, Illinois. Ryan was "amazed" at how well the children had

adjusted to this placement after just two weeks. She observed the children laughing and playing outside with other children and noted the change in their personality was "striking." The foster mother home-schooled her own children and planned to start a preschool curriculum for A.S. and B.S. The foster parents reported a willingness to adopt A.S. and B.S.

¶ 20 During an August 26, 2015, permanency-review hearing, Sherri Cummins, the caseworker from Cunningham Children's Home (Cunningham), testified she had been assigned to this case since June 5, 2015. Cummins testified the children were placed in a new foster home in Paxton on June 12, 2015. The foster parents were willing to provide permanency for the children. Respondent had been referred to a new counselor and had completed a mental-health assessment. Although respondent was supposed to complete the treatment goals, she had been inconsistent in meeting weekly with her therapist. She had missed three of five or six sessions.

¶ 21 Cummins testified respondent was to participate in weekly supervised visits with the children. Originally, they were scheduled in Danville, Illinois, but, because of respondent's inconsistency and cancelling at the last minute, the visits were moved to Cunningham. Excuses for missed visits were for illness or doctor appointments. In August 2015, Cummins asked respondent to go to the emergency room when she called to cancel her visit due to illness. Respondent went to the hospital but left without treatment and against medical advice, explaining she had received a call from her sister to pick up her sister's children. Cummins stated visits went well overall; however, she was concerned because respondent seemed to concentrate her attention mostly on A.S. while the visitation supervisor occupied B.S. During visits, respondent also spent time talking or texting on her phone. Cummins had told respondent she needed to pay attention and give equal time to both children.

¶ 22 Cummins testified respondent acknowledged her responsibility for the situation in which she had placed her children. Cummins had seen some progress with respondent. She followed through with a request to find a residence and she had applied for a daytime job. Cummins acknowledged respondent had a long road ahead of her and a lot of work to do. Although respondent had stated she wanted to put her children first and concentrate her efforts on getting them back, respondent had continued to be primarily interested in male relationships.

¶ 23 Ryan testified she had met with respondent at her home on August 20, 2015. It did not appear anyone else was living in the home. Respondent told Ryan she was interested in a man who was a "good guy," but she was not sure if he wanted to subject himself to questioning and a DCFS background check. She claimed she wanted to wait until she had better visits with her children. Respondent was still married to the children's father. Respondent's home was neat and clean and the room for the twins was ready to be set up. There was an ashtray with cigarette butts in respondent's bedroom, but she stated she would stop smoking when the children were there. Although the visit with respondent was positive, Ryan still had concerns over the missed visits and missed therapy sessions. To Ryan, it appeared respondent was not putting her children first.

¶ 24 Ryan testified she had no concerns about the foster home. In fact, she was very excited and pleased with the improvement in the children's personality, development, and happiness.

¶ 25 At the conclusion of the hearing, the trial court changed the permanency goal from return home to substitute care pending determination of termination of parental rights.

¶ 26 On September 23, 2015, the State filed petitions to terminate respondent's parental rights as to A.S. and B.S. The petitions alleged respondent was unfit for (1) failing to maintain a

reasonable degree of interest, concern, or responsibility as to the minors (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(b) (West 2014)); (2) deserting the minors (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(c) (West 2014)); (3) failing to make reasonable efforts to correct the conditions that were the basis for the removal of the children within nine months after the adjudication of neglect, abuse, or dependency, from January 16, 2014, through October 16, 2014 (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(m)(i) (West 2014)); and (4) failing to make reasonable progress toward the return of the children within any nine-month period following the adjudication of neglect, abuse, or dependency, specifically, from January 16, 2014, through October 16, 2014, or from October 17, 2014, through July 17, 2015 (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(m)(ii) (West 2014)).

¶ 27 During the January 6, 2016, hearing on the State's petition to terminate parental rights, Cummins testified respondent had not completed any of the services necessary for the return of her children. Respondent was discharged from counseling for missing appointments and showing up late. She failed to successfully complete a parenting program at New Directions. Respondent never had stable housing, having lived in four different places between June 2015 and the date of the hearing. By the time respondent moved into a trailer at the end of October 2015, the goal had already changed to substitute care pending termination. Visits were scheduled on Fridays, respondent's day off. Despite this, respondent had missed 10 of 24 visits with the children between June 2015 and December 2015. Sometimes the children were in the car on the way to visit respondent when she cancelled. Cummins had discussed with respondent the importance of making the visits. Cummins had also had discussions with respondent concerning different people in the home when the children visited. Cummins discussed with respondent on more than one occasion the need for her to put the children first and leave the men

alone. This was also a topic to be addressed in individual counseling, which respondent did not complete.

¶ 28 Ryan testified during the time she had been the CASA, the children had been returned to respondent's care and removed again. During the period the children had been returned to respondent, December 2014 through June 2015, Ryan tried to visit them in respondent's home every two or three weeks. There were times Ryan was unable to make contact and conduct a visit. During two visits, Ryan saw unidentified males in the home. Ryan was concerned about whether these men had been background-checked. One time, a man was watching the children while respondent was asleep. He told Ryan he was on probation for a drug charge.

¶ 29 Ryan testified about the incident in June 2015 when she found the children in respondent's bedroom with the door shut and it appeared respondent had been asleep just before Ryan arrived. Ryan believed the children had been in the bedroom for a while because of the way they ran to her when she opened the door. Ryan noticed cigarettes and a lighter on an end table by the bed where the children could reach them. The children were 15 months old at the time.

¶ 30 Respondent testified about the occasion when Ryan found the children in her bedroom while she was asleep on the couch. Respondent stated she had put the children down for a nap in their own bedroom. She normally slept during the children's nap time, between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., because she was working the third shift. She did not have a babysitter that afternoon. She was not expecting Ryan. Respondent stated she tried to get help from the Center with babysitting but was not successful.

¶ 31 Respondent testified she had some medical issues, for which she was taking medications. She had been on medical leave three times. She provided all the doctor's notes and information about her medications to the Center. Respondent was taking medications for anxiety, depression, and pain.

¶ 32 Respondent testified sometimes she had trouble getting to the visits and counseling sessions in Urbana, Illinois, because of a lack of gas or her car not starting, being too tired after she got off work, or doctor appointments. Once she had to work overtime. She always let the caseworker know when she was unable to make it. Respondent acknowledged, during two of her 30-day medical-leave periods, she was not working and was just resting; however, she still missed visits with the children. She also acknowledged the caseworker always tried to accommodate her work schedule by scheduling visits and counseling sessions on the same day so respondent did not have to drive to Urbana twice. Despite all that, respondent agreed she still missed times she was given to visit with her children. Respondent acknowledged it hurt the children when she missed visits.

¶ 33 Respondent stated she had moved to five different places during the pendency of this case. One move was during the period the children had been returned to her care because she was unable to pay the rent due to being on medical leave. Even though she had been advised she needed to get a place of her own, it was not until after the goal changed to substitute care pending termination on October 7, 2015, respondent found a trailer. Respondent agreed she had been advised several times not to smoke around the children, but she continued to do so. Respondent also agreed she had not successfully completed individual counseling due to lack of attendance. Respondent agreed she had not completed the voluntary parenting classes. She claimed sometimes she forgot but ultimately acknowledged she chose not to go any longer.

¶ 34 Respondent claimed the man who was on probation, whose last name she did not know, was not caring for the children. She did not know he was on probation. Once she found out, she no longer allowed him in her home. Respondent agreed the man may have watched her children once while she slept, which happened to be when Ryan came for a visit. She stated the only other people who watched her children were her sister and another man who passed the background check. Respondent stated she did not have a lot of company going in and out of the house.

¶ 35 At the conclusion of the hearing, the trial court found the State had proved by clear and convincing evidence respondent was unfit for failing to (1) maintain a reasonable degree of interest, concern and responsibility; and (2) make reasonable progress in any nine-month period following adjudication, specifically from January 16, 2014, through October 16, 2014, or between October 17, 2014, through July 17, 2015.

¶ 36 On January 20, 2016, the trial court held the best-interest hearing. During that hearing, Cummins testified A.S. and B.S. were living in a traditional foster home. Cummins had observed the children interact with their foster parents and felt the children were well-bonded with their foster parents and "they love them." Cummins testified A.S and B.S. "are part of the family, [and] they interact with the other [four biological] children very well." According to the best-interest report, the foster parents were willing to provide permanency to the minors. The report also recommended changing the permanency goal to adoption. Cummins testified she did not have any concerns about the placement being a permanent one for the children.

¶ 37 At the conclusion of the hearing, the trial court found it was in A.S.'s and B.S.'s best interest to terminate respondent's parental rights.

¶ 38 This appeal followed.

¶ 39

## II. ANALYSIS

¶ 40 On appeal, respondent argues the trial court erred in (1) finding her unfit and (2) terminating her parental rights as to both minors.

¶ 41

### A. Unfitness Finding

¶ 42 In a proceeding to terminate a respondent's parental rights, the State must prove unfitness by clear and convincing evidence. *In re Donald A.G.*, 221 Ill. 2d 234, 244, 850 N.E.2d 172, 177 (2006). " 'A determination of parental unfitness involves factual findings and credibility assessments that the trial court is in the best position to make.' " *In re Richard H.*, 376 Ill. App. 3d 162, 165, 875 N.E.2d 1198, 1201 (2007) (quoting *In re Tiffany M.*, 353 Ill. App. 3d 883, 889-90, 819 N.E.2d 813, 819 (2004)). A reviewing court accords great deference to a trial court's finding of parental unfitness, and such a finding will not be disturbed on appeal unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *In re A.F.*, 2012 IL App (2d) 111079, ¶ 40, 969 N.E.2d 877. "A decision regarding parental fitness is against the manifest weight of the evidence where the opposite conclusion is clearly the proper result." *In re D.D.*, 196 Ill. 2d 405, 417, 752 N.E.2d 1112, 1119 (2001).

¶ 43

A parent will be deemed unfit if the State proves, by clear and convincing evidence, one or more of the grounds of unfitness enumerated in section 1(D) of the Adoption Act (750 ILCS 50/1(D) (West 2014)). See *In re A.L.*, 409 Ill. App. 3d 492, 499, 949 N.E.2d 1123, 1128 (2011). We note the State need only prove one statutory ground to establish parental unfitness. *Donald A.G.*, 221 Ill. 2d at 244, 850 N.E.2d at 177. "Evidence of a single statutory ground is sufficient to uphold a finding of parental unfitness." *In re T.Y.*, 334 Ill. App. 3d 894, 905, 778 N.E.2d 1212, 1220 (2002).

¶ 44 In this case, the trial court found respondent unfit for, *inter alia*, failing to make reasonable progress during the nine-month periods from January 16, 2014, through October 16, 2014, and from October 17, 2014, through July 17, 2015 (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(m)(ii) (West 2014)). (On appeal, the State has conceded the evidence does not support the court's findings as to the first nine-month period. The concession is appropriate because the trial court, at a permanency-review hearing covering that period, specifically found respondent had made reasonable progress and returned the children to her in December 2014. Thus, the only period we focus on is October 17, 2014, to July 17, 2015.) This court judges reasonable progress according to an objective standard. See *In re Jordan V.*, 347 Ill. App. 3d 1057, 1067, 808 N.E.2d 596, 605 (2004). For a court to find progress was reasonable, the record must show, at a minimum, measurable or demonstrable movement toward the goal of returning the child to the parent. See *In re Daphnie E.*, 368 Ill. App. 3d 1052, 1067, 859 N.E.2d 123, 137 (2006). A court will find progress to be reasonable when it can conclude it will be able to return the child to parental custody in the near future. *A.L.*, 409 Ill. App. 3d at 500, 949 N.E.2d at 1129 (quoting *In re L.L.S.*, 218 Ill. App. 3d 444, 461, 577 N.E.2d 1375, 1387 (1991)).

¶ 45 In mid-December 2014, the children were returned to respondent's care. She had complied with services and appeared to be doing everything expected of her. Additionally, the foster placement with relatives was not ideal. However, by mid-January, the CASA caseworker was concerned about the children's safety. Ashtrays full of cigarette butts and lighters were within reach of the children. They were exposed to second-hand smoke despite their respiratory issues. They were found penned up behind a closed door in respondent's bedroom while she slept in the living room. They were exposed to a constant flow of different men in and out of respondent's home. Respondent allowed a man whose last name she did not even know to watch

her children while she slept. He was on probation for drug charges. Contact with respondent and the children had been lost for a three-week period in March 2015. Without anyone's knowledge, respondent had moved in with a female roommate, who began watching the children before she had been background-checked. Consequently, the children were once again removed from respondent's care in June 2015. Therefore, during the nine-month period from October 17, 2014, through July 17, 2015, respondent failed to make reasonable progress toward reunification because the children could not be returned to her in the near future.

¶ 46 Respondent argues her participation in and completion of some services shows reasonable progress in reaching her service goals. Prior to the children being returned to her in December 2014, respondent did complete parenting classes and was participating in counseling. In December 2014, respondent did not need to complete any other services, but continued counseling was recommended. However, once the children were returned to her care, respondent quickly failed to demonstrate she could properly care for her children and keep them safe. Nor could she demonstrate her ability to provide them with stable housing. Therefore, we disagree with respondent's claim completion of some services demonstrated reasonable progress.

¶ 47 On July 17, 2015, the end of the second nine-month period considered here, respondent was virtually in the same position she was when the children were initially removed from her care. No chance of reunification was in sight and certainly not in the near future. Therefore, the trial court's finding respondent was unfit because she failed to make reasonable progress was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 48 B. Best-Interest Findings

¶ 49 Respondent argues the trial court's decision to terminate her parental rights was against the manifest weight of the evidence. We disagree.

¶ 50 At the best-interest stage, a "parent's interest in maintaining the parent-child relationship must yield to the child's interest in a stable, loving home life." *In re D.T.*, 212 Ill. 2d 347, 364, 818 N.E.2d 1214, 1227 (2004). Before a parent's rights may be terminated, a court must find the State proved, by a preponderance of the evidence, it is in the child's best interest for those rights to be terminated. See *D.T.*, 212 Ill. 2d at 366, 818 N.E.2d at 1228. When considering whether termination of parental rights is in a child's best interest, the trial court must consider a number of factors within "the context of the child's age and developmental needs." 705 ILCS 405/1-3(4.05) (West 2014). These factors include the following:

- "(a) the physical safety and welfare of the child, including food, shelter, health, and clothing;

- (b) the development of the child's identity;

- (c) the child's background and ties, including familial, cultural, and religious;

- (d) the child's sense of attachments, including:

- (i) where the child actually feels love, attachment, and a sense of being valued (as opposed to where adults believe the child should feel such love, attachment, and a sense of being valued);

- (ii) the child's sense of security;

- (iii) the child's sense of familiarity;

- (iv) continuity of affection for the child;

- (v) the least disruptive placement alternative for the child;

- (e) the child's wishes and long-term goals;
- (f) the child's community ties, including church, school, and friends;
- (g) the child's need for permanence which includes the child's need for stability and continuity of relationships with parent figures and with siblings and other relatives;
- (h) the uniqueness of every family and child;
- (i) the risks attendant to entering and being in substitute care; and
- (j) the preferences of the persons available to care for the child." 705 ILCS 405/1-3(4.05)(a) to (j) (West 2014).

The trial court must consider all of the above-cited factors; however, no single factor is dispositive. *In re Austin W.*, 214 Ill. 2d 31, 50, 823 N.E.2d 572, 584 (2005).

¶ 51 The trial court's best-interest finding will not be reversed unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *In re Anaya J.G.*, 403 Ill. App. 3d 875, 883, 932 N.E.2d 1192, 1199 (2010). Under this standard, a reviewing court gives the trial court deference because it is in a better position to observe the parties' and witnesses' conduct and demeanor. *In re M.H.*, 196 Ill. 2d 356, 361, 751 N.E. 2d 1134, 1139 (2001). We will not substitute our judgment for that of the trial court regarding witness credibility, the weight to be given witness testimony, or inferences to be drawn from the evidence presented. *People v. Deleon*, 227 Ill. 2d 322, 332, 882 N.E.2d 999, 1005 (2008). A decision is against the manifest weight of the evidence "if the facts clearly demonstrate that the court should have reached the opposite conclusion." *Daphnie E.*, 368 Ill. App. 3d at 1072, 859 N.E.2d at 141.

¶ 52 In this case, A.S. and B.S. had lived together in a traditional foster home since June 2015. Just two weeks after placement there, Ryan testified she was "amazed" at how well the children had adjusted and the change in their personalities was "striking." At the best-interest hearing, Cummins testified both children had developed a strong bond with the other children in the home. Cummins also testified A.S. and B.S. were well-bonded with their foster parents and "they love them." According to the best-interest report, both children had developed "a loving, emotional, and physical bond" with their foster parents. The best-interest report also indicated A.S. and B.S. were doing well and thriving in their new home and their foster parents were willing to provide them with permanency. Therefore, the trial court's order finding termination of respondent's parental rights was in the minors' best interest was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 53 III. CONCLUSION

¶ 54 For the reasons stated, we affirm the trial court's judgment.

¶ 55 Affirmed.