

Thank You!
8/7/20

From The Principal's Pen

I wasn't an exceptional elementary student. I am sure if I continue to write these long enough, I will tell more stories about my elementary experience, and many of them are less than glamorous. I didn't always apply myself, and I was most likely one of those students that teachers would whisper about in the teacher lounge. "I just hope you don't get that "Trantham" kid when he goes to fifth grade." Yep. I'm pretty sure that was probably me. Most teachers will tell you that mischievousness and intelligence are poor bedfellows, and I had enough of both to be dangerous.

At the beginning of my final year of elementary school, on one of the first few days of school, I was summoned for a conference with the teacher. "Todd, will you come out in the hall with me for a few minutes." I had been summoned by Ms. Palmer, my new sixth-grade teacher. At this point, I was still unsure of how to read her. She had a sweet southern personality that had me more than a little concerned. I was pretty sure she was a monster underneath that exterior that I did not want to mess with! We walked across the hall to the library, sat for about fifteen minutes, and had a discussion that would change the direction of my life.

She began by informing me that she knew I was capable of far more than I had shown anyone in my first few years of elementary school, and she expected more from me. She also let me know that during the year, I would be helping out in one of our classrooms for exceptional children. I would spend thirty minutes in their class two or three times a week working with students who needed my help and friendship. I was partnered with a student twice my age that was nonverbal and had limited mobility. We would become friends during the year, and through this experience, I was given a very different view of the world. For the first time, I had been shown just how much I had been blessed.

In the coming years, my attitude towards school, my effort on my school work, and my focus changed. From that day in August of 1986, I knew I wanted to be an educator. I find myself sitting in my office this morning as the principal of Hazelwood Elementary. I have taught and worked with hundreds of students in the last quarter of a century. I can only hope that I have had half of as much of an impact on someone's life as Ms. Palmer did when she called me out of class and reminded me of what I was capable of becoming.

Our mission at Hazelwood Elementary reads, To Empower and Inspire All Students To Be Responsible and Respectful Lifelong Learners. This is what we want to do every day for every student. It doesn't matter if we are all here at school in a traditional setting, all home in a remote learning environment, or somewhere in between. This is why we do what we do. It's why our teachers are ready to come back to school, even facing the dangers of a pandemic. And, it is what Ms. Palmer did for me. My hope is that one day our students will be able to point back to a moment in elementary school that changed the trajectory of their lives and search for a way to say "Thank You."

Thank you Ms. Palmer, that's what you did for me!