

Olivia Baczynskyj
413A Warners Bay rd
Charlestown 2290 NSW
49425376

Imagine walking into a school and being told:

“The only way you will ever succeed in this world is to use your physical attributes to get there. You should be a secretary so you can just sit there and look pretty.”

“ It is a waste of my breath even attempting to explain anything to you, you can’t learn.”

“ All you are is lazy and an attention seeker.”

“ Disability? Come see me when you are in a wheelchair and have a real disability.”

I have a disability called Scotopic Sensitivity. It is a form of dyslexia. I am a very severe case and it effects my learning in all areas of my life.

I require:

- Dark blue paper to read from
- Dark blue Urlen lenses
- Reading and light causes migraines
- Fainting episodes
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- I am unable to read for extended periods of time even with blue paper
- Have difficulty using a computer due to the glare
- Have difficulty reading overheads or off whiteboards
- Or be in a room where there is bright or fluorescent light.

I was diagnosed in year 10 with this condition and had successfully hidden my disability from all around me. I hid it by still managing to complete my work. I wrote on a ruler so when I heard the letters click I knew I had written them. I can't express to you what feels like to be so isolated and know that everyone in the room can read and understand, but you can't. An English teacher who noticed the whole class had finished the novel in a week and despite my endless effort I had made it through two paragraphs picked it up. When I was diagnosed it validated that I was not stupid only struggling to learn within my limited capabilities due to my disability, finally I believed the same education system that had failed me could assist.

I was wrong. The severity of such symptoms are only classified by the Board of Education as a learning "DIFFICULTY" and all the school is required to do to assist is present me with one blue overlay to place over my work. This is insufficient.

This is my first year at University and the first time my disability has ever been validated. I have had substantial support, lighting has been changed, photocopied are my sheets, I am not marked down for only being able to read a certain amount of work, extensions on assignments, the list seems endless.

I did not attend a bad school nor have heartless teachers. My teachers were merely ignorant of my disability and this is a result of poor training in the area of Scotopic Sensitivity. They followed all guidelines set down by the Board of Education, although these guidelines did not meet any of my needs as a student with a disability.

Despite what many teachers believed, there were some extraordinary teachers at my school who constantly gave me extra assistance and offered help in any way, they can be credited for my UAI of 92.45 and coming 7th in the state in Aboriginal Studies.

The guidelines for being classified as having a disability need to be addressed and it is imperative that staff learn new methods of dealing with 'us kids', who nobody ever expects much from.

I am now studying to be a teacher and as a teacher with a learning disability I will bring hope to other learning disabled students, hope to all the students the Education Department forgot.

As a teacher I want to be able to support other students in their endeavour to learn. What can WE do to change this?