Enock Gota sits in the library at Dekaney High School, high ceilings overhead and a wall of windows letting in the late-winter sunlight, quietly reading a book. It’s a rare break for the senior, since the majority of his time is spent in class, working with his ROTC classmates, or on the field as a member on both the football and soccer teams.

But for Gota, keeping busy is exactly the point. It is where he draws inspiration.

“I try to draw inspiration from as many people and places as possible,” Gota said.

Asked to name some inspirations, he lists everyone from his football coach to his ROTC chief to his parents, as well as retired Navy SEAL and author David Goggins and fictional movie characters.

“I want to incorporate parts of them, but at the end of the day I am still me,” Gota said.

Whatever his inspiration, Gota has his own list of achievements. Born in Togo in west Africa, Gota had a typical childhood, but one that was punctuated with periods of political violence.

After a long-standing leader of the country died in 2005, violence broke out in Togo over claims of an unfair election. Gota fled his native village with his family to the country’s capital and largest city Lomé. The violence in his native village eventually killed 400 people.

“A memory I will never forget: We were hiding from some troops. I remember hiding from them, and my aunt carrying me on her back,” Gota said. “We fell down, but I remember not crying because somehow I knew that I needed to be quiet.”