

August 19, 2015

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kellie Powers and I am the parent of Karsen Powers. He is a senior at Sprague High School in Salem Oregon. I am asking for an academic hardship so that Karsen can play football his senior year. If you had a chance to meet my son, you would see what an amazing person he is and after I share with you his story I am hoping you will see the journey he has been on and where we hope he will continue on to. When Karsen was 9 months old he stopped breathing for no apparent reason other than the doctors decided it was an interrupted case of SIDS meaning we caught it before it killed him. Because there was an amount of time (2-3 minutes) that his brain was without oxygen, the doctors believe that his brain needs more time to process things.

We discovered this when Karsen was in kindergarten and after having an MRI the conclusion was that the neurons take more time to process information. This was due to the lack of oxygen when he stopped breathing. We met with the team of school officials at Schirle and made the decision for Karsen to repeat kindergarten as a way to help him gain the basic skills he would need to be successful in school. Karsen was then put on an IEP and this has been in place for him academically ever since. Because of this learning disability school has been very difficult for Karsen. Simple math is difficult for Karsen, but things as complicated as rebuilding a firetruck he can accomplish because there is meaning behind it. When Karsen was in 6th grade his club soccer coach of 4 years committed suicide. Karsen loved his coach and was in complete devastation to lose him. Coach Aaron understood Karsen and had a relationship with my son that inspired him to get up everyday and go to school and be a better person. Losing Coach Aaron was very hard for us all but especially for Karsen. During Karsen's middle school years he started to get bullied because other kids knew he struggled in school. The administration at Crossler always showed Karsen support and was the reason he made it thru such a difficult time. As a family we decided to give Karsen a break from public school and he completed one semester at Connections Academy. This gave him time to regroup emotionally and he was fairly successful with the schooling but missed his friends so we enrolled him at Sprague for the second semester of his freshman year. Math continues to be the most difficult class for Karsen. Karsen's junior year turned out to be quite a struggle for him with his studies and he did not do as well as he should have. He knew he was entering his senior year behind in math and had made a plan with his school counselor to complete some classes thru SK online this summer to get back on track to graduate. My son knew this would not be easy but also understood what it was going to take to graduate and walk graduation with his class and best friends. He entered the summer ready to accomplish this step and then the unthinkable happened. One of his dearest and closest friends from school was killed in a tragic accident at the beach at the end of June. The SK online class had just started 2 days earlier and Karsen went from being excited about his future to complete and utter devastation. At the age of 18 my son has lost 2 very important people in his life. Slick Nelson was not only Karsen's best friend but also his teammate on the football team. So now as he approaches his senior year without his dearest friend, playing football took on a whole new meaning because now he wants to play for Slick. A few weeks after we lost Slick, myself, my husband and Karsen met with Mr. Swanson the

Sprague Principal to come up with a plan to help Karsen become eligible to play football. The on-line class became impossible to work thru not only because it is a difficult class but also because just getting out of bed every day for Karsen became a hard task. Mr. Swanson helped arrange for a tutor to help Karsen get to a passing grade for his spring geometry class that he had failed. Karsen met with this tutor over a span of several weeks and because of the compassion from not only Mr. Swanson but Mrs. Burelson, Karsen was able to pass the class and we thought that this would carry him thru to be eligible to play football not knowing that the regulations were going to change August 1st. When Karsen found out he passed this course he came home crying because he was so happy that he would be able to play football in Slick's honor. Our plan for Karsen was to have him slowly work on the SK online class until he has passed the class which would get him on target to graduate. Today, my son learned that because the rules had changed starting August 1st, that he was once again in-eligible to play football despite passing the class he thought would clear him. Karsen's emotions are up and down these days learning how to approach the school year without one of his best friends and teammates. Karsen's goals are to play football for Slick and graduate from high school and enter the Marines. This school year will be an uphill battle for sure but losing the chance to play football will destroy any positive emotion to move on without Slick.

I am an educator myself, teaching kindergarten for Salem-Keizer School District. I understand the importance of academics and experienced this past spring the decision of possibly requesting one of my kindergarten students to repeat kindergarten that happened to be a boy who reminded me very much of my son Karsen. My principal gave me some hard statistics that showed that the odds of boys who repeat kindergarten are less likely to graduate from high school. I am sure the color in my face turned white during this conversation as I was brought back to the reality that this was what my own son was facing. As I stated earlier, school is very difficult for Karsen and my husband and I want to see him become a successful adult with a high school diploma. We hope that having the opportunity to play football his senior year is one step that will help motivate Karsen to stay in school so that he won't end up being part of the statistics.

It is with my most sincerest plea that I ask for reconsideration for Karsen's case.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Kellie Powers  
Parent of Karsen Powers