When I was little, I looked forward to going to school. I loved dinosaurs, building, and my friends. School felt carefree. But by fourth grade, I felt nervous in class. Sometimes I’d pretend I had to use the bathroom just so that my teacher couldn’t call on me. Everyone else seemed to know how to read. But I couldn’t get the hang of it. I knew my letters. But my brain couldn’t make sense of them when they were put into words.

My parents arranged for a special teacher to read to me and write for me. My school gave me extra time for tests and assignments. That helped. But I still had a hard time explaining what I’d read. I felt confused and frustrated.

When I got to middle school, my struggle with reading and writing was overwhelming. Other kids spent 30 minutes on their homework. But it took me three or four hours. My friends didn’t tease me. But they stopped asking me to hang out or play sports after school. I felt left out—and anxious about keeping up with my schoolwork.

When I was in seventh grade, my mom found a school called Jemicy near my house in Maryland. It’s for kids who struggle with reading and writing. I took a test and found out that I have a learning difference called dyslexia. I didn’t know anyone else who had dyslexia. I felt alienated. I thought something was wrong with me. But then I learned that 1 in 10 people are affected by dyslexia. Some people think dyslexia means you see letters upside down or backward. But that’s not true. For me, dyslexia means that my brain has a hard time processing words.
I also have a hard time putting my thoughts down in writing. I now understand that dyslexia has nothing to do with how smart I am or what I can achieve. I just have to work harder, because I learn differently.

I have friends with dyslexia who are amazing athletes, artists, and musicians. Others are great at science and math. Even some of my teachers have dyslexia.

Tools to Help

Now I have strategies to help me learn. Instead of writing notes, I record myself talking into my phone. I play it back to study. I also use audiobooks. We’re reading *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in school. I listen to it, then go back and listen to parts of it again if I need to. And I have computer programs that read to me and type for me as I speak.

I’ve also learned it’s important to communicate with my teachers. I ask them to repeat things or look over a paper before I turn it in. Sometimes I need more time for an assignment. My teachers always want to help.

Big Changes

I’ve had to work hard. But I’m a junior now, with a 4.0 GPA. And since I’m not struggling with my homework anymore, I even have time to be on the basketball team.

In April, I gave a speech I wrote at my school’s public speaking event. I used to hide so I wouldn’t get called on in class. But there I was, proudly speaking to 300 parents, teachers, and students!

I have always had good friends. But my Jemicy friends understand my challenges. One friend and I recently spent our lunchtime helping each other revise a paper. Feeling understood has given me a lot of confidence.

I’ll always have dyslexia. But now I have ways to deal with it. I’ve learned that when you have a challenge, you have to reach out to parents, teachers, or friends for help. And no matter what your struggle may be, always work your hardest. Never, ever give up. You have to keep going.

**Tools to Help**

| No More Hiding | Last April, Jaylen delivered a speech he wrote to 300 Jemicy students and parents. |

**CAREFREE AGAIN**

1. Jaylen records notes on his phone.
2. Jaylen, left, poses with his parents and two younger brothers.
3. Jaylen plays video games with his brothers.
4. Jaylen takes a break from shooting hoops.

**WHAT TO DO:** In this story, you learned that Jaylen had a problem, but he found a solution to it. In the chart below, fill in the blanks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detail 1:</th>
<th>Detail 2:</th>
<th>Detail 3:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joyleen knew his letters but couldn’t make sense of words.</td>
<td>Joyleen found new strategies to help him study and learn.</td>
<td>Joyleen asked his teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Problem:**

Joyleen knew his letters but couldn’t make sense of words.

**The Solution:** Joyleen found new strategies to help him study and learn.

**Detail 1:** Instead of taking notes, Joyleen records himself talking into his phone.

**Detail 2:** Joyleen records notes on his phone.

**Detail 3:** Joyleen asks his teachers.