Redefining Success: Dyslexia and CHS Junior Emily Fischetti

Emily Fischetti considers being diagnosed with dyslexia in 8th grade as a gift. Though she stresses that being dyslexic doesn’t define her, she says being dyslexic has helped her find her voice, advocate for herself and her peers, and has shaped her into the person she is today.

“Being dyslexic is my superpower,” says Fischetti, who is a junior at Coppell High School.

As an elementary and middle school student, Fischetti had excellent grades and studied hard to please her teachers and family. She says she didn’t realize the pressure she was putting on herself to be perfect until she became seriously ill in September 2018.

“I ended up in the hospital with liver failure and an inflamed pancreas due to CMV [Cytomegalovirus] and adenovirus,” Fischetti says. “It turns out I was putting so much pressure on myself to be perfect that I was literally making myself sick.”

As part of her recovery process, Fischetti was diagnosed with dyslexia, ADHD, anxiety and depression. She credits Lynn Cooper, Dyslexia Specialist at CMS North, for knowing she had dyslexia.

“I think Ms. Cooper helped save my life,” Fischetti says. “She knew I had dyslexia and encouraged me to get tested.”

Once she was diagnosed, Fischetti says the pressure to be perfect eased.

“I realized that being dyslexic only meant that I learned differently,” she
says. “I am still kind, still smart, still outspoken, still me, only better, because now I know more about how I learn.”

Fischetti believes being diagnosed dyslexic later than usual has helped her advocate for herself and her fellow students with dyslexia and learning challenges. She says her mother, Kelly Fischetti who teaches fourth grade math at Lakeside Elementary, taught her to speak up for herself.

“I think if I was diagnosed at a young age, I wouldn’t be able to speak up when classmates ask me why I can’t spell or be able to tell my teachers what I need,” she says. “It has enhanced my voice, and I want to use it to advocate for others.”

Fischetti is sharing her story to put a face on being a student with dyslexia, to destigmatize learning differences and to give credit to the dyslexia and special education teachers she feels they deserve.

“Nobody understands dyslexia until you deal with it,” Fischetti says. “By sharing my story, I hope to put a face to dyslexia and have people understand it and the students who have it.”

One important lesson Fischetti has learned and wants to pass on is that perfect people don’t exist.

“I wish high school students knew that your grades don’t define you,” she says. “It is better to be kind and inclusive and to be able to talk to people than to put so much pressure on yourself to have a high GPA. Your grades won’t matter after high school and college, but how you treat people will.”

Fischetti defines success as making someone’s day better.

“If I can make someone smile, make their day better and be known for being kind, then that is being successful in my book,” she says.

A member of the CHS softball team who plays first base, Fischetti plans to continue to play softball in college while studying to become a special education teacher. She says her special teachers, including Cooper, Erika
Chavez at CHS9 and Pamela Yazbeck at CMS West have inspired her to become a special education teacher.

“That's my dream to go to college with a scholarship to become a special education teacher,” Fischetti says. “Our dyslexia teachers and special education teachers and many more educators who serve students with learning differences do not get the credit they deserve, and they should.”

She wants to show others like her that anything is possible with hard work. She believes that just because you are different doesn't mean you can't accomplish anything once you put your mind to it. It is this belief that helped Fischetti make the National Honor Society at CHS in spring 2021.

Fischetti also wants her fellow students and the CISD community to know that being dyslexic doesn't mean that someone isn't smart, they just learn differently.

“We can be overlooked and judged sometimes,” she says. “I just want people to know that just because I am dyslexic, doesn’t mean I’m not smart, it just means I work 10 times harder than the average person.

People who are dyslexic can do anything we put our minds to and understand what it is like to struggle.”

She continues, “I'm proud to be dyslexic, and I hope people will be inspired by my story. I couldn't imagine life without my dyslexia. I reach for the stars to show others like me that all things are possible to reach, even if you learn differently.”

Fischetti adds, “I want our community to know that dyslexics are special, and they should be blessed to know one.”

About 350 CISD students are identified as dyslexic and receive support services from the district. According to the International Dyslexia Association, dyslexia is a neurological condition caused by a different wiring of the brain. There is no cure for dyslexia and individuals with this
condition must learn coping strategies. Research indicates that dyslexia has no relationship to intelligence. Individuals with dyslexia are neither more nor less intelligent than the general population. Some say the way individuals with dyslexia think can actually be an asset in achieving success. Learn more at https://dyslexiaida.org/.