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'I will not allow you to defeat me'

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Struggles with dyslexia.

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New Century sophomore

John Colby Whisante has written previously for The Times about his struggles with dyslexia. Even though he may sometimes fail, he won't give up on his education.

You can try to defeat me. If you do not have patience with me, I will fall behind in my work and I will fail. If you do not explain things in a simple and structured way for me, I will become lost in your instructions and I will fail. If you make me read aloud, I will need to know in advance so I can prepare myself for what I will be reading or I will fail.

If you make me try to remember every vocabulary word from lessons and get those words down on paper without a list, I will become overwhelmed with the spelling, the sounds in the words and what I am hearing in my brain, and I will fail.

You have questioned my abilities and my need for help. You have thrown up my accomplishments outside of the classroom even though you have no concept of the effort and time it takes for me to achieve those accomplishments because you have never allowed me what I need to show my full potential.

You have questioned my diagnosis of dyslexia. I could give up and walk away from getting an education, but I am not a quitter. I may fail in the beginning, but I will keep on trying until I succeed and I will not allow you to defeat me.

As my school official, you have choices. You can assist me in getting an education by making accommodations that have been proven to help me, or you can allow me to fail and hope I will go away. Even if you turn your back on me, I will not go away.

As my teacher, you have choices. I trust you to not humiliate me because of my weaknesses. I depend on you to educate me. I depend on you to have patience with me when I am slow because I can reach my full potential with your patience.

You can either turn the light on in my confused brain or you can remove the light bulb. I ask of you, please do not leave me in the dark.